

### Target killers arrested

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Counter Terrorism Department and security forces on Friday claimed to have arrested five target killers in a joint operation in Peshawar. As per details, the arrested target killers who were in contact with the banned TTP, were involved in the killing of polio in-charge Dr Abdur Rehman. The CTD spokesperson said that the terrorists also confessed to killing senior tribal leaders.



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# Maryam enters parliamentary politics

## Newly-elected Punjab Assembly members take oath

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Outgoing Speaker Sibtain Khan administered oath to the newly-elected members of the Punjab Assembly on Friday, marking the beginning of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) chief minister nominee Maryam Nawaz's parliamentary politics.

The provincial assembly session, presided over by Sibtain, began after a delay of more than two hours on Friday. The secretary of the assembly said that the speaker and deputy speaker will be elected tomorrow (Saturday) through secret balloting. "Nomination papers for speaker and deputy speaker will be collected and scrutinised today," he added.

This was the maiden provincial assembly session after the February 8 general elections, wherein the newly-elected members were sworn-in. The session was attended by 313 lawmakers out of which 215 belonged to the PML-N and its allied parties while 98 members of the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) also took oath. At the outset of the delayed session, members of the PML-N, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) candidates, and SIC chanted slogans against each other and exchanged heated words.

PTI-backed candidate Imtiaz Sheikh reached the assembly hiding in a vehicle with black-tinted glasses. He laid low in the vehicle's rear seat. Later in the day, PML-N's Malik Ahmed Khan submitted his nomination papers for the post of Punjab Assembly speaker, while Zaheer Iqbal Chunar filed for the deputy speaker's post.

Meanwhile, SIC's Ahmed Khan Bhachar and Moin Riaz Qureshi submitted their documents for the two posts, respectively. During the session, the SIC said their members were not being allowed to enter the assembly. SIC members tried talking to the assembly speaker, however, they were told that they would be heard once they took an oath.

"The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has not yet [issued a list] of reserved seats," said Speaker Sibtain. PML-N leader Azma Bokhari said that

none of the members can speak unless they take an oath. "The decision on some reserved seats is still not taken due to their ineligibility. We currently have a two-third majority after forming an alliance," she said.

Bokhari said that her party respects the decision and wants to work with them. "Sindh Assembly session is convened tomorrow and National Assembly session will also be called in a couple of days," she said. The Punjab Assembly is the first house to convene its opening session, out of five assemblies that went to the elections. Earlier, PA members of different parties, including PML-N Senior Vice President and CM nominee Maryam Nawaz, arrived at the assembly.

Talking to media persons outside the Punjab Assembly, Speaker Muhammad Sibtain Khan said the elected MPAs should not be prevented from attending the assembly session. He admitted that some members got a level playing field while others were deprived of it. To a query, he said he came too early as sessions had been delayed in the past up to six hours.

The speaker also said the election for the provincial assembly's speaker and deputy speaker would be held on Saturday (tomorrow). The PTI on its Twitter handle alleged that police were stopping its elected members from taking oath. Sharing a video, it also alleged they were standing outside the assembly to arrest the PTI's CM candidate Aslam Iqbal. Talking to media outside the provincial assembly, PTI's Farrukh Javed spoke about his party's chief minister candidate Mian Aslam Iqbal, stating that he had taken bail and was coming to take oath as the chief minister. The politician confirmed that those who were "forcibly defeated" will hold a demonstration during the session. Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman had formally issued a notification convening for the assembly meeting. After the induction of independent MPA-elects in the party, PML-N has become the largest party in the Punjab Assembly which has announced to form the government in the province with Maryam as its head.

# PPP nominates Murad Ali Shah for Sindh CM's slot

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has nominated Murad Ali Shah for Sindh chief minister slot as the party was set to form next government in the province.

While addressing a press conference in Lahore on Friday following meeting of the parliamentary committee of the PPP, Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari announced that Murad Ali Shah would be the party's candidate for Sindh chief minister.

The former foreign minister said, "We will request Murad to take the responsibility of this post again. But this time round we have to beat our own record." It should be mentioned here that Murad Ali Shah was first elected Sindh chief minister in 2016. After the 2018

general elections, he was nominated for the coveted office by his party.

Bilawal Bhutto also announced that Naveed Anthony would be the candidate for Sindh Assembly deputy speaker. He further said that Awaish Shah would be the candidate for Sindh Assembly speaker. In the Feb 8 general elections held on 130 general seats of the Sindh Assembly, the PPP had secured 87 seats, followed by the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan that bagged 28 seats, Grand Democratic Alliance and Jamaat-i-Islami two each and 11 independents backed by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf.

The PPP enjoys a comfortable majority in the house and it doesn't need support from any other party to get its speaker, deputy speaker and chief minister

elected. He thanked the people of Sindh for having 'faith' in PPP, saying that the people not only made his party successful but also gave better results as compared to the past.

The PPP chairman said that his party's first priority after forming a government in Sindh would be to fulfill the promises made to flood affectees. "We will not just build houses but also give ownership rights to women," he added. Bilawal Bhutto further stated that there were several other projects regarding the flood affectees and reiterated that the same would be the PPP's top priority.

He reiterated that PPP has not sought any ministry in the federal government, but demanded that the promises made to the flood affectees of Sindh and Balochistan be fulfilled.

## Work on Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline approved

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The caretaker Cabinet Committee on Energy (CCoE) Friday approved works on the first phase of the Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline, prompting hope for boosting the nation's energy security as the project had seen more than a decade's delay.

In a statement, the Ministry of Energy said that a summary of the Petroleum Division regarding the IP Gas Pipeline was taken up by the cabinet committee in its session on Friday. The CCoE, the statement mentioned, approved the recommendations of the Ministerial Oversight Committee for the project constituted by caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar in September 2023, whereby the committee recommended to start work on the 80km segment of the pipeline inside Pakistan — from Pakistan border up till Gwadar in the first phase.

The project will be executed by Inter State Gas Systems (Pvt) Ltd and funded through Gas Infrastructure Development Cess, the statement mentioned. All the concerned divisions, the ministry said, gave a positive nod to move ahead with the project to ensure gas supplies to the people of Pakistan, thereby addressing the increasing energy needs of the country.

The ministry added that the project would not only boost the energy security of Pakistan but would enhance the confidence of the local industry which would be ensured with the enhanced gas supplies. "This will also catalyse the economic activity in the province of Balochistan and will contribute to the economic progress of Pakistan," the ministry added.

The project has been facing delays since 2014. In January, Iran issued a third notice to Islamabad, renewing its intention to move the arbitration court for not laying the pipeline as part of the IP gas line project. The News reported that Pakistan has been arguing that it could not materialise the project in its territory because of the US sanctions imposed on Iran, a view which authorities in Tehran have never subscribed, saying the US sanctions are not justified. Iraq and Turkey have been using gas from Iran for long as they have managed waivers on the US sanctions. However, as Pakistan is also showing intentions to move forward, Iran has already extended the 180-day deadline till September 2024 to Pakistan.

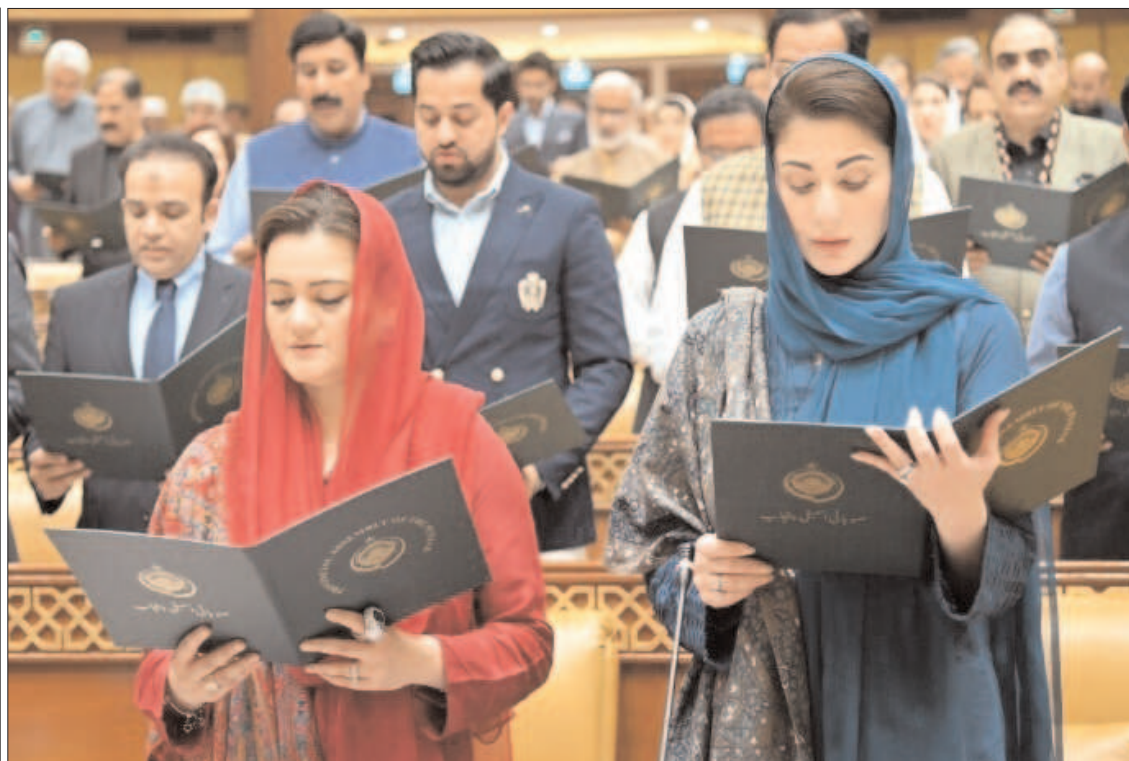
## Five injured in blast in D I Khan

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: At least five people were wounded on Friday after an explosive planted in a motorcycle near the central market in the Dranzada area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Dera Ismail Khan went off, officials said.

Yaqoob Khan, the spokesperson of Dera Ismail Khan District Police Officer Abdul Rauf, confirmed the number of injuries to media. He said the injured were moved to the District Headquarters Hospital and the condition of one was critical. "Four shops and three motorcycles in the locality suffered severe damages," Khan said, adding that a large contingent of police arrived at the scene soon after the blast was reported.

He added that the area had been cordoned off and an investigation was underway. Immediately after the incident, the KP government ordered a day-long closure of the district's Gomal University. "In pursuance of the directives of the Higher Education Department [...] the Gomal University will remain closed on February 23, 2024 (Friday)," a notification issued by the institution said.



LAHORE: PML-N leaders Marriyum Aurangzeb and Maryam Nawaz taking oath at the inaugural Punjab Assembly session.

# IMF looking forward to working with new govt

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has stated that it is looking forward to engaging with the new government on policies to ensure "macro-economic stability and prosperity for all of Pakistan's citizens".

The development comes a day after PTI Senator Ali Zafar told reporters that a letter would be sent from incarcerated party founder Imran Khan to the international lender urging it to call for an independent audit of the Feb 8 general elections before it continues talks with Islamabad. Zafar said the IMF, the European Union and other organisations had a charter that stated that good governance was needed for working in the country or giving a loan.

"The most important condition for good governance is democracy," he said, adding that the people's mandate was stolen "in the darkness of the night" during the Feb 8 polls. He said that if elections were not free and fair, any organisation would avoid giving a "loan" to such a country. "Because that loan will further burden the people," he said. He said the PTI wanted an audit of the election results and that condition would be put in front of the IMF.

It should be mentioned that Pakistan averted default last summer thanks to a short-term IMF bailout, but the programme expires in April and a new government will have to negotiate a long-term arrangement to keep the economy stable. During a press briefing held early on Friday, Julie Kozack, the head of the Communications Department at the IMF, was asked about whether Pakistan was on track to secure the third tranche of the stand-by agreement reached in June 2023. She was also asked whether the IMF

would entertain any letter by Imran calling for investigations into election irregularities. In her response, Kozack said: "On January 11, the IMF Executive Board approved the first review of the Stand-By Arrangement, with Pakistan that brought total disbursements under the Stand-By Arrangement to \$1.9 billion. The Stand-By Arrangement is supporting the authority's efforts to stabilise the economy and to, of course, with a strong focus on protecting the most vulnerable."

She said that during the tenure of the interim government, the authorities had "maintained economic stability". "This has been done through strict adherence to fiscal targets while also protecting the social safety net. It has been done by maintaining a tight monetary policy stance to control inflation and to continue to build up foreign exchange reserves," she said.

"We look forward to working with the new government on policies to ensure macroeconomic stability and prosperity for all of Pakistan's citizens. And I am going to leave it at that," she said. Asked to specifically comment on a possible letter by Imran, she said, "I'm not going to comment on ongoing political developments. So, I don't have anything else to add to what I just said."

Pakistan had secured a last-gasp \$3bn Stand-by Arrangement last year in June with an immediate disbursement of \$1.2bn to helping the country narrowly avoid default. On January 11, the IMF's executive board completed its first review of the country's economic reform programme, allowing for the release of \$700 million. This brought total disbursements under the programme to \$1.9 bn. The current IMF programme is expected to conclude in the second week of April.

## Journalists pillar of democracy, says Solangi

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Friday that journalists were the main pillar of democracy and freedom of expression in the country.

The minister made these remarks during his visit to the Press Gallery of the Parliament House. He also held one-on-one meetings with the journalists in the press gallery. The minister said journalists were a mirror for the society who inform the public about the facts.

Solangi said the caretaker government had taken steps to promote freedom of expression in the country, adding the caretaker government had fulfilled its responsibilities under the constitution and law by holding free, fair and transparent elections in the country. The journalists in the press gallery thanked Murtaza Solangi for visiting the press gallery. The journalists also appreciated Murtaza Solangi's role as Federal Information Minister during the caretaker government.

## Maryam Nawaz vacates NA-119 seat

F.P. Report

LAHORE: PML-N leader and the Punjab chief minister-elect, Maryam Nawaz, has announced her resignation from the National Assembly's NA-119 seat.

This decision comes amidst her nomination and subsequent decision to take up the office of chief minister of Punjab, marking a significant shift in the political landscape of the province.

Maryam Nawaz's resignation from NA-119 Lahore III was confirmed by sources close to the politician. In the February 8 general elections, Maryam Nawaz had won from this constituency with 83,855 votes against PTI-backed candidate Shehzad Farooq, who clinched 68,376 votes.

Among the other candidates for the seat were Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan's Muhammad Zaheer and Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) Iftikhar Shahid. In the general elections of 2018, PML-N's Ali Pervaiz Malik had won from this constituency with 113,265 votes, while PTI's Jamshed Iqbal Cheema secured the second spot.

The total population of this constituency is 916,577 with 520,829 registered voters. Of these, 277,172 are male and 243,657 female. Moreover, Maryam had secured her victory in the race for the Punjab Assembly's PP-159 constituency in Lahore, which she has decided to retain to become the chief minister of Punjab. In the tightly contested race, Maryam emerged victorious with 23,598 votes, while her competitor, PTI-backed independent candidate Maher Sharafat, trailed behind with 21,491 votes.

# Gohar 'removed' as PTI chairman: Marwat

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Sher Afzal Marwat Friday claimed that Barrister Gohar Ali Khan was "removed" as the chairman of the former ruling party over "unsatisfactory" performance.

His remarks came a day after Gohar announced that the PTI's next chairman nominee is Barrister Ali Zafar. The party's internal elections are scheduled to take place on March 3. The former ruling party's top post had been lying vacant for more than a month after not only the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), but the Supreme Court also declared its intra-party elections unlawful and stripped the party of its iconic bat symbol.

Therefore, Gohar, who became the chairman as a result of those elections,

was not the party head anymore. But as the party is set to hold its next elections, it has chosen someone else other than him. Talking to media, Marwat said: "Incompetence and poor performance are the reasons behind Gohar's removal as chairman. Barrister Gohar is a gentleman but his performance was not satisfactory."

Responding to a question, the PTI leader said that Gohar failed to meet the workers' expectations. "To run a party office, one has to be active all the time, but this did not happen." Following the election results, the party leadership's approach was not commendable, he said, adding that Gohar should have led the party after the polls but he failed.

A day earlier, Gohar, while announcing the nominee for the top slot said: "This time, our candidate

for party chairman will be Barrister Ali Zafar and Omar Ayub secretary general." He said everyone should do everything in their power to ensure that Zafar is elected as the party's next chairman.

PTI spokesperson Raoof Hasan had announced holding intra-party polls to elect the chairman, central and provincial organising bodies on February 5 but the party, however, postponed the elections. As per the PTI's new election schedule, candidates intending to contest the intra-party polls can submit their nomination papers on February 23 and 24, with the scrutiny being carried out on February 25.

Meanwhile, the final decisions on nomination papers will be announced on February 27 and the polling will be held on March 3 at the party's central office as well as provincial secretariats.





# Governor Sindh meets with Naqvi

LAHORE (APP): Governor Sindh Kamran Tessori met with the Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi and congratulated him on being elected as Chairman PCB.

The Governor Sindh lauded the performance of the CM on getting the public welfare projects for the

people of Punjab completed in a record time frame.

The CM while talking with the Governor Sindh acknowledged that the whole team in the Punjab government worked day and night and strived to their utmost to serve the people of Punjab in short span of 13 months only.

"InshaAllah, Pakistan will attain its destination of progress, prosperity and the future of our country is very bright," he added.

Mohsin Naqvi extended an invited to the Governor Sindh to watch a PSL match. Farooq Sattar and Mustafa Kamal were also present on the occasion.

## World Bank delegation visits GCU

LAHORE (APP): A delegation from the World Bank, led by Senior Economist Ms. Inga Afanasieva and Education Specialist Ms. Tashmina Rahman, visited the GC University Lahore along with the Higher Education Development Project (HEDP) team led by Project Director Dr. Mahmood Ul Hassan Butt.

The delegation engaged in discussions with Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Adnan Ahmad and university officials, including Prof. Dr. Hamid Mukhtar, Director of the Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC), Dr. Fouzia Shahin, Director of Academic Planning & External Linkages (AP&EL).

The World Bank and HEDP teams were briefed about the operations of GCU's administrative and academic departments, the implementation of the revised Undergraduate Education Policy (UEP), including student internship support mechanisms, and the role of HEDP in promoting academic reforms.



KARACHI: Senior Adviser to Federal Ombudsman Regional Office Karachi Syed Anwar Hyder having interaction with a woman during visit of Main Passport Office Saddar.

# PML-N respects opposition: Azma Bukhari

LAHORE (APP):Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz leader Azma Bukhari has said the PML-N respected the opposition and wanted to take them along.

Talking to the media outside the Punjab Assembly on Friday, she urged the PTI backed candidates to follow rule of business. She said:

"If the PTI backed candidates think that they will halt affairs of the house through negative tactics then it is their misunderstanding."

Azma Bukhari said the PML-N was present in the house with its allies with a strength of two-third majority. She said people of Punjab wanted relief and

solution to their problems as they had no interest in politics of hue and cry. The PML-N in Punjab would set new development era under the leadership of Maryam Nawaz, she said and added that with the grace of Allah, The Almighty, people would see progressive in Punjab.

# PM&DC Achieves Accreditation from World Federation for Medical Education (WFME)

## F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In a landmark achievement, the Pakistan Medical & Dental Council (PM&DC) has been granted accreditation by the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME). This recognition underscores PM&DC's commitment to ensuring the highest standards of medical education within Pakistan. With the remarkable feat of being granted the (WFME) Recognition Status for a remarkable tenure of 10 years.

PM&DC being WFME accredited all the Pakistani students become eligible to apply for ECFMG and USMLE. Achieving WFME Recognition will enable Pakistan's medical graduates to pursue postgraduate training and practice in other countries that require WFME recognition, such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

WFME has an official relationship with the WHO, representing the medical education and training of medical doctors worldwide. The WFME recognition delivers an independent transparent and rigorous method of ensuring that accreditation of medical school worldwide and is at an internationally acceptable and high standard. WFME evaluated the compliance of accreditation agencies with defined criteria.

The accreditation from WFME signifies that PM&DC's medical education programs meet international benchmarks for quality and excellence. It reflects the council's dedication to providing a robust and globally competitive medical education framework for aspiring healthcare professionals in Pakistan.

The PM&DC team under the leadership of President Rizwan Taj undertook the WFME recognition process and achieved this historic milestone.

President PM&DC Prof. Dr. Rizwan Taj in a statement, expressed that "We are thrilled to receive recognition from WFME, a testament to our continuous efforts to elevate medical education standards in the country.

This achievement opens new avenues for collaboration and ensures that our medical graduates are well-equipped to meet interna-



tional healthcare standards."

Dr. Rizwan added that in pursuit of goals, PM&DC required some direction and long-term relationship with global organizations such as the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME). Their guidance and support would immensely contribute to improving medical education standards in our country.

Prof. Dr. Rizwan congratulated all the nation on this landmark achievement said, "WFME's recognition underscores that the quality of medical education in Pakistan adheres to global standards. This will empower our students with the opportunity to pursue their careers anywhere in the world. He appreciated all the team who worked tirelessly for achieving this Goal. He emphasised that the Minister of Health NHS&C Secretary Health, Surgeon General, PM&DC Council members. He also appreciated Mr. Farzan Ali International Consultant on Collaboration and recognition for his guidance and tireless efforts in expediting the complete recognition process in record time.

He appreciated the hard work of Medical Colleges and hospitals namely Shifa College of Medicine, Khyber Medical College Peshawar, University of Lahore, Agha Khan Medical College Karachi and Army Medical College Rawalpindi for their support and role in conducting workshops, and inspections during the formal evaluation of WFME. He congratulated the entire staff of PM&DC for their tireless efforts in achieving this accreditation.

He added that this recognition is a testament to PM&DC's firm commitment to the highest standards in medical education and accreditation. As part of this

recognition, all the 185 existing medical colleges in Pakistan will become WFME accredited and the new medical colleges that will be set up in the coming 10 years will automatically become WFME accredited.

The recognition will further enhance the quality and standards of medical education in Pakistan by aligning them with global best practices and benchmarks. He added that PM&DC will continue to work closely with international partners and stakeholders to ensure the compliance and continuous improvement of the medical education in the country.

tion in Pakistan by aligning them with global best practices and benchmarks. He added that PM&DC will continue to work closely with international partners and stakeholders to ensure the compliance and continuous improvement of the medical education in the country.

## JOB IN FRONTIER CORPS KPK (South)

1. Headquarter Frontier Corps KP (South) is hiring Male Psychologist on contract basis Specifications are as under:-

a. Gender	Male
b. Age	22-40 Yrs
c. Domicile	KPK
d. Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Msc Psychology / Clinical Psychology (from Government / Government Recognized institute)</li><li>Candidates with higher qualification like, M.Phil, Phd or Diploma holders will be preferred.</li></ul>
e. Experience	Minimum 05 years with a well reputed Government / Private institute (Greater experience will be preferred)
f. Language proficiency	English, Urdu and Pushto
g. Miscellaneous	Good Communication and Computer Skills
h. Document / Degrees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Attested Photocopies:-<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Computerized National Identity Card - 4 Nos</li><li>Domicile - 4 Nos</li><li>Educational Degrees - 4 Nos</li><li>Additional degrees /Diploma - 4 Nos</li><li>Experience Certificate - 4 Nos</li><li>Passport size photographs - 4 Nos</li></ul></li></ul>

### 2. Ineligibility Criteria

- > Convicted or wanted by Court of Law/ Law Enforcing Agencies in any illegal act.
- > Dismissed from a Government / Private Institute previously on medical grounds or forgery of documents or disciplinary issue.
- > Found forging Computerize National Identity Card, Educational degree or concealing personal data.

3. Desirous Candidates to send their attested relevant documents & CV by 28 February 2024 at following address.

> **Scouts Welfare Pharmacy Headquarter Frontier Corps KPK (South) New Cantonment Dera Ismail Khan**

PID(P# 051/2023)

**Contact No. 0336-4478301 , Email: cadetamcol@yahoo.com**

## GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN MINISTRY OF INTERIOR NADRA RHO PESHAWAR CORRIGENDUM

### Invitation for Open Auction

Reference: PID(I) No. 4990/23 above captioned Tender Notice published in the Newspapers following amendment is being incorporated: -

#### FOR

#### Tender Items be read as below

Open Auction of the following 20 x used/unserviceable items  
Items can be checked/inspected on working days during office hours from **18th January, 2024 to 5th February, 2024**

Open auction activity will be held on **6th February 2024** at 1130 HRS at NADRA store/plot.

#### READ

Open Auction of the following **10 x used/unserviceable items**

Sr#	Item Name	Total Qty	Sr#	Item Name	Total Qty
1.	Server (Power-edge)	25	6.	LCDs	116
2.	Stabilizer	8	7.	Token Printer (Dot-matrix)	51
3.	UPS	90	8.	Waiting Bench 3 x Seater (Plastic)	50
4.	UPS Batteries (Dry Small)	150	9.	Sofa	21
5.	DVR	15	10.	Tyre	125

Items can be checked/inspected on working days during office hours from **18th February, 2024 to 5th March, 2024**.

Open auction activity will be held on **5th March, 2024 at 1130 HRS** at NADRA store/plot. Only registered and active tax payer bidders will be allowed to participate.

Assistant Director (Administration)  
(Abdul Samad Afridi)  
NADRA Regional Head Office, Peshawar  
EOBI Building Phase 5, Hayatabad, Peshawar. Phone: 091-9217840-41

PID(I)5072/23

# Murtaza attaches great hopes with Murad Ali Shah as CM

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Friday said the Sindh Assembly Member will take oath on February 24, and a Jiyala will be the Chief Minister of Sindh and we will continue to serve without prejudice.

He said this while addressing the foundation stone laying ceremony of the sewerage system rehabilitation project from Teen Hatti to Dakhkhana Liaquatabad. He said that the way the people of Sindh have expressed their confidence in the Pakistan People's Party, they will continue to serve one of our workers will fulfil this confidence.

He said that if the leadership of the PPP is working, then it will be seen, Insha Allah, the next three and a half years will be better for this city. He said that we are working in every town and every district of Karachi under the leadership of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

He said that there are sewerage problems in Liaquatabad which are going to be solved and will com-

plete all such projects. It is the commitment of PPP and Asif Ali Zardari that all the promises made in our manifesto will be fulfilled, wherever people reside, we will continue working for them.

Deputy Mayor Karachi Salman Abdullah Murad, Mayor's representative for political affairs Karamullah Waqasi, Deputy Parliamentary Leader of People's Party in City Council Dil Muhammad, Juman Darwan and other elected public representatives of People's Party from Central District were also present on this occasion.

Barrister Murtaza Wahab said that work is being done on the sewerage project in this area of the Central district at a cost of about Rs 370 million, pipelines of 36 and 42 inches in diameter are being laid at a distance of about one kilometer from Teen Hatti to Liaquatabad

Dakhkhana.

On completion of the project, all the sewage which was earlier taken via Altaf Ali Bareilvi Road to Treatment Plant-I will now directly reach Treatment Plant S-III through Lyari River. This will also remove the complaint of sewage overflow in the area and this project will be completed in one year. The population of this area will get better drainage facilities and the sewage system in the area will have the requirement till 2050, he added.

Barrister Murtaza Wahab said that we are working in Liaquatabad without discrimination, as every day the road of this main street of Liaquatabad used to be affected due to the sewage system. PPP believes in the politics of service without discrimination and, after the election, we went to Suba Nagar and Isa Nagri in East

District. The foundation stone of such a project has been laid while more such projects will be started in seven more katchi abadies as well, he said. He said that the water supply and drainage system are being corrected and improved in all the districts and the construction and development in Karachi will continue in the same way.

He said that the work on sewage treatment projects is also going on rapidly and we are solving the problem of its funding, soon we will solve the problems of water supply by making significant progress in water recycling and desalination. He said that where there is a lack of resources, we are trying to work under public-private partnership to run closed and inactive institutions, if we want to develop the city, then we will have to make important decisions.

## NOTICE FOR AUCTION OF MINOR MINERALS BLOCKS OF DISTRICT UPPER CHITRAL

The District Auction Committee of District Upper Chitral invites applications from registered contractors of Minor Minerals for participation in auction and grant of Minor Mineral lease of the following 07 identified blocks as One Unit of the whole District Upper Chitral under provisions of Section-78 Sub Section (3) of The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mines & Mineral, 2017 Act for a period of one year on the basis of "As is where is" against reserve prices of **Rs.5,610,000/-** and call deposits of **Rs. 1,402,500/-** in office of the Deputy Commissioner Upper Chitral on **07/03/2024**. In case of non-auction due to any reason, the next date of auction will be announced by the District Auction Committee.

S.No.	Location & Extant of Area	Acreage
1	Reshun Block District Chitral Upper	132.38
2	Green Lasht Block District Chitral Upper	247.33
3	Krui Junali Block District Chitral Upper	443.96
4	Charun Pul Block District Chitral Upper	669.18
5	Kosht Block District Chitral Upper	185.7
6	Mastuj Block District Chitral Upper	449.42
7	Mulkhow Block District Chitral Upper	142.97

### TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Only those persons or firms registered with Directorate General Mines & Minerals Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as Minor Minerals Contractors can participate in auction. Interested parties can register themselves in the Directorate General Mines & Minerals Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- The registered parties/individuals shall submit application form complete in all respect along, with Call Deposit at the cost of **Rs. 10000/-** (Ten thousand) application fee non-refundable on any working day at least three (03) days before the auction. Last date for submission of application form is **04/03/2024**.
- Blacklisted/Defaulter persons or those persons who are not registered with Directorate General Mines and Minerals are not allowed to participate in the auction.
- The successful bidder can visit and check the advertised areas before the auction for their satisfaction. The sketches of the areas are available for the interested parties in the office of the Assistant Director Mineral Development Chitral.
- Call deposit shall be deposited under account No. **0066-2008140092** and application fee under account No. **0066-2008209319** in any branch of Bank of Khyber.
- The registered applicants/parties shall also submit attested copies of CNIC, income tax registration certificate (NTN) and partnership deed/article & memorandum of association along with evidence of paid-up capital (if applicant is partnership firm/company).
- The successful bidders shall deposit 1/4th of the total bid money as security within three days from the date of auction, otherwise call deposit shall be forfeited in favour of the Government and the bid of second highest bidder shall be considered as highest bid, subject to condition that the difference between the first and the second highest bids is not more than 10 percent of the highest bid.
- The successful bidder shall demarcate his leased area within fifteen days from the date of issuance of Allotment Letter on his own expenses.
- The successful bidder shall be bound to pay Excise duty to Commissionerate of Mines or its approved excise duty collection contractor on government notified rates.
- The successful bidder before issuance of allotment letter shall be bound to deposit withholding tax under Rule-236-A of ITO 2011 with Income Tax Department and Professional Tax as per rules to the Excise & Taxation Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- The successful bidder will be bound to pay surface rent to the land owner under the provisions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mines & Minerals Act, 2017.
- The successful bidder shall be responsible to work in leased area strictly in accordance with the provisions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mines & Minerals Act, 2017.
- The successful bidder shall be bound to use only verified challans for transportation of minor minerals duly verified by the concerned Assistant Director. Transportation without a verified transit challan shall be considered as un-authorized transportation and action under section-56 of the ibid Act shall be initiated against the lessee as well as other offenders.
- The Licensing Authority reserves the right to accept or reject any bid with cogent reason.
- The successful bidder shall be bound to carry out mining activities in the granted area/ blocks as per the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mining of Minor Minerals from River Bed Rules-2022 as directed by Honorable Peshawar High Court Peshawar in its decision dated 15/06/2023.
- Other information in this regard can be obtained from the office of the undersigned during office time i.e. 09:00 AM to 05:00 PM on any working day.

Assistant Director (Tech)  
Mineral Development Chitral

INF(P)  
343/2024

# PU clash: ATC remands 18 students in police custody

LAHORE (APP): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Friday handed over 18 students, involved in a violent clash between two student groups at the Punjab University New Campus, to police on 7-day physical remand.

Earlier, the police produced students, including Sajjad Khan, Abdullah, Wali Khan, Saif Ullah, before ATC Judge Muhammad Naveed Iqbal.

The investigation officer submitted that the accused were involved in a violent clash which took place at the Punjab University New Campus on Wednesday. He submitted that several students were injured in the incident. He requested the court to grant physical remand of the accused for recovery of weapons and investigations.

However, the defence counsel opposed the remand plea and submitted that the police had arrested his clients in a baseless case, requesting to discharge them from the case.

The court, after hearing arguments of the parties, handed over the accused to police on 7-day physical remand and ordered for producing them on expiry of the remand term.

Muslim Town police had registered a case against the accused following the incident.



# Another series of rains, strong winds, snowfall in KP

## F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Another series of rains, strong winds and snowfall in upper districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is likely to start from February 25, an official of the Meteorological Department said here Friday.

In this connection, Provincial Disasters Management Authority (PDMA) has issued a message to all district administrations to be alert. In view of the rains and snowfall, the district administration has been instructed to take precautionary measures. DG, PDMA Muhammad Qaiser Khan said here.

Landslides in upper districts due to snowfall and

rains and directives have been issued to district administration to ensure availability of small and heavy machinery. DG PDMA told media men. He said in the event of a storm, people should stay away from power lines, dilapidated buildings and structures, sign boards and billboards.

Tourists and local population in sensitive upper areas are instructed to be aware of weather conditions and take precautionary measures, he added. He said, in sensitive districts, messages to the district administration should be conveyed to the local population in local languages.

In any emergency situa-

tion, all concerned organizations should be alert in the maintenance of road links and in case of road closure, alternative routes should be provided for traffic, he directed the concerned department. Passengers should be warned in advance on provincial and national highways in sensitive areas. He said, during this time, ensure the availability of emergency services personnel and tourists should be informed about the weather situation. He said rains and snowfall are likely to continue intermittently till February 27 while tourists should take special precautions while traveling to these areas.

## KPRA to conduct registration drive from 26th

## F.P Report

PESHAWAR: To facilitate taxpayers at their doorsteps the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority has announced to conduct a two-week-long registration drive throughout the province starting from Monday, February 26 till March 9 this year.

On the directives of Director General KPRA Fouzia Iqbal, teams from KPRA will conduct door-to-door visits to the business premises of people associated with the services sector to provide on-the-spot registration facilities to them.

"Taxpayers are our stakeholders and their utmost facilitation is our top priority. We are con-

ducting the registration drive to facilitate our people and to ease their jobs. Anyone associated with the services sector can take benefit of the Registration Drive and can instantly register his/her business with KPRA," said Fouzia Iqbal in her message. She added that KPRA teams will personally visit the business premises, a step to facilitate them in the best possible manner.

The teams of KPRA will be available to provide on-the-spot registration or any other assistance relating to registration, tax payments, and monthly returns filing with KPRA. People can also directly contact KPRA through WhatsApp, telephone, or visit its website

to get any information regarding registration or sale tax on services.

Under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sales Tax on Services Act 2022, Sales tax on services is mandatory for every business owner providing services in the province. To pay sales tax on services it is obligatory to register the business first and this registration drive is aimed at providing the facility to the business community of KP at their doorstep. All they need to do is to cooperate with the teams visiting their business premises. Your cooperation in this regard will be instrumental in the development of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and our future generation

## New coalition to redress acute economic crisis

PESHAWAR (APP): Political analysts and academicians have pinned their hopes on the upcoming coalition government for redressal of the acute economic crisis currently faced by the country.

The 12th general elections conducted on February 8, 2024 has failed in producing a clear winner and no single political party is in a position to form government on the basis of its own parliamentary strength.

Although the independent candidates allied with the Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI) has won more seats in the National Assembly, followed by the former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif led Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan people's Party (PPP) and Muthahida Qaumi Movement (MQM).

For the formation of the federal government, PML-N and PPP following days of negotiations have reached an agreement to form a coalition government. The agreement between both political parties is being seen as a breakthrough towards the forma-

tion of a stable government at national level and political stability in the country.

In his comment on the situation, Professor Dr. A.Z. Hilali, a former chairman of the Department of Political Science at University of Peshawar (UoP) said that as no political party has won absolute majority, it needed to form a government on its own. So the future government may have to contend with the issues of political and economic instabilities. It may have to be focused on navigating internal politics and solidarity and unity of the nation, which is a challenging, but approachable task.

The Prime Minister designate, Shahbaz Sharif had recently before the general elections had headed the coalition government of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) for a period of 16 months and also served three times as Chief Minister of the largest province of Punjab is experienced in running a coalition government. Similarly, his coalition partner former President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari is also known

for successful operation of coalition governments.

The combination of senior politicians like former President of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari, Mian Mohammad Nawaz Sharif and Mian Mohammad Shahbaz Sharif would ultimately prove successful and deliver, said Adnan Khan, a local businessman.

He called for imposition of all those small and medium business concerns and individuals with earnings under tax-net through a fixed tax on them and granting of relief to the general public through arrest of the current inflation rate.

According to Professor A. Z. Hilali, Pakistan is a nation already beset by severe economic hardship and deep political division. The economy, he said, is in dire straits with rapidly weakening currency and high inflation rate where 30 to 40% of the population is living under poverty. Nonetheless, this is an appropriate time for the political government to reduce the frustration of the people and economic burden on the poor people.

## Peshawar Dental College celebrates 'White Coat' ceremony

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar Dental College (PDC) hosted its prestigious White Coat Ceremony, a significant event attended by esteemed figures in the medical field, dedicated faculty members, enthusiastic students, and parents.

The event featured key personalities, including CEO Dr. Iftikhar Husain, Prof. Dr. Hafeez ur Rahman, Dean, PMC, Prof. Dr. Saeed Anwar Executive Director, Prof. Dr. Mohammad Aman Khan, Principal, PMC, and Prof. Dr. Shamim Akhtar, Principal, PDC. Dr. Saba Siraj skillfully managed the proceedings as the stage secretary.

Addressing the audience, Prof. Dr. Hafeez ur Rahman extended heartfelt congratulations to the students, commending their achievement in gaining admission to the esteemed dental profession. He emphasized the importance of cultivating a positive attitude of gratitude, professional competence, ethical values, and a profound love for learning while maintaining respect for teachers.

Prof. Dr. Shamim Akhtar highlighted PDC's commitment to providing state-of-the-art facilities and attitudinal training to produce well-mannered doctors. The ceremony also witnessed Dr. Nasih Mottahir administering the oath to the budding dentists. During the ceremony, Dr. Moshayyada Durani, Dr. Laaleena, Dr. Mah Noor Fatima, Dr. Gulsanga Shams and Dr. Ayesha Tahir shared their experiences and memories with the audience. The White Coat Ceremony not only marked a significant milestone in the academic journey of the students but also underscored PDC's dedication to nurturing skilled and compassionate professionals in the field of dentistry.

## Two accused arrested

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: As many as two alleged accused involved in illegal currency and hundi business have been arrested in a major operation conducted by the team of the FIA Commercial Banking Circle Peshawar on Friday.

According to details, on the directive of the Director Peshawar Zone Nisar Tanoli, crackdown continues against elements involved in hundi business. He said 2 suspects arrested in raid operations were identified as Asif Khan and Basit Ali.

The accused were arrested from Bathkela Malakand and Dargai Bazar, the official of the FIA said. He said during the raid, domestic and foreign currency was recovered from the accused. A total of 19,97,000 Pakistani rupees and 700 Saudi riyals were recovered from the accused, FIA official said, adding, Hundi reference and records related to foreign currency were also recovered from the two alleged accused.



PESHAWAR: Activists of Pakistan Rah-e-Haq party holding a protest to show solidarity with Palestinian people.

## EOC, PPC ink MoU to spread awareness on children's diseases

## F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Special Secretary Health Department and Coordinator Emergency Operation Center (EOC) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Abdul Basit has said that the role of media was of prime importance in creating awareness regarding keeping our children from various chronic diseases including the polio.

He was addressing a function at Peshawar Press Club (PPC) here on Friday wherein a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was also signed between the Emergency Operation Center KP and PPC with regard to creating awareness in society about the consequences of various diseases among children.

The MoU was signed by Special Secretary Health, Abdul Basit and President Peshawar Press Club, Arshad Aziz Malik. On the occasion Communication Officer of the UNICEF, Shadab Younus, vice president PPC Tayyab Usman, General Secretary Irfan Musazai, former PPC president Muhammad Riaz and Chairman PPC Health Committee, Irshad Ali were present. Under the agreement, the PPC would also be provided with facilities including the inverter air-conditions, printers,



photo copiers and other necessary equipment.

General Secretary PPC, Irfan Musazai on the occasion said the incumbent body of the Peshawar Press Club in assistance with various organizations was ensuring provision of all missing facilities to the press club.

President PPC, Arshad Aziz Malik said Peshawar Press Club was a prestigious institution for the journalists of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa adding that around 600 journalists attached with different electronic and print media offices were optimizing the various

aspects and affairs of the province in a true manner. Special Secretary Health KP, Abdul Basit on the occasion thanked the Peshawar Press Club members and said the role of media was very crucial in creating awareness among people in every sphere of life. He expressed the hope the journalists' community will continue its efforts in safeguarding the children from the chronic polio disease through their journalistic responsibility. He also assured every possible assistance to the Peshawar Press Club for upgradation of its services.

## HMC achieves milestone by successfully dealing with 115 cases of thrombolysis

## F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Department of Neurology, Hayatabad Medical Complex (HMC) has crossed the milestone of successfully dealing with more than 115 cases of thrombolysis.

The event held on Friday was in addition to Professor Zahid Aman, Dean of Khyber Girls Medical College? hospital Administration, attended by clinical faculty and patients recovering from stroke participated. The purpose of the event was not only to celebrate a milestone in the healing of more than 115 cases of thrombolysis, but also to celebrate the lives saved with the tireless efforts of the neuro team and to create preventive awareness.

Dr. Mian Ayaz-ul-Haq, in-charge Neurology Department, said HMC was the first hospital in the public sector of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan to have purchased the EltiPlace product. This honor also goes to HMC that this hospital has treated so many stroke patients in Pakistan. He said that expert and regularly trained doctors were appointed in

HMC for stroke care. There were 47 lakh 58 thousand 762 people in Peshawar while there were 40 million people in the entire KPK for whom this method of treatment was very limited.

Since HMC was now providing this facility and HMC as a medium through which telecommunication channels were created, the concept of telemedicine should be introduced to promote treatment. He said that the best way to reduce the risk of stroke was to control the blood pressure and sugar. Dr. Mian Ayaz ul Haq appreciated the efforts of his team and thanked the administration, medicine dept, Radiology, Cardiology, Physiotherapy depts and Martin Dave saying with their support more than 115 stroke patients have been successfully treated. This is the highest number of cases benefited by EltiPlace injection in any government hospital in Pakistan in a year.

He said our team organized a program and with the efforts of the hospital management, we made this journey a success and we hope to benefit more and more patients through this injection

in the near future. Hospital Director Dr. Faisal Shehzad & Medical Director Professor Dr. Shehzad Akbar and Dean KGMC Prof. Dr. Zahid Aman Sahib said that this is the strategic plan of our hospital that we have to further develop the hospital under which Cardiac Surgery, Neurology? Pulmonology and Ortho and Spine Surgery facilities were established in the hospital. The hospital administration promoted the stroke services with the joint advice of Dr. Mian Ayaz ul Haq Neurologist and Dr. Zahid Aslam Awan Cardiologist started work on thrombolysis procedure for stroke patients with their help.

Thanks to which more than 115 patients have been successfully treated after the tireless efforts of the team. Alhamdulillah In the near future, we will try to make neurology, neurosurgery and ICU facilities available to patients under one roof. In this regard, we were in constant contact with the government and we tried our best to get thrombolysis to include this treatment in the health card, so that the patients could get absolutely free of cost treatment.

## Call for showcasing KP's historical significance through digital media

PESHAWAR (APP): Carrying a primitive history, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is a unique province that witnessed oldest civilizations including Gandhara requiring proper projection on digital media to attract foreign investment imperative for rural development.

Being a gateway to the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa having about 3,000 years old history carried a unique geographical location, archaeological heritage and primitive history that saw onslaught of invaders who marched to India through historic Khyber Pass. Bakhtzada Khan, senior research officer, archeology department told APP on Friday that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa carried one of the richest histories in the subcontinent where followers of almost all religions had come and stayed for accomplishment of their political, trade and business objectives.

Resultantly, different religions including Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism and Christianity gained roots for many years in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa before Islam. He said the discovery of human remains in Soan Valley in Pakistani Punjab province as evidence of the stones and bones' tools dating from around (2 million to 90,000 years before present) of the Early Paleolithic period had signified that people were living here.

"Sangaro cave's excavations at village Mian Khan in Mardan district conducted by renowned archeolo-

gists Ahmad Hasan Dhani and Farid Khan in 1963 had revealed the presence of people's remains in the Middle Paleolithic period (9,000 to 27,000 years before present) in KP." These people were living in stone-made caves, who fulfilled their food's needs mostly from hunting of birds and animals.

The discoveries of primitive rocks, bones and hunting tools dating back of Mesolithic or Middle Stone Age (10,000 to 8,600 years before present) during excavations at Khanpur in Haripur district and Sangaro Cave signified presence of humans' life in Swat and Dir where every stone speaks about their life style, culture, livelihood and civilizations, he informed. It was found that people started making clay and stones made pots, crockery and others related utensils for kitchen during Neolithic period or commonly known as new stone-age dating back some 8,000 years before as evident from excavations of historic Mehgar Gharh in Balochistan of the Indus Civilization, Rehman Dheri DI Khan and Sheri Khan Tarkai Swabi.

These strong evidence had magnified that people were living in the stone and mud houses in those primordial era. The graves of Aryans invaders were also discovered at Aligram Swat, Sangota Chitral and Timergara Dir Lower dating back of the Dark Ages period of around 2,000BC. "The semi-nomadic Aryans entered KP from the Afghanistan side and settled along

rivers Swat, Gomal, Kurram, and Kabul before migrating to India. The Gandhara civilization gained roots in the province after Persians conquered it in 6th century BC and made it one of the provinces of the Achaemenid Empire."

He said reading and writing in Swat, Dir, Mardan, Charsadda, Peshawar and Malakand, famous for Gandhara civilization, started as evidence of the inscriptions mostly made on stones by Iranians. In 327 BC, Alexander the Great invaded the subcontinent through Khyber Pass and faced tough resistance while trying to subdue Youafzai tribesmen at Swat and Kunar valleys.

Alexander also resided in Taxila where he met a bold young man by the name of Chandragupta Maurya, who was an exiled prince of Magadha in eastern India and Maurya decided to forge an empire in Alexander's footsteps. However, his dream remained unfulfilled after the death of Alexander. Later, Alexander's general Seleucus established rule in India's territories. The Indo Greeks, a group of about 39 kings and queens laid the foundation of its own culture and introduced Greek art style still existed in KP besides promoted Buddhism.

In 1001 AD, Mahmud Ghaznavi defeated Jayapala, the last Hindu Shahi King and subsequently Islam was spread in subcontinent including KP. In 1505, Zaheeruddin Babar, the founder of the Mughal Empire had entered

Khyber Pass and took today's Kohat, Bannu districts before defeating the last Lodhi King and becoming Emperor of Delhi.

After uniting Pathans, he said Babar paved the way for Mughal rule over KP till the 18th century and after his demise, Humayun succeeded him. Later, Sher Shah Suri, a pathan commander took control of the region from him. However, Humayun Khan regained the throne after fifteen years and his son Akbar succeeded him. He said Khushal Khan Khattak who had formed an alliance with the Mughals during the reign of Emperor Shah Jahan was opposed by Yusufzais. However, King Shah Jahan appointed Khushal Khattak as tribal chief to assist him.

Khattaks broke ties with the Mughal Empire during King Aurangzeb's rule due to a conflict with a Mughal Governor over toll collection. In the wake of Aurangzeb's death in 1707, the Mughal empire split into competing kingdoms and Nadir Shah, a Persian ruler, gained control over the province with support from the Pathans' local commanders. Bakhtzada said Ahmad Shah Abdali had launched several campaigns from Peshawar into many places across India.

However, Abdali's reign (1747 - 1772) was temporarily interrupted when the Marathas invaded in early 1750s, but he succeeded to regain control over KP in 1761. Later the province came under control of Sikhs

in 1818 under the command of Maharaja Ranjit Singh after he took over Peshawar in 1923. He said Sayyid Ahmad Shah stood against the Sikhs, however he was defeated at Balakot due to lack of unity between Pathans tribes. Following Maharaja Ranjit Singh's death in 1839, the Sikhs fought amongst themselves and ultimately the British under the guise of East India Company established their rule in KP in 1849.

He said a Wazir from Waziristan Mirza Ali Khan had spearheaded a civil disobedience movement against British in 1936 but failed. The Khilafat and Hijrat movements also took place in the region but were not successful. Another popular freedom movement also called non violent movement was launched by freedom fighter Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his brother Dr. Khan Sahib and later KP was granted self-government in 1937.

"The history of Pakistan would not be completed without mentioning the outstanding role of KP's people and students of Islamia College Peshawar during Pakistan Movement," said Muhammad Younas Khan, Chairman Pakistan Studies Department while talking to APP. KP people accorded warmest welcome to father of the nation Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and voted in favour of All India Muslim League when he came here in 1946, he added.

"The Muslim League secured maximum seats in 1946 election and after that historic victory nobody

could stop independence movement of Pakistan from this province," he added. In July 1947 Referendum, he said Muslim League achieved landslide victory in KP by securing over 200,000 votes and people announced to become part of Pakistan.

Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his brother Khan Sahib (first Chief Minister of KP) had urged the Government to give the province a name that reflects the Pathan identity. However, the province was given the name of North West Frontier Province (NWFP) after rejecting Pashtunistan's name as being too controversial.

Later, the province was renamed as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2010 during PPP-ANP's coalition government under 18th constitutional amendment. Bakhtzada Khan said these historical significance of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa if properly showcased on digital media through small videos, films and pictures could make it a hub of international tourists.

He said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has plenty of sites of Gandhara civilizations especially in Takhtbhai Mardan and Swat districts that required proper protection on social media platforms imperative for attracting foreign investment through tourism. The experts said tourism was a major gifted source that could brought turnaround to the province economy and positive changes in people lives if properly showcased on digital media under a Govt patronage.





## In brief

### Mubashir, Faizan defend their PhD theses

#### F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Mubashir Ahmad, PhD Scholar & Lecturer in Department of Pharmacy, University of Malakand has successfully defended his PhD thesis under the supervision of Dr Syed Wadood Ali Shah, Assistant Professor, Department of Pharmacy, University of Malakand. The faculty members congratulated Dr Mubashir Ahmad & Research Supervisor, Dr Syed Wadood Ali Shah for PhD Public Defense. Meanwhile, Faizan ul Haq, PhD Scholar in the Department of Pharmacy, University of Malakand has also successfully defended his PhD thesis under the supervision of Dr Mohammad Shoaib, Associate Professor, Department of Pharmacy, SBBU Sheringal and Dr. Muhammad Naseer Abbas, Assistant Professor, Department of Pharmacy, KUST Kohat. The faculty members congratulated Dr Faizan ul Haq & Research Supervisor, Dr Mohammad Shoaib for successful PhD Public Defense.

### Anti-polio drive reviewed

#### F.P. Report

KHAR: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Bajaur, Muhammad Anwar-ul-Haq has directed concerned authorities to utilize resources and achieve targets of anti-polio campaign starting from March 3. He was chairing a meeting that was convened to discuss preparation for upcoming anti-polio campaign. The meeting was also attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner, Ali Raza, Assistant Commissioners, District Health Officer, EPI Coordinator and representatives of police and local government. The meeting was also briefed about the preparations and strategy devised to achieve targets of campaign. Chairing the meeting, DC directed concerned department to work with cohesion and make efforts to make the campaign a success. He also directed proper utilization of resources to conduct the campaign and ensure vaccination of each and every targeted child. He also administered vaccine to children and inaugurated the anti-polio campaign.

### Hashish recovered

#### F.P. Report

SWABI: Local police here Friday foiled a bid of smuggling and recovered hashish from two drug peddlers near Kalu Khan. According to District Police Office, a team led by Inspector Munsif Khan recovered intercepted a motorcycle and recovered 2.4 kilogram hashish. The smugglers identified as Shoulak and Jehanzaib, residents of Tirah were arrested on the spot. Case has been registered and investigation is underway. In another incident, a man was stabbed in Panipier village of district Swabi. The injured was rushed to hospital but he succumbed on way to hospital.

### Criminals held

SARGODHA (INP): The district police busted 20 criminals, here on Friday. Police teams during an ongoing crackdown raided at different localities and busted namely-- Ahmed, Naeem, Nadeem, Wasim, Waqar, Shahid, Muzamil, Khan Muhammad and others besides recovering of 300 liters of liquor, 2kg of hashish, 1kg of opium, 12 pistols, 233 bullets and valuables worth in millions of rupees from them.

# Train crushes youth while using mobile phone

## F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Trian crushed a young boy when he was utilizing mobile phone to sit in railway line near Hafizabad station. According to details, Zaman son of Muhammad Younas was engaged in talking on mobile phone to use hand free near railway station Hafizabad.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Express coming from Rawalpindi was crushed him. As result of which, he lost his breath on the spot. Police city Hafizabad and Railway police rushed to the spot and handed over dead body of Zaman to his parents after necessary formalities.

**Defeated candidate places fabricated allegations:** Independent candidate for PP-37 Hafizabad-I, Chaudhary Amanullah Sandhu has said that my rival candidate Mian Mamoon Jaffar Tarar is leveling baseless and falls blames after defeating election. While addressing a press conference at Hafizabad, he said that I neither met nominated candidate of PMLN for PP-37 Mian Shahid Hussain

Bhatti during election campaign nor received anything from Mian Shahid Hussain Bhatti at all.

I was himself candidate for the PP-37 against Mian Shahid Hussain Bhatti and Mamoon Jaffar Tarar while people of the constituency were elected Mian Shahid Hussain to pose confidence over him according to their own choice, he said and added that Mian Mamoon Jaffar Tarar was lose confidence of people of his constituency because he failed to deliver the masses during his five-year tenure as MPA.

**Polio eradication campaign to kicks off from 26th:** Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad has said that five-day anti-polio campaign will start from February, 26 and drops of polio vaccine and an additional doze of vitamin 'A' will be administer to more than 238000 children below to five-year-old in the district.

While addressing the meeting of District Anti-Polio Committee Hafizabad held to review arrangements to make the anti-polio campaign result-

oriented and successful, she said that health department was constituted 998 anti-polio teams to visit door to door for giving polio vaccine and vitamin 'A' while special arrangements were also made to administer polio drops to children at hospitals, Railway stations, bus stands, markets and other public places so that no children could be left without polio vaccine in the district.

AC Hafizabad Munawar Hussain, AC Coordination Ishfaq Rasul, CEO Health Dr. Umer Sharif Rathor, CEO Education Sohail Azhar Khan, representative of WHO Dr. Touqeer Ahmad and other members of the committee attended the meeting. DC Directed the officers concerned to ensure door marking and finger marking of children after giving polio drops and vitamin 'A' to children.

She appealed the ulema, traders, teachers, parents, media personnel and civil society to cooperate with polio teams for administering polio drops to hundred percent target children so that children could be saved from crimpling disease of polio.

# Blood feud resolved in Lower Dir

## F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: A local jirga of elders on Friday succeeded to resolve a blood feud among three rival families over a property ownership dispute in the Ramial area of Adenzai. Two persons including Muhammad Nazir Mishwani and Farhan Khan were killed and one Nadar Khan was injured during a clash among the parties on the Chakdara bypass road several months ago.

The feud had put peace in the area at stake as the rivals belonged to influential tribes. The Adenzai Islahi Jirga led by its chief Khawaja Faizul Ghafoor started efforts to end the enmity and it finally brought the parties to negotiate. A function in this regard was held at Chakdara with Brigadier Sanaullah of the Pakistan army in the chair.

The jirga members, elders of the rival parties, government officials and political activists attended the function. The function was addressed by the jirga's chief Khawaja Faizul Ghafoor, Maulana Azizul Haq, Abbas Durani and Noor Shad Ali Bacha. The rivals forgave each other unconditionally and promised before the jirga to live like brothers in future. Talking to local journalists Malik Khan Badshah Mishwani from one side and Ali Rehman from the other, thanked the jirga

members for resolving the matter. They said that petty issues always led to enmity putting the tribes in trouble. They also promised to keep the jirga's decision and would never violate it.

**JUI-F protest rally:** The Jamiat Ulema Islam Fazl on Friday staged a protest rally at Timergara against the alleged blasphemous decision regarding an Ahmadi accused. Dozens of party workers while carrying flags and banners marched on the road. The rally was addressed by the JUI-F district chief Sirajud Din, general secretary Javed Iqbal, Maulana Muhammad Rahim Haqqani, Maulana Nabi Shah, Haji Khurshid Ali and others.

The speakers said the nation had rejected the Supreme Court of Pakistan decision of granting bail to a person associated with the Ahmadiyya community and demanded the court to immediately reverse its decision. They alleged that 'Qadianiat' was being promoted in the country. They criticized the decision saying it was against the Islamic Sharia and the constitution of Pakistan. The charged workers also chanted slogans against the court's decision and said they would never hesitate to go to any extent on the call of their party chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman.

**Spring plantation:** The acting district education officer Mahboob Elahi on Friday planted a tree at gov-

ernment high school Mian Banda and kicked off the spring plantation here in the district. The school's head Shahid Anwar along with his senior staff was also present on the occasion. The DEO said that all public sector schools would be engaged to take active part in this year's tree plantation drive.

He said that plants had a vital role in keeping the environment clean and healthy. The official said the world faced climate change and global warming due to deforestation. He directed the schools' heads to play their active role in tree plantation in their institutions.

**Anti-polio drive:** The Lower Dir district administration on Friday reviewed its arrangements for the five-day anti-polio drive commencing from Feb 26 in parts of the district. Deputy Commissioner Wasil Khan chaired a review meeting which was attended by assistant commissioner Samarbagh Suhail Khan, MS district headquarters hospital Timergara Dr Ali Asghar, deputy district health officer Dr Wali Khan, Dr Asfandiar, district administrator Afghan refugees Humayun Khan, district khatib Maulana Azizul Haq, officials of education and police departments. The meeting was informed that a total of 345,833 children in the district would be vaccinated for which 1337 teams had been formed.



JAMRUD: Workers of religious party holding a protest rally at Bab-e-Khyber against disputed decision of Supreme Court. — F.P. photo

## JUI-F hold rally in Jamrud

### F.P. Report

JAMRUD: Hundreds of activists from religious parties gathered at Bab-e-Khyber, Jamrud on Friday to resent the decision passed by the Supreme Court in favor of Ahmadi citizen. It is to be stated here that the Supreme Court of Pakistan passed a ruling on February 8 about the right of the persecuted Ahmadiyya community of printing and disseminating the "Tafseer-e-Sagheer," the shorter version of the 10-volume "Tafseer-e-Kabeer."

The activity was organized under the banner of Jamiat Ulam-e-e-Islam, Pakistan Fazal Rehman (JUI-F) and party was attended by a large number of their workers. The rally was taken out from the local press club to Bab-e-Khyber and the participants were carrying placards inscribed with slogans in favor of Khatme Nabooat while condemning the decision for allowing the Ahmadi to preach their rituals.

Speaking on the occasion district leadership of JUI-F including Maulana Saeed Khan, Haji Muhammad Kareem Afridi, Maulana Darwish, Maulana Gul Nawaz and others expressed their deep concern over the disputed verdict and declared it attack on the belief of Khatme Nabooat that hurt feelings of the Muslims.

They maintained that negation of the belief of the last Prophet hood of the Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) deserves no concession. The rulers were disregardful although the Ullemas will never compromise at the blasphemy of the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him). The religious scholars were deliberately kept out of Parliament; however, they would lay down their lives for the safeguard of the faith of the Khatme Nabooat, they vowed. Similar protest moots were also organized in Landi Kotal and Bara.

# PHC CJ inaugurates court's rooms at Kohat

## Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Chief Justice Peshawar High Court Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan visited District Courts Kohat and inaugurated newly constructed court room as well as virtual bench of Peshawar High Court, at Kohat the Chief Justice also planted a tree on this occasion.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by the District & Sessions Judge, Kohat along with all the Judicial Officers of District Judiciary, Kohat the Judges of Anti-Terrorism Court and Consumer Court, Kohat, Officers of District Administration, Police and C & W departments, lawyers of District Bar Association Kohat and media persons.

The representative of Chief Justice and the guests about the project. The District & Sessions Judge Kohat in his welcome address thanked the Chief Justice for gracing the occasion with his presence. The Chief Justice also visited the Bar Room an Laid the foundation stone of the under-construction mosque. In the end the Chief Justice urged the Judicial for expeditious and inexpensive dispensation of justice to the public.

**Poet, writer Omar Badshah retired as District Account Officer:** Well-known poet, writer and Senior Editor of District Accounts Office Kohat Omar Badshah retired in the age of sixty after completing his tenure.

In this connection, Staff and Officers hosted a farewell party in the honor of Omar Badshah with Treasury Officer Mohammad Arshad Khan and other colleagues expressing their views about Omar Badshah's life and work.

He is an honest and capable officer and never neglected his duties. During his service, his work has been commendable. At the end of the ceremony, gifts were presented by all the staff and prayers were offered for his healthy and long life and best wishes. Finally, outgoing senior editor Omar Badshah thanked all the staff and officers of the Accounts Office for holding a farewell ceremony in his honor.

# Equal opportunities to pave way for prosperity

## F.P. Report

SUJAWAL: The speakers at the different sessions of the second day of the three-day Sujawal Youth STEAM Learning Festival mulled over changing patriarchal norms to foster gender equality in the education system.

Discussing 'Super Women: Gender Gap in STEAM education SDG 4, 5 and Widening GPI' Sidra Sadozai emphasized the irreplaceable role of mothers, asserting that the children showcasing their talents at festivals owe their presence to the support of their mothers. She advocated for encouraging the participation of women in all aspects of life to foster integrity. They underscored that women would be instrumental for diverting society to persistent progress.

Makal Shah, hailing from a Syed family, broke societal taboos by entering the development sector in 2004. Despite confronting multiple hurdles, preventing her from attending university due to

stereotypes, she became the sole woman in her family to contribute to this field. She stressed the need to eliminate gender-based segregation in schools, emphasizing the importance of creating an environment that encourages participation from all genders to bridge the gender gap.

Sonal Dhanani highlighted the positive impact of women leadership in schools on increasing girls' enrollment. She urged the government to design strategies and advocacy to update curricula for STEM learning, praising the projects showcased by girls in festivals, which deserve appreciation and can encourage more participation in STEM fields.

Kapil Dev praised Dr. Soomar Khoso's exemplary work in a remote village but acknowledged challenges in schools, emphasizing the need for qualified teachers and advanced facilities. He raised concerns about the lack of security and demand for girls' education, advocating for increased female representation in policy-making and leadership roles.

"Changing patriarchal norms will play an instrumental role in bringing gender equality in the education system," he added.

Khushboo shed light on the challenges in sending girls to schools in remote areas, proposing a strategy akin to polio vaccination workers going door-to-door. She suggested that government initiatives should actively promote girl education, engaging with communities to overcome societal barriers.

In a discussion on 'jobs of tomorrow?' Be your own boss. Are we preparing our students? Hameed Dipali highlighted that there is still no concept of career counseling in the school framework. Children lack exposure to various fields and the job market because our education system is unaware of market demands. Consequently, youngsters often fall short of meeting job criteria due to a lack of practical knowledge.

# Navigating challenges and solutions in mid-February to March cotton cultivation

## Sajid Mahmood

**EARLY cotton cultivation has commenced in Pakistan, typically from mid-February to March 31, with many cotton farmers initiating cultivation on their available lands. This trend is particularly notable in Punjab, where areas such as Multan, Sahiwal, Faisalabad, and Sargodha divisions are witnessing a rapid increase in early cultivation practices. The Agriculture Secretary of South Punjab, Saqib Ali Ateeel, has set a target of 200,000 acres for cotton cultivation in the Multan Division. To support this target, training programs for cotton farmers have been scheduled, along with plans for comprehensive monitoring of the cultivation process.**

In Sindh, Munir Ahmad Jaman, the former Cotton Commissioner and current Director General of the Department of Agriculture Extension is actively involved in promoting early cotton cultivation. Lower Sindh, including areas like Thatta, Badin, Sajawal, Dhuronaru, Kanri, Tando Allahyar, and Tando Jam, as well as other coastal areas with moist air, offer ideal climatic conditions for cotton cultivation. Farmers in Sindh are show-

ing great enthusiasm for early cotton planting due to these favorable conditions.

Based on information from multiple sources, it's anticipated that Punjab will see 800,000 to 1,000,000 acres of early cotton cultivation this year, while Sindh aims for 1.5 million acres. Expected yields are between 30 to 35 maunds per acre in Punjab and 35 to 45 maunds per acre in Sindh. A previous newspaper article praised the benefits of early cotton cultivation, but in this article, we'll delve into the challenges encountered and propose potential solutions.

According to experts from the Pathology Department of the Central Cotton Research Institute in Multan, farmers growing early cotton should utilize laser land levelers to prepare their land prior to planting. This not only conserves water and fertilizer by ensuring a smooth field but also prevents standing water, thus safeguarding the cotton crop from seedling diseases and other ailments. By comprehending the factors contributing to seed diseases and taking necessary precautions, farmers can mitigate potential issues and risks linked with early harvests and foster a robust cotton crop. Through employing appropriate inputs at the right time and embracing sustainable farming techniques, cotton farmers can

enhance their earnings by improving production.

There is a risk of disease attack in early planted cotton which is also called Seedling Disease or Seedling Rot in English. This condition can be triggered by low temperatures, particularly cold temperatures, and excessive moisture in the soil. Under normal conditions, if the temperature ranges between 30 to 34 °C, cotton seeds will germinate within 6 to 7 days.

However, if the temperature falls between 24 to 29 °C, germination may take longer, increasing the likelihood of disease in the crop. Fungi and bacteria present in the soil, such as Rhizoctonia solani, Pythium, Fusarium, and other pathogens, are the primary causes of this disease. In this disease, the emerging young plants from the ground tend to wither and eventually die. The disease causes the roots of young cotton plants to rot, leading to wilting within a few days. Upon examination, dark-colored spots are visible on the roots of affected plants.

While plant diseases in our country are generally not severe and treatment is not typically recommended under normal circumstances, precautionary measures can be taken against this disease in early planting. Cotton farmers should consider

using delinted seeds for cultivation or treating the seeds with a fungicide mixture of Mefenxam, fludioxinil, and azoxystrobin before planting. This fungicide mixture should be applied at a rate of 2 to 3 ml per kg of seeds, mixed with 25 ml of water per kg of seed before application. This treatment helps protect the cotton crop from disease attacks during the initial 30 to 40 days of growth.

Early cotton varieties are susceptible to the initial onslaught of pink bollworms. Consequently, agricultural experts from the Central Cotton Research Institute, Multan, and field staff from the Department of Agriculture Extension in Punjab, stress the importance of meticulous off-season management practices for cotton. Additionally, efforts should be made to eradicate pink bollworms from waste in ginning factories. Failure to address these issues can lead to the carryover of pink bollworms from early cotton cultivation, posing increased risks of infestation for seasonal cotton crops typically grown in April and May.

As the early cotton crop progresses to the seedling stage and starts developing bolls, it's crucial for cotton farmers to employ sex pheromone traps to deter pink bollworm infestations in their fields. Experts from the

Department of Entomology at CCRI Multan advise using eight sex pheromone traps per acre for effective pink bollworm management. Additionally, they suggest utilizing one sex pheromone trap per five acres for observation or monitoring purposes to track pink bollworm activity. Growers employ cotton yellow sticky traps to safeguard young cotton crops from cotton whitefly infestations. Once the cotton plants reach a height of 6 inches, it's crucial to position yellow sticky colored boxes throughout the field.

As the cotton plants continue to grow, the placement of these boxes should be adjusted to match the height of the plants. The potent adhesive on the yellow traps ensnares whiteflies, effectively eliminating them without the need for spraying pesticides. These traps should be strategically placed around the perimeter and within the central area of the cotton crop. It is recommended to deploy yellow sticky traps at a rate of 10 per acre.

The American bollworm is a threat to early cotton planting, as it can infest a variety of host plants such as potato, tomato, okra, carrot, corn, wheat, millet, and berseem, potentially shifting its focus from these plants to early cotton crops. But today, with the increased cultivation of

Bt cotton varieties across larger areas, the American bollworm is no longer a significant threat to cotton crops. However, concerns persist about its potential impact on early cotton crop. Before early planting, cotton farmers should adequately prepare the land by utilizing chisel plows to break up the compacted topsoil.

This process enhances the soil's water retention capacity, enabling the plant roots to penetrate deeper into the soil to access nutrients effectively. Based on observations from last year, it's clear that single, double, and triple gene varieties of cotton are effective for early cultivation, potentially yielding 40 maund per acre with proper management. To optimize early cotton yields, it's crucial for farmers to stick to approved varieties, as advised by institutions like the Central Cotton Research Institute Multan and the Punjab Agriculture Department.

Unapproved varieties are more prone to attacks by harmful insects and diseases, leading to reduced yields. Some approved varieties for planting between mid-February and March 31 include BTCIM775, BTCIM343, BTCIM663, BTCYT0537, BTCYT0511, FH333, Hataf3, CKK1, CKK3, CKK5, CKK6, Ghori 2, Badr 1, ICI 2121, and ICI 2424.





## China tells ICJ justice ‘must not be denied’ to Palestinians

THE HAGUE: China has told the International Court of Justice (ICJ) that the Palestinians "must not be denied" justice at a hearing on the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories. "Justice has been long delayed, but it must not be denied," China's Foreign Ministry's legal adviser Ma Xinmin told the court in The Hague in the Netherlands.

"Fifty-seven years have passed since Israel began its occupation of the OPT (Occupied Palestinian Territories). The unlawful nature of the occupation and sovereignty over the occupied territories remain unchanged," he said. Al Jazeera's Step Vaessen, reporting from The Hague, said China used its time at the ICJ to counter the United States' argument that Israel should not be ordered to unconditionally withdraw from the occupied territories without security guarantees.

"The US said the United Nations and the ICJ should stay out of a bilateral issue between Israel and Palestine. According to China, it was definitely a matter for the UN to talk about the self-determination of the Palestinian people," Vaessen said. "The Chinese representative said Israel is a foreign

nation occupying Palestine, so the right to self-defence lies more with the Palestinians than with the Israelis." Representatives from the Republic of Ireland, Japan, and Jordan also presented their arguments at the ICJ. Ireland said it concluded that "Israel has committed serious breaches of a number of peremptory norms of general international law". The Irish representative added that Israel had also breached the basic rules of international humanitarian law.

The legal adviser for Japan's Foreign Ministry, Tomohiro Mikanagi, also told the ICJ that his country believes a "two-state solution where Israel and the future independent Palestinian state live side by side in peace and dignity remains the only viable path for both peoples". For Jordan, Michael Wood said that "the only way for the [Palestinian] right to self-determination to be exercised is for the [Israeli] occupation to come to an end". Al Jazeera's Hamdah Salhut, reporting from occupied east Jerusalem, said Jordan holds a "key position" at the ICJ hearing as it is one of the most prominent critics of the occupation and is also the custodian of the Al-Aqsa

Mosque compound in Jerusalem. "While they have been not only critics of the occupation, they've been critics of Israel's war on Gaza, so their role within the region is quite crucial for aiding the Palestinians in any sort of conversations," she said. The ICJ is hearing from about 50 countries on their opinion about the occupation and is part of a push by Palestinians to get international legal institutions to examine Israeli policy.

Palestinian representatives asked the judges to declare Israel's occupation of their territory illegal and said its opinion could help reach a two-state solution. In the occupied West Bank, tensions between illegal settlers and Palestinians intensified significantly due to Israel's war on Gaza. On October 7, a Hamas attack killed 1,139 Israelis, according to Al Jazeera's tally of Israeli figures. In response, Israel's deadly offensive on Gaza has killed about 29,000 Palestinians. Israel, which is not participating in the hearings, said in written comments that the court's involvement could harm achieving a negotiated settlement. The judges are expected to take roughly six months to issue an opinion. — Aljazeera

## Russian war blogger dies in apparent suicide

MOSCOW (AP): A Russian military blogger has died in an apparent suicide after facing a barrage of criticism for revealing heavy losses in Ukraine, and his supporters have blamed Kremlin propagandists for his death.

Andrei Morozov, who also served as a soldier on the front line in Ukraine, said in his last post that he decided to "execute" himself to help his comrades in arms avoid fallout from his critical publications, which had angered the military command. Maxim Pashkov, a lawyer who knew him, confirmed Morozov's death in a messaging app statement, saying that he shot himself dead. Morozov was 44 years old. Morozov, who went by the nickname Murz, said in a recent post that about 16,000 Russian troops were killed and the military lost about 300 armored vehicles since October when the four-month battle for the eastern stronghold of Avdiivka began. Russian troops captured Avdiivka over the weekend after Ukrainian troops pulled back.

Morozov's remarks drew angry comments from a top TV show host on Russian state TV and others who called for him to be prosecuted for "discrediting" the military. Several fellow bloggers blamed those who

attacked Morozov for his death. In his last post before killing himself that he posted on his channel in Telegram, Morozov said he was forced by military officials to remove his post about the Russian losses. He harshly criticized the military command for turning a blind eye to losses and ignoring troops' needs.

Alexander Kofman, head of the Public Chamber in the Moscow-controlled part of the Donetsk region, described Morozov's suicide as a "huge mistake" in a statement on his messaging app channel. Morozov's death came as Russian authorities have become increasingly intolerant ahead of March's election in which President Vladimir Putin is all but certain to win another six-year term. It also follows chief Kremlin foe Alexei Navalny's death on Friday in an Arctic prison that caused a global outrage and dealt a heavy blow to the beleaguered Russian opposition.

Russian war bloggers like Morozov have provided a more factual alternative to terse statements from military officials and a flow of propaganda on state TV channels, giving detailed accounts of the fighting. While all of them ardently supported the Kremlin's war in Ukraine, they offered a glimpse into problems faced by Russian

troops and assailed the military leadership for ill-conceived tactics and neglect for soldiers' needs. Many Russian military bloggers were supportive of mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin who had scathingly criticized the military brass and then launched a brief mutiny in June that saw his Wagner private contractors march on Moscow to oust the top military leaders.

Most war bloggers toned down their criticism of military officials after Prigozhin's death in a suspicious air crash two months after his rebellion, which was widely seen as revenge by the Kremlin. One of the most popular war commentators, Igor Strelkov, was handed a four-year prison sentence last month on charges of extremism after he called Putin a "nonentity" and a person of "cowardly mediocrity." He argued that a total mobilization is needed for Russia to achieve victory and accused the Kremlin of indecision and weakness.

Strelkov, whose real name is Girkin, is a retired security officer who led Moscow-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine in 2014 and was convicted of murder in the Netherlands for his role in the downing of a Malaysia Airlines passenger jet that year.

## Aid appeal for Ukraine is only 10% funded: UN

KYIV (AP): The UN's humanitarian appeal to meet needs in Ukraine is only 10% funded for 2024, the country's resident coordinator said, putting in jeopardy crucial assistance needed to reach those in need across frontline areas. Denise Brown, the U.N.'s top representative in Ukraine, said an estimated 8.5 million Ukrainians living in dire conditions near combat zones risk going without basic humanitarian deliveries, including food and water. The UN's annual appeal for Ukraine is \$3.1 billion.

"If we don't receive that money, I don't know where that money is going to come from," Brown told The Associated Press in an interview. Without the funds, "we won't be able to sustain the high number of colleagues that we have here who are absolutely dedicated to humanitarian support." As the future of military aid to Ukraine hangs in the balance, Brown is lobbying the international community and private sector to remember that humanitarian needs are also high. Ukraine's economy is still suffering the aftermath of Russia's full-scale invasion two years ago, families are separated by war and millions of Ukrainians living near front-line areas have little access to food and are unable to meet basic needs.

"There's a lot left to support," Brown said. The UN's aid deliveries to such areas across the front line, where electricity and running water are scarce, often consist of basic supplies, Brown said. UN teams, along with partner organizations, make deliveries across embattled zones in Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk and Kharkiv. In 2023, deliveries targeted 11 million people.

Needs include water and hygiene kits, which include toothpaste, toilet paper and sanitary napkins. "Very often it's things like adult diapers because of the elderly people in those communities who don't have mobility," said Brown. "So basic, but crucial." The intensification of battles hinders the UN's access or limits delivery times. Front-line areas like Chasiv Yar in the Donetsk region, for example, was inaccessible for several months. "So we're always hoping that the last supplies that were delivered will be enough to carry people through," she added.

## Libya govt says militias to leave Tripoli

TRIPOLI (BBC): Armed groups that have been controlling Tripoli for more than a decade have agreed to leave Libya's capital. Interior minister Imad Trabelsi - part of the internationally recognised government - said after lengthy negotiations a deal had been struck for regular forces to police Tripoli.

He told journalists there would only be emergency police, city officers and criminal investigators in their place. The deal comes after a series of deadly clashes in the city in recent months. Libya has been battered by many armed groups who emerged after the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. A series of armed uprisings that led to the long-time dictator's killing created a security vacuum, with much of the country lawless and chaotic since. Libya is currently divided between the internationally recognised government in the west, led by interim Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah in Tripoli, and an administration in the east run by military strongman Khalifa Haftar. In a press conference, Mr Trabelsi said from now on the militia's "place is in their headquarters", adding the Libyan government "will use them only in exceptional circumstances for specific missions".

He said once they had left the capital other cities would follow, noting there "will be no more checkpoints and no more armed groups" on roads. The deal will see at least five armed groups quit Tripoli by the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan on 9 April, including one based in an area where 10 people were killed over the weekend.



GAZA: A view of the destroyed Al-Farooq Mosque and damaged buildings after Israeli attacks on Shaboura neighbourhood in Rafah.

## South Korea raises health alert to ‘severe’ over protest by doctors

SEOUL (Reuters): South Korea has raised its health alert as of Friday morning after thousands of doctors walked off the job this week to protest against a government plan to raise the number of medical school admissions, the health ministry said. "We've decided to raise the healthcare disaster risk alert from cautious to severe," the ministry said in a statement, citing an "intensifying" walkout by resident doctors and concerns over public health.

Prime Minister Han Duck-soo will preside over a disaster management meeting on the matter on Friday, the ministry said. Emergency departments in South Korea's biggest hospitals have been squeezed since trainee doctors began leaving the job this week in protest at government plans to increase medical school admissions to bolster the healthcare sector. The protests by almost two-thirds of the country's young doctors has forced hospitals to turn away patients and cancel procedures, raising fears about further disruptions to the medical system should the dispute drag on. The doctors say the real issue is pay and working conditions, not the number of physicians.

Meanwhile, three days into a mass walkout by trainee doctors, patients

in South Korea expressed growing worry and frustration as hospitals nationwide delayed surgeries and emergency rooms turned away patients. With more than 8,400 doctors staying off the job in a protest over government plans to step up medical school admissions and no immediate sign of resolution, some of the sick and hurt voiced concerns about getting treatment. "If the government truly cares for its people, I hope they take a step back now, and doctors also take a step back, so that patients won't be hurt," said a 34-year-old office worker with a broken leg that required surgery.

The man, who asked to be identified only by his surname, Kim, said he had been turned away from three hospitals before finally receiving treatment at the state-run National Medical Centre in the capital, Seoul. "I'd been in an accident before and at that time, my abdomen was cut open. If that had happened while doctors were on walkout like now, I would have died," he added. Emergency departments at all but one of South Korea's biggest hospitals were on red alert as trainee doctors protested the plan to remedy a shortage of as many as 15,000 doctors expected by 2035, amid one of the fastest-ageing popu-

lations in the world.

Asthma sufferer Lee Joo-hyung said he had been lucky to get treatment, but worried about getting to see a doctor at his next appointment three months from now. "Since many doctors have submitted their resignations, we don't know what will happen," the 31-year-old teacher added. "So I'm really worried about that." Nearly two-thirds of the country's trainee doctors have walked off the job after submitting resignations, defying government orders to return to work or face punishment and even arrest. They say the real issue is pay and working conditions, not the number of doctors. Some say more admissions will compromise the quality of education, a worry also for senior doctors. A recent Gallup Korea poll showed about 76 percent of Koreans favour the government's plan, however, regardless of political affiliation. Nevertheless, as the disruption grows, the government told patients to go to smaller clinics, while advising the seriously ill or those needing urgent care to turn to state-run and military hospitals. "Doctors are supposed to treat patients, so it seems unreasonable for them to go on strike," said Kim, who was treated for his broken left leg.

## Navalny's mother says Russian authorities pressuring ‘secret’ burial

MOSCOW: The mother of Alexey Navalny has said Russian authorities are pressing her to bury the opposition leader's body in "secret". Speaking in a video message posted on YouTube, Lyudmila Navalnaya said Russian authorities had allowed her to see her son's body in the morgue. She said investigators were "blackmailing" her over the funeral of the Kremlin critic, who died in detention last week, and trying to force her to hold a private burial ceremony without mourners.

"They want this to be done secretly, with no farewell. They want to bring me to the edge of a cemetery, to a fresh grave and say: 'Here lies your son.' I don't agree to this," she said. There was no immediate comment from Russian authorities. Navalnaya said she had been taken to the morgue and shown Navalny's body.

She made an appeal to Russian President Vladimir Putin. "Let me finally see my son," she said, urging authorities to release his body so she could bury him. Navalny's team said the death certificate, also seen by Navalnaya, stated that he had died of natural causes. Navalny, Russia's best-known opposition politician, died suddenly in an Arctic penal colony last Friday at the age of 47. His aides and family have alleged that the Kremlin murdered him, an allegation Russia has rejected. "The investigators claim that they know the cause of death," said Navalnaya, dressed in black and speaking in a calm voice on video. "They have all the medical and legal documents ready, which I saw, and I signed the medical certificate. According to the law, they should have given me Alexey's body right away,

but they have not done so until now. Instead, they are blackmailing me, setting me conditions on where, when and how Alexey should be buried. This is illegal."

Navalny's mother said: "I'm recording this video because they started threatening me. Looking into my eyes, they say that if I don't agree to a secret funeral, they will do something with my son's body." She quoted one of the investigators as saying: "Time is not on your side; corpses decompose." "I don't want special conditions," she said. "I just want everything to be done according to the law. I demand that my son's body be returned to me immediately." Earlier, Navalny's widow Yulia published a picture of her mourning with the couple's grieving daughter Dasha. "My sweet little girl. I flew to you to hug and support you, but you are sitting there sup-

porting me," Yulia Navalnaya wrote in a post published on Instagram. "You are so strong, so brave and steadfast. We can handle anything, my heart. How good that you are by my side." Navalny has a 15-year-old son as well as 23-year-old Dasha, who studies in the United States. Dasha had repeatedly made demands for the release of her imprisoned father and had also given speeches in his honour at award ceremonies.

Navalny's widow did not immediately travel to see her children when his death was announced on Friday, but instead visited the Munich Security Conference, where she blamed Russian President Vladimir Putin for her husband's fate. The Kremlin has said it had nothing to do with Navalny's death, and that the circumstances are being investigated. Putin has yet to comment on it. — Aljazeera

## US, European powers back Rutte as NATO head

BRUSSELS: The United States, United Kingdom, France and Germany have all thrown their weight behind outgoing Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte to become NATO's next secretary general, at a crucial time for the alliance as Russia's war against Ukraine rages on.

Top NATO powers backed Rutte to succeed current chair Jens Stoltenberg when he steps down in October, putting him in a strong position to win the leadership of the transatlantic alliance. Stoltenberg's successor will take office at a crucial juncture, tasked with sustaining NATO members' support for Ukraine's costly defence while guarding against any escalation that would draw the alliance directly into a war with Moscow.

"The United States has made it clear to our allies, our NATO allies, that we believe Mr Rutte would be an excellent secretary general for NATO," US National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby told journalists. UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's spokesman said the UK "does strongly back" Rutte, adding that the

UK wanted a candidate who would "keep NATO strong and deliver on the alliance's NATO 2030 vision". The British Foreign Office also said Rutte was a well-respected figure across NATO, with serious defence and security credentials and who would ensure it remained strong and prepared for any need to defend itself.

A senior French official told the Reuters news agency that President Emmanuel Macron had been an early supporter of putting Rutte in the role. And German government spokesperson Steffen Hebestreit said on X that Rutte had Berlin's backing, praising him as "an outstanding candidate". Diplomats have said Rutte is the only official candidate for the post in the behind-the-scenes contest, although some said the name of Romanian President Klaus Iohannis had also been floated in informal discussions recently. Other candidates may include Estonian Primer Minister Kaja Kallas and Latvia's foreign minister, Krisjanis Karins.

But with the support of Washington - the alliance's

predominant power - and the three big European nations and some 16 other NATO members, according to diplomats, Rutte is in a commanding position. However, some analysts believe he could face opposition from Turkey and Hungary. After ruling himself out for the NATO post in previous years, Rutte, 57, told Dutch media in October that running the military alliance was a "very interesting" job and he would be open to the prospect.

The Netherlands' longest-serving leader, Rutte has had good relationships with various British, European Union and US leaders - including Donald Trump - during his tenure. Set to run for a second term as US president later this year, Trump drew fierce criticism from Western officials earlier this month for calling into question his commitment to defending NATO allies if re-elected. At the weekend, Rutte urged European leaders to "stop moaning and whining and nagging" about Trump and focus instead on what they could do to bolster defence and help Ukraine. — Aljazeera

## Glasgow Kindertransport refugee celebrates 100th birthday

GLASGOW (BBC): Henry Wuga is a refugee based in Glasgow, who has just turned 100 years old. In May 1939, as pre-war tensions were rising in his home country of Germany, he escaped to Scotland via a child safety mission known as the Kindertransport. By the time World War II began, he was in Glasgow, a place he now calls home.

He and his wife, Ingrid, spent their later lives visiting Scottish schools to educate the younger generation about the Holocaust. Reflecting back on his many years of life, Henry said: "I may be 100, but I don't feel 100. To be 100 is quite an idea." Henry was born in Nuremberg in 1924 to Karl and Lore Wuga. His family was Catholic on his father's side and Jewish on his mother's side and he was raised Jewish. At age 14, he was forced to leave school and began an apprenticeship as a cook in a hotel. After six months, Henry decided to go home on 8 November 1938 - the day before Kristallnacht, the night of violent Nazi attacks

on synagogues and Jewish businesses. In May the following year, he was able to escape the country via the Kindertransport to Scotland, where he was interned as an "enemy alien" after the war began. This year, the Kindertransport will celebrate its 85th anniversary. The Kindertransport was the name given to the mission which helped 10,000 children to safety ahead of World War Two, to escape from Adolf Hitler's reign in parts of Europe controlled by the Nazis.

It is called this as kinder means "children" in German. "New language, new food and new people," said Henry of his first encounters with Scotland. "You just have to cope with it and people being very friendly in Glasgow, it certainly helped. They took me in and allowed me to do certain things and I became a Glaswegian." When he was sent to Euston Station in London to get on the Flying Scotsman, he thought he was in Paradise. "A train with upholstered

seats and a dining room with waiters wearing white gloves, serving hot chocolate out of silver teapots, it's not the kind of train I was used to so that was a very welcoming sight," he said. At 16 years old, Henry was accused of corresponding with the enemy and was taken into custody for sending letters to his parents via uncles in Paris and Brussels. As a result, he was interned on the Isle of Man, but tried his best to embrace the experience. Academics, professors and musicians were among some of the people in the prison, but he still was not free and spent 10 months there. "On the Isle of Man, I was obviously behind barbed wire," he said. "I was interned because I was perceived to be a dangerous enemy. I coped with what I found and then took out the best I could. "It was very wonderful to be surrounded by people like that. I was only 16 so I took all that in." Henry returned to Glasgow and attended a refugee club, where he met people from similar back-

grounds, including his future wife Ingrid Wolff, who had also come to Scotland via the Kindertransport. They married in December 1944 and together the couple had two daughters, Gillian and Hilary. Henry and his wife set up a kosher function catering business, which continued for 30 years. In their later life, they toured Scottish schools and educated children on the "horrors that went on in the Holocaust".

"My wife Ingrid and I, we felt we had to fight against him to tell people how terrible Hitler had been," he said. "So Ingrid and I went to hundreds of schools all over Scotland and talked to young people for many years. "What's particularly important to me is that my two daughters have continued where Ingrid and I left off. They go to various schools in Scotland." Henry's daughters are both very proud of him. Hilary Hodsman said her parents had 75 "very happy" years of marriage "joined at the hip".



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## Social media needs tactful handling

**C**ARETAKER Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said that some elements were using social media platforms to incite violence, spread discomfort, and hatred among the masses which was an illegal activity. According to him, freedom of expression under Article 19 of the Constitution was not unlimited, rather it was subject to the law of the land. The derogatory remarks against the judiciary, armed forces, and brotherly countries were not allowed under relevant clauses of Article 19 of the constitution. He noted that social media platforms X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram had been continuously used for propaganda, lies, defamation, and harassment of government officials, wherein, the companies owning these platforms would have to control this illegal activity. According to the Minister, the state of Pakistan will not in any way allow these platforms to spread baseless, false, and fabricated propaganda in the country.

A fabricated and malicious propaganda related to the army deployment on election and security duties, accusation of rigging, and character assassination of the top government officials including the Chief Election Commissioner, the Chief Justice, senior judges, and generals was underway since the election day on February 8th. According to the reports, some malefactor political elements are misguiding their supporters for political gains, while referring to the security troops deployed for election duty, delay in election results, and the recently staged presser of retired Commissioner Rawalpindi Division who admitted his guilt/complicity and sought an apology from the government and the masses for his falsehood and treason with the nation. Various anonymous and fake social media accounts were used to spread lies and disinformation and disseminate nefarious propaganda to create chaos, agitation, and instability in the aftermath of peaceful and smooth elections. Presently, the Pakistani nation has transitioned from pre-poll unrest and chaos to post-election accusations and rivalry, while the months-long electoral exercise ended up with no success in achieving Political stability which might lead to economic revival and social cohesion in a highly polarized society.

Various social media platforms including X, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram were blocked by the authorities due to the massive upsurge in anti-state propaganda in recent days. The nationwide internet closure attracted global criticism, and various foreign governments and advocacy groups called on the government to protect freedom of speech and civil liberties in its country. The Sindh High Court also ordered the government to restore internet service and unblock social media on an urgent basis. In the latest move, the caretaker Information Minister lashed out at the social media companies for not stopping anti-State activities on their platforms, which is somehow not a thoughtful and sane idea. Realistically, such a sensitive task can only be accomplished through liaison, teamwork, and cooperation with the multinational internet services providers instead of shut down of services, clashes, and coercion that is not only counterproductive but futile.

In the present era, social media has been shaped into an effective weapon that is being used to spread disinformation, subvert minds, and incite chaos and anarchy in the target countries to fuel mutiny or disobedience in the masses. The government and security apparatuses are well aware of hidden risks attached to malicious online campaigns yet the risk mitigation and modus Operandi seem to be void of necessary prudence, effectiveness, and legitimacy. The use of constitutional provisions by the state has always been considered as restrictions on the fundamental rights of individuals instead of protection of those same provisions of the citizens. Therefore, the government must coordinate with service providers while the state institutions must act on victims' complaints to avoid criticism and backlash at the global level. Hence, efforts must be made to kill the snake without losing the stick otherwise hunting rabbits with a tank is no statesmanship and gallantry.

## Cousins marriage and risk of Thalassemia

**P**RESIDENT Dr. Arif Alvi stressed the need for community efforts to prevent thalassemia among children emphasizing mandatory testing before marriage. The president appreciated the people and charity organizations working for thalassemia elimination and for serving humanity. Dr. Alvi lauded philanthropic individuals and organizations for their generous financial support towards the treatment of these otherwise expensive medical conditions. He called them heroes, who would stand honored before Almighty Allah.

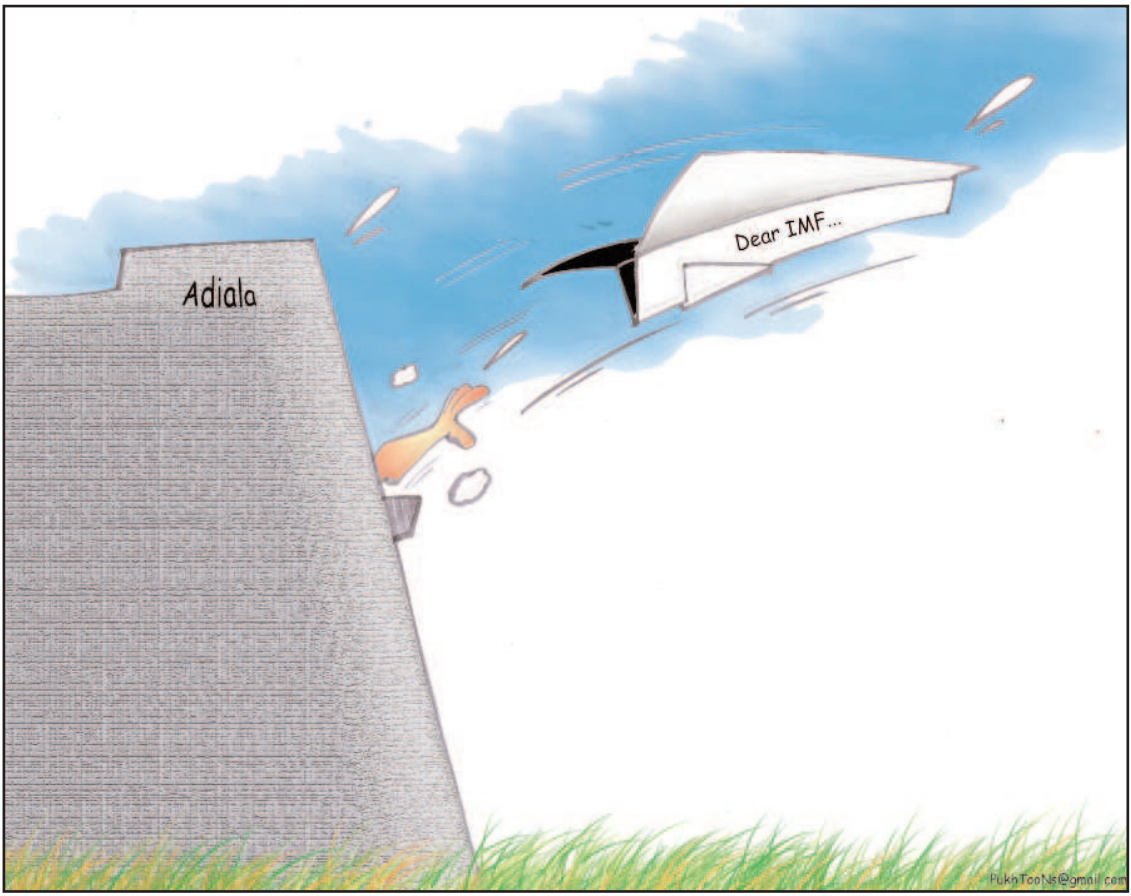
Thalassemia is a genetic blood disorder that affects the production of hemoglobin, the molecule in red blood cells that carries oxygen. Thalassemia is the most serious disease which is unhindered increasing in our society due to complex family systems and cousin marriages. According to official statistics, thalassemia traits frequency ranges between 5-7% in Pakistan. There are over 10 million thalassemia carriers and around 5000 children are diagnosed with carrying thalassemia germs each year. Unfortunately, there are no standard management protocols and blood transfusion remains the mainstay for the management of the disease so far. Currently, there is no cure for thalassemia, but treatments are available to manage the symptoms and complications. Blood transfusions are often used to provide healthy red blood cells to patients that provide him temporary relief and need to repeat these practices on frequent intervals to keep the patient stable and healthy.

Unfortunately, there is very little awareness in our society regarding the disease of thalassemia, its reasons, and preventive measures to be adopted to stop its spread in our future generations. Historically, Islamic stresses on out of family marriages while shadowing the untrue sentiments of superficiality, ethnic segregation that not only cause differences but are harmful for a healthy, united and resilient Muslim society. There is also a need for prenatal diagnosis, genetic testing as well as genetic counselling of couples who have some family history of thalassemia.

Early diagnosis and appropriate management can help individuals with thalassemia live relatively normal lives. However, the government must launch a public education and awareness campaign that can help increase understanding of thalassemia and promote genetic testing and counseling among at-risk populations. This is the only path to contain and mitigate this inherited disease that casts serious risks to our society at a fast pace.

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## UK Conservatives may lose badly, but extinction is unlikely

Andrew Hammond

**W**ITH the UK's Labour Party riding high in opinion polls, comparisons are often made between the expected 2024 election result and Tony Blair's huge triumph in 1997. However, some Conservatives now fear an even worse outcome.

The specific reference here is to what is sometimes called the "extinction level event" of Canada's 1993 federal election, which saw the then-ruling Progressive Conservatives drop from 167 seats to two. This ultimately led to the organization's winding up and a merger into a new Conservative Party of Canada. On the face of it, there are some political similarities between Canada in 1993 and the UK in 2024. For starters, tactical voting in a first-past-the-post Westminster-type electoral system can give rise to unusual outcomes.

In 1993, the Progressive Conservatives won more than 15 percent of the Canadian vote, but secured less than 1 percent of the seats, finishing in fifth place. In the UK, meanwhile, tactical voting by voters supporting opposition parties in 2024 could accentuate the loss of Conservative seats. Secondly, as in Canada in 1993, the ruling British Conservative Party this year faces a vigorous challenge from the political right in the guise of Reform UK (formerly the Brexit Party), which is polling more than 10 percent nationally. Plausibly, this could split the center-right and right-wing vote in a way that allows opposition parties, especially Labour, to win even more seats than forecast.

A third issue is leadership. In 1993, then-Canadian Prime Minister Kim Campbell led the Progressive Conservatives in the context of a struggling economy following two big earlier election victories in 1984 and 1988 for Brian Mulroney, her more charismatic predecessor. While not identical, this is analogous with the challenge faced by UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak after the unexpectedly big victory in 2019 of his flamboyant predecessor-but-one in 10 Downing Street, Boris Johnson. Yet, despite these parallels, it is most unlikely that the UK Conservatives

will suffer the type of worst-case election scenario suffered by their Canadian cousins in 1993. Despite its huge problems, it is currently polling about 25 percent, well down on the approximately 45 percent secured in 2019, but strong enough, according to the Electoral Calculus prediction tool, to win 99 seats (down from 376 in 2019).

While nothing can be

election day, but not nearly enough to keep hold of power - winning only 165 seats. While this is less than half the number in the previous parliament from 1992 to 1997, it comfortably avoided the Canadian 1993 meltdown scenario.

In this context, the key explanation for the rise in speculation of a potential extinction of the UK Conservatives probably lies

in the next election, the likelihood is that he will be. This is not least because his potential rivals know that the party is headed for probable defeat and would therefore prefer to sit this ballot out.

But Sunak still has a gargantuan political mountain to climb as he, like other previous prime ministers who take power mid-term, tries to give himself sufficient time to establish himself before going to the polls. This was shown this week in a remarkable Deltapoll survey, which detailed how Labour leader to a Keir Starmer, who has done much to restore confidence in the party after the huge 2019 election loss, had opened up a 41 percentage-point lead over Sunak in terms of leadership approval. Sunak must also defy political gravity, given that no party in modern UK political history has won five elections in a row, as the Conservatives are now attempting. There is wide discontent with the ruling party, which is on its fifth prime minister in the past eight years, as Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic have caused major convulsions.

If this was not bad enough, he also knows that Johnson (and indeed the other PMs who have left office in recent years, including Liz Truss) remain significant political thorns in his side. For instance, Truss is launching a book called "Ten Years To Save the West" in April. It is styled as "a call to action for fellow conservatives who share my belief in our nation and our way of life." Truss has also set up a new backbench group of MPs called the Popular Conservatives. "PopCon," as the movement calls itself, wants to see radical institutional reform and is campaigning against so-called woke ideas, restoring what it perceives as democratic accountability to the UK. It is also promoting populist, hard-right policies in areas like immigration.

Taken together, this toxic brew is why Sunak's prime ministership is now perilously positioned. While he is most likely to last in office to fight the 2024 general election, the political winds are blowing very hard against him as he seeks to defy history and win a fifth term of office for the Conservatives.

entirely ruled out in politics, these figures are likely to be around the floor rather than the ceiling for the Conservatives. Many pundits think it more likely that the opinion poll gulf between Labour and the Conservatives will narrow rather than widen in the weeks ahead. Indeed, in 1997, when the Conservatives' standing in the polls was last about as low as today, the party had regained modest support by

more widely disgruntled MPs in the party who are plotting against Sunak's leadership and/or seeking for him to shift to a more hard-right, populist position on issues like immigration to counter Reform's rise. Many of these MPs are supporters of ex-PM Johnson, who still craves a return to the top job in UK politics after his messy departure from power in 2022. While it is far from certain that Sunak will be the

## US' fading regional influence down to its lack of resolve

Dr. Dania Koleilat Khatib

**T**HE situation in the Middle East is getting out of control. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is unhinged in his genocidal war on Gaza. Despite several statements from the US State Department calling for restraint and for the limiting of civilian casualties, Israel is only accelerating its attacks. Iran, on the other hand, is attacking the US presence in the region. Three American troops were killed last month in an attack on the Tower 22 military base on the border between Jordan and Syria. Iran does not seem deterred by the US. Washington has reached a situation where it can neither influence its allies nor deter its enemies and this all comes back to one factor: America's lack of resolve.

Having capabilities is not enough to project power. Capabilities without resolve are not effective. We have three cases in the Middle East: two of allies and one of an enemy. Israel is the ally that takes the US for granted. Not only that, but Netanyahu brags that Washington has no influence over Israel's decisions. Israel is an embarrassment for the US. A small state whose population is about the same as New Jersey can snub the mighty United States of America.

At the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting last month, Secretary of State Antony Blinken called for a "pathway to a Palestinian state" and for cooperating with the Palestinian Authority. What was Israel's response? Its Cabinet declared that "Israel utterly rejects international diktats regarding a permanent settlement with the Palestinians." It used the word "utterly," meaning the American proposition was not even subject to negotiations. On the other hand, Israel gets whatever it wants from the US. It is getting arms, money and support at the UN. So, the prevailing impression is that Israel is the one controlling the US, not the other way around. Basically, the attitude of Israel signals to allies that, even if it snubs the US, nothing will happen. It is allowed to jeopardize US interests in the Middle East.

This has affected the seriousness with which other players in the region view the US. Blinken has received a lukewarm reception from regional countries. When he visited Ankara in November, he was snubbed by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who was not available to meet with him. Leaders in the region are worried that the situation might get out of hand. They no longer see the US as being in control. This is why they are trying to seek solutions on their own, perhaps bypassing the US. After years of tumultuous relations, Gaza has brought Egypt and Türkiye together. Erdogan last week visited Cairo for the first time in more than a decade. Both Erdogan and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi have realized that they need to cooperate to take the situation into their own hands. The US attitude toward the Gaza massacre has affect-

ed its image. It is no longer perceived as the offshore balancer that can keep everyone in check.

The other type of US ally is the Arab Gulf states. They are actually in an opposite position to Israel. The US asks its Arab allies to take the American side, but in return it does not offer the support it should be offering when it is needed. This is not only with the Biden administration. This trend has been going since the Obama administration. Though Donald Trump, at the beginning of his presidency, tried to improve relations with the Gulf countries, his engagement did not materialize into real support. When Iran or its proxies used drones to attack the Abqaiq oil facility in Saudi Arabia in 2019, what was the US' response? Nothing. This pushed the Arab Gulf states to make the rational decision to look for an alternative. America's traditional friends are diversifying their alliances and, at times, cooperating with the US' foes or entering into parallel organizations. The UAE has entered the BRICS bloc and Saudi Arabia is considering joining.

When these countries diversify their alliances, lending a helping hand to the US is no longer the priority. As they know they need to fend for themselves, they need to see a return for every favor they extend to the US. This is why America's Gulf allies, except for Bahrain, did not take part in the coalition to tame the Houthis as a result of their attacks on ships in the Red Sea. They did not want to jeopardize the fragile entente they have with Iran in order to show solidarity with the US. The third case is the case of enemies. America's lack of resolve buttresses its enemies. Iran knows that the US will not cross a threshold that will lead to a confrontation. Washington is more concerned with optics than with real deterrence.

Of course, striking Iran is not an option, as such an act would wreak havoc in the region. However, Iran, supposedly the US' enemy, knows that there will be no repercussions for its actions. Tehran does not have the muscle that the US has, but it has the resolve that America lacks. It has consistency, while the US adopts a transactional policy. In Syria and Iraq, who has more influence, the US or Iran? The answer is obvious. US leaders should conduct some soul-searching and ask themselves: why are we not in control anymore? What have we done wrong? For sure, it is not a lack of capability, it is a lack of resolve. Unless the US shows some resolve, its influence will wane, if not now, then in a few years' time.

Gaza presents an opportunity to demonstrate this resolve. The first step would be for America to stop Netanyahu, bring its allies onto the same page and push for a peace plan that can stabilize the region and offer the Palestinians a viable and sovereign state. Most importantly, the US needs to keep Iran in check so that it does not take advantage of this disastrous situation.

## Aging populations a potential catastrophe

Khaled Abou Zahr

**F**OR years, many experts claimed that one of the biggest risks for planet Earth was the projected increase in its population. They would state that the trajectory of population growth would lead to starvation and wars and, along with the impact of climate change, mean that Earth was heading for a catastrophic event.

This was never correct. A quick look at the UN's forecasts, from decades ago up to today, reveals consistent predictions of an increase up to about 10.1 billion by 2100 followed by a reduction. Yet, the theme of overpopulation has always been dominant.

The reality is that Earth is indeed heading for a catastrophic event, but for the opposite reason - it is an aging population and the predicted decline in the world's population that is the true risk. Virtually every country in the world is experiencing growth in the number and proportion of older

people in their population. Population aging is poised to become one of the most significant social transformations of the 21st century, with implications for nearly all sectors of society, including the labor and financial markets, demand for goods and services, such as housing, transportation and social protection, and family structures and intergenerational ties.

The figures are clear and hit all major countries. The latest trends in population aging, as outlined in the 2022 revision of the UN's World Population Prospects, indicate that the population aged 65 years and above is growing at a faster pace than the population below that age. The global percentage of people in this age group is expected to rise from 10 percent in 2022 to 16 percent in 2050. By 2050, it is projected that the number of individuals aged 65 years or above worldwide will be double the number of chil-

dren under the age of five and nearly equivalent to the number of children under 12.

Yet, it is clear that this aging is mainly affecting developed countries, which have been - as their descriptive name indicates - leading the global political and economic agendas. This change in population is synonymous with lower productivity, less dynamism and less global power. Moreover, developed countries are now facing what is known as inverted age pyramids.

The inverted age pyramid refers to a population age structure in which the proportion of elderly individuals is larger than that of younger individuals, resulting in a shape that is opposite to the traditional pyramid-shaped age distribution. This pattern is typically associated with lower birth rates, longer life expectancy and declining fertility rates.

This poses major societal challenges, which will supersede anything else and will impact these countries' resources and capacity to act internationally with power. Moreover, these changes are leading to a rise in health-care expenses. This situation is also putting in danger historical social pacts, which were embodied by social welfare policies and guaranteed annuities for the elderly. With an inverted age pyramid, this pact is no longer sustainable and questions arise about countries' capacity to cater for an expanding elderly population. Moreover, this change also impacts productivity, causing potential deficits in the labor force, which in turn reduces financial savings.

And this is why the current immigration waves across developed countries, which are being met with feeble policies attempting to stem them, are viewed as a

deliberate strategy by policymakers to counteract the challenges posed by an aging population. This is, in reality, the undeclared solution chosen by leftist and progressive political parties, when perhaps encouraging more births, along with a better planned immigration policy, would be a preferable solution.

This format of immigration is a panicked reaction to the results of their flawed analyses and policies on overpopulation. Yet, it also guarantees them more votes, as right-wing parties tend to become the bad guys who look to expel this new segment of the population.

The impact of these new waves is not only domestic, as they have also inverted the global political order. In fact, the capacity of these countries to act internationally has been hampered as they face chaos and disorder on the domestic front, which is amplified via social media. There is no doubt this

deep societal change has a real impact and is intuitively and partially responsible for the chaos noticed in the political landscape of these developed countries.

The interesting fact is that, as we contemplate a world with a new competition between the US and China, both countries face this same issue. The number of Americans aged 65 and older is projected to increase from 58 million in 2022 to 82 million by 2050. And China's population is aging faster than almost all other countries in modern history. In 2050, the proportion of Chinese over retirement age is predicted to be 39 percent of the total population. Looking at the impact of aging populations indicates that the country that is capable of solving this problem, whether through people or the use of artificial intelligence and robots, will probably take the lead.



# Our democracy is endangered when politicians give in to threats

THE debate on Gaza this week was dripping in faux outrage. The Scottish National Party had set a trap for Labour: they would lay down a motion calling for a ceasefire. If the Tories tabled an amendment to the motion, Labour's would not be debated.

This would leave Labour MPs with a choice of backing the SNP (and condemning Israel) or being seen to vote against a ceasefire. It seemed about 100 Labour MPs were about to rebel and humiliate Sir Keir Starmer. The ruse was all going perfectly, until the Speaker allowed Starmer to table his own amendment. So yes, there was anger that Sir Lindsay Hoyle had broken with Commons convention. Especially if he did it to throw a lifeline to his old party, perhaps (as was rumoured) under threat of losing his job after the election. But the real anger was from the Conservatives and Nationalists who had come so close to putting Labour through the mincer.

It wasn't just political discomfort: the fear of being seen as against a ceasefire was, in many cases, a fear for personal safety. In the Commons it was a Tory back-bencher, Paul Bristow, who made the most arresting point. He felt strongly about Gaza, he said, so much so that he lost his government job to support a ceasefire. But he also felt personally at risk in his Peterborough constituency because he was seen to be on Israel's side.

"Because people misrepresented my position, someone suggested on social media that they would show my wife a real man," he told MPs. "Someone else suggested that they would attack me and my family." In other words, voting against a ceasefire would mean a credible threat of violence from extremists. The murder of Sir David Amess at the hands of Ali Harbi Ali permanently changed the mood in the House of Commons. Ali had tracked two Tory MPs - Michael Gove and Mike Freer - as potential targets before he settled on his victim.

The death was a reminder to

everyone in the Commons that living an open, relatively low-security existence means risking their lives. Having madmen going around willing to kill - with the minimal of reasons - gave more weight to the threats of abuse

*It's therefore easy to see why the Speaker decided to let Labour and the Conservatives both express their own ceasefire votes in their own words, given the vast public interest. What's the harm, really, in allowing two amendments even if the convention is only for one? The harm lies in the precedent. To bend Commons procedures as a result of threats of violence is to let democracy be shaped by intimidation. Rather than make MPs safer, it can do the opposite: if MPs are seen to respond to such pressure, they can expect more of it. What was once written in a small number of green-ink letters can now be typed in anonymous Twitter accounts.*

which social media has made a daily part of political life. I've spoken to MPs who put it even more emphatically than Bristow. "It's not a protest outside my house that I worry about, it's the safety of my children," said one. Another says he worries about being attacked on his journey back from the airport, which he never varies.

Freer himself decided to stand down after his North London office was set on fire. That is now thought to be the work of two homeless people who had earlier set a restaurant ablaze, but Freer had been targeted by a group calling themselves "Muslims Against Crusades". The destruction of his office seemed to fit a theme. So it wasn't just Starmer who had begged the Speaker to break with convention and let Labour vote for a ceasefire in its own language.

Individual MPs had also pleaded for him to do so, mentioning their own personal safety - and that of their staff and family.

It's therefore easy to see why the Speaker decided to let Labour and the Conservatives both express

their own ceasefire votes in their own words, given the vast public interest. What's the harm, really, in allowing two amendments even if the convention is only for one? The harm lies in the precedent. To bend Commons procedures as a result of threats of violence is to let democracy be shaped by intimidation. Rather than make MPs safer, it can do the opposite: if MPs are seen to respond to such pressure, they can expect more of it.

What was once written in a small number of green-ink letters can now be typed in anonymous Twitter accounts. The arrival of social media has made it easier for mobs to organise and intimidate and get their message directly to politicians. Such methods should be futile - and need to be seen to be futile. The tradition of an Opposition Day debate embodies

an important principle: the right to introduce a motion and then have it tested on the floor of the House. Allowing a larger Opposition party to big-foot the smaller one, as Hoyle did, denies that right.

The SNP were using their cynically, to be sure. But there is also a longstanding tradition of cynical motions, where smaller parties will propose a motion in favour of motherhood and apple pie, just to see the wicked government vote against it. Is it unfair? Of course. Rowdy? Absolutely. But it's the way that democracy has been carried out for some time and the Speaker needs to be the defender of this system, especially when there are signs of mob rule seeking to subvert it.

There are important questions about MPs' safety and security that need to be addressed, but the most important issue is not succumbing to the worst forms of intimidation. That's why, in bending the rules to navigate through a tight spot, Hoyle has ended up in far bigger trouble. Concern about him runs deeper. Some MPs believe he is worried about being kicked out of the Speaker's chair and so he has started to be biased towards Labour - in the hope that their MPs will re-elect him after the general election.

There are reports that Starmer tried to do a deal with him that day. Hoyle would stave off the Gaza rebellion by allowing Labour its own vote - and then he'd have the support of what's expected to be a Labour majority after the next election. This is hotly denied. But 60-odd MPs are now pushing for a new Speaker. My own feeling is that Hoyle erred, but in good faith. He listened to MPs' concerns and tried to enact a compromise, but apologised quickly when he realised the depth of feeling.

The row this week has not exposed that the Speaker is biased. It shows that the procedures of the House of Commons matter a lot more than many - even the Speaker - had realised. And at times when democracy is threatened by violence and intimidation, they matter more than ever.

The Telegraph

# Solidarity with the children of Sudan a moral obligation

At the heart of Sudan's ongoing conflict lies a tragedy of immense proportions, one that may go unnoticed amid the chaos and turmoil: the plight of the country's children. As the war rages on, their innocence is sacrificed at the altar of violence and strife, leaving behind a trail of devastation and despair.

The dire humanitarian situation continues to worsen with each passing day, with at least 700,000 children facing the specter of severe malnutrition this year alone, according to alarming warnings from UNICEF. Tens of thousands of these vulnerable young souls are at risk of losing their lives due to the devastating consequences of malnutrition, yet their plight remains largely overlooked by the international community.

For the children of Sudan, the harsh realities of war have become an inescapable part of daily life. The relentless conflict has shattered their sense of security, torn families apart and robbed them of their childhoods. "The world's largest displacement of children has been seen in Sudan," UNICEF spokesperson James Elder said this month. "Four million children have been displaced. That's 13,000 children every single day, for 300 days. Safety, gone. Worldly possessions, gone. Friends and family members separated or lost. Hope, fading."

As Sudan's brutal war enters its 11th month, the situation for children has reached a tipping point. Widespread malnutrition, the world's largest child displacement crisis and a shattered healthcare system pose a far graver threat to their lives than the armed conflict itself. UNICEF reports record levels of admissions for the treatment of severe acute malnutrition - the deadliest form of malnutrition - in areas accessible to humanitarian aid. However, conditions in areas rendered inaccessible due to the ongoing hostilities are undoubtedly even more dire, leaving vulnerable children without access to lifesaving assistance. Cut off from humanitarian aid

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

and essential services, these children are left utterly defenseless against the ravages of malnutrition, disease and violence. In such places, the need for urgent international intervention is more pressing than ever. Without swift and decisive actions to ensure access to humanitarian aid for children, the suffering and despair of these vulnerable populations will only deepen, leaving a lasting scar on Sudan's conscience and future.

The toll of the war on Sudan's children also extends far beyond physical suffering. Thousands have perished or sustained life-altering injuries, while countless others endure egregious protection violations, including sexual violence and forced recruitment into the conflict. With the majority of schools shuttered or struggling to reopen across the country, an astonishing 19 million school-age children face the grim prospect of being deprived of their right to education. The consequences of this lost generation will be felt for decades to come, as the cycle of poverty and conflict perpetuates itself. It is worth noting that education is not just a basic human right; it is also a powerful tool for empowerment and social change. It provides children with the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to build a better future for themselves and their communities. Furthermore, the absence of education leaves children vulnerable to exploitation, abuse and recruitment into armed groups. Without the protective environment of school, they are more likely to fall prey to the lure of violence and extremism, adding to the cycle of conflict and instability.

In addition, a generation of children who have missed out on schooling will struggle to compete in the job market, adding to the poverty crisis and hindering Sudan's economic development. As a result, it is critical that the international community prioritizes education as a central component of the humanitarian response to the conflict in Sudan. In spite of repeated appeals for urgent

international assistance, funding remains woefully inadequate, leaving countless children to suffer needlessly. The latest food security analysis for Sudan reveals unprecedented levels of hunger during the October-February harvest season, exacerbated by escalating insecurity in key regions of the country. Without a substantial increase in humanitarian aid, certain regions of Sudan are at heightened risk of plunging into severe hunger conditions during the upcoming lean season, potentially starting as early as March, as per UNICEF's assessment.

Finally, as the international community grapples with the enormity of Sudan's humanitarian crisis, it is vital that children remain at the forefront of our collective efforts. Urgent action is needed to bring an end to the conflict and provide essential humanitarian assistance to those most in need. Moreover, efforts must be made to protect children from the worst effects of the war, ensuring their safety, well-being and access to education. As UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell pointed out this month: "We cannot abandon the children of Sudan. The impact of nearly 10 months of war, displacement, disease and deprivation on Sudan's 24 million children is horrific. Without urgent action and additional resources, the country risks a generational catastrophe that will have grave implications for the country, the region and beyond. Above all, Sudan's children need a ceasefire and peace."

In conclusion, the plight of Sudan's children is a tragic consequence of the ongoing conflict and a stark reminder of the human cost of war. As the world watches in horror, we cannot afford to turn a blind eye to their suffering. It is our moral obligation to stand in solidarity with the children of Sudan, advocate for their rights and work tirelessly toward a peaceful resolution to this devastating war. Only then can we begin to heal the wounds of war and pave the way for a better tomorrow for Sudan's future generations.

## Lead by example

Increasing geopolitical tensions and challenges to globalization make regional cooperation more important now than ever. Yet how this can be achieved remains unclear. Working to improve bilateral relations across the region is one way to support multilateral efforts to enhance the prospects for sustained cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Asia-Pacific region is a vital engine for global economic growth. The various regional economic agreements, including the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation, Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership and "Indo-Pacific" Economic Framework for Prosperity, all attest to its importance. However, further efforts to harmonize regulatory practices and achieve greater regional economic integration will require significant political effort to nurture the conditions for cooperation.

China, Japan and the United States, the largest regional economies, play a crucial role and lead efforts to create commonly agreed-upon rules of cooperation. These rules help support smaller states to navigate the challenging geopolitical environment. Many states are reconsidering their strategic priorities moving into the post-pandemic world, and in this context, it is not desirable for them to ignore challenges in their bilateral relations. It is also essential to be mindful of how such challenges are addressed.

For smaller states, commonly agreed-upon rules and norms help them protect their national interests. Sensitivity to their unique conditions and aspirations helps avoid interpreting their behavior through the prism of competition between the larger powers. The region's economic powers should better recog-

Andrew Wilford

nize the impact of their actions on smaller states and work to reduce tensions at regional and sub-regional levels. This is important for furthering economic multilateralism in the region. Dialogue is key, as is a willingness to make concessions for the greater good. The China-New Zealand bilateral relationship is an example that shows how clearly delineated areas of engagement and cooperation have served both sides without giving rise to friction. Both countries have worked to build areas of complementarity while constructively engaging in dialogue around areas of difference. Reciprocity, respect and forthright dialogue form the bedrock of this "mature relationship."

This approach extends to regional cooperation efforts, which both countries have sought to strengthen. Important efforts such as the APEC Aotearoa Plan of Action to implement the Putrajaya Vision 2040 reaffirm a commitment to an "open, dynamic, resilient and peaceful" Asia-Pacific. By following these principles, regional states can further economic integration and advance people-to-people exchanges. The CPTPP is another grouping representing the highest standard of plurilateral trade agreements and a vital mechanism to enhance regional resilience and dynamism. It, too, is a means of overcoming regional economic and political headwinds.

Former New Zealand prime minister Chris Hipkins welcomed China's application to join the CPTPP during a visit to Beijing in June 2023. This underscores the importance of trust and confidence at the bilateral level for maintaining economic integration momentum at the regional level. China has also sought to demonstrate its commitment to these high standards. In 2023, it

## Momentum growing in Saudi Arabia-Japan relations

ON the 64th birthday of Naruhito, the emperor of Japan, which falls on Friday, I would like to extend my profound congratulations. I am pleased to see the celebrations in both of our friendly countries, as Saudi Arabia has also been marking its Founding Day this week. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Arab News for providing me with this opportunity to address the evolving bilateral relations between Japan and Saudi Arabia.

Reforms in the Kingdom have been progressing and, recently, Saudi Arabia has been elected to host World Expo 2030, while it has also become the sole candidate to host the FIFA World Cup in 2034. The Kingdom also holds frequent international conferences and exhibitions, including the World Water Forum in Riyadh in 2027. The Kingdom is showing its international presence more than ever before. Amid these circumstances, Japan-Saudi bilateral relations have greatly prospered over the past year. On this special day, I would like to share with you three things regarding the recent development of our two countries' partnership.

The first is the increasing number of high-level visits between Japan and the Kingdom. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's visit to Jeddah last July was followed by the visits to Riyadh of then-Foreign Minister Yoshimasa

Hayashi in September and Minister Ken Saito and Parliamentary Vice-Minister Yoichi Fukazawa in December.

These visits achieved significant results, including the hosting of the first Japan-Saudi Arabia Foreign Ministerial Level Strategic Dialogue, an agreement on the resumption of negotiations for the Japan-Gulf Cooperation Council Free Trade Agreement, the seventh ministerial meeting of the Japan-Saudi Vision 2030, and the signing of memorandums of cooperation in the fields of tourism and mineral resources.

Likewise, from the Kingdom, Minister of Defense Prince Khalid bin Salman, Minister of Communications and Information Technology Abdullah bin Amer Al-Swaha, Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources Bandar bin Ibrahim Alkhorayef, Public Investment Fund Governor Yasir Al-Rumayyan and other senior officials have visited Japan to promote bilateral relations and cooperation in a wide range of fields.

Second, from the economic perspective, Japanese companies are increasingly interested in investing in Saudi Arabia. When Kishida and Saito each visited the Kingdom last year, they were accompanied by business missions consisting of a wide variety of Japanese companies and organizations, ranging

from startups to large corporations. Japan-Saudi investment events were held and about 40 memorandums of understanding were signed in areas such as medicine and healthcare, water, space, entertainment and tourism, in addition to energy. In fact, Japanese companies such as HIS, Fujifilm Healthcare, Monstarlab, Canon Medical Systems, Takeda Pharmaceutical, Avest and AIZAWA Concrete have opened new offices and factories in the Kingdom and kicked off their business operations. In sports, international tournaments such as the FIFA Club World Cup, the World Combat Games and the Saudi Ladies International golf tournament were held in Saudi Arabia and many Japanese teams and players had opportunities to play in the Kingdom. In terms of culture, the Japan Festival was held in Riyadh last November, featuring Japanese cultural experiences, stage performances and exhibitions by Japanese companies, attracting more than 3,000 visitors over two days.

Thirdly, it is worth mentioning the promotion of tourism between the two countries. The number of visas issued to Saudis for travel to Japan has increased sharply, about four times more than in the previous year. This is due to the March launch of the online application process for tourist visas and December's start of issuance of

multiple-entry visas for Saudi passport holders who meet certain conditions. Now, discussions are underway to launch direct flights between Japan and Saudi Arabia. Meanwhile, Japanese interest in traveling to Saudi Arabia has been growing, with a Saudi familiarization trip taking place last November for Japanese travel industry representatives, while the development of tours for Japanese visitors is progressing rapidly. I hope that the increase in mutual visits among citizens of these two countries will bring Japan and Saudi Arabia closer together over the years to come.

Thus, the cordial relationship between Japan and the Kingdom continues to strengthen in various areas, such as the increasing number of visits by key government officials, the development of business in new fields and more opportunities for people-to-people communications through mutual visits by citizens. As June 7, 2025, marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries, I would like to further enhance the momentum for promoting bilateral relations, leading to a new phase of Japan-Saudi ties. It is with great pleasure that I conclude my message by wishing King Salman, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and all the people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia good health and happiness.

Arab News

## Trials of Julian Assange: A death sentence for democracy

IN June 2022, when Russia's foreign ministry announced that it was considering "stringent measures" against United States media outlets in response to US restrictions on Russian media, the US Department of State huffily complained that the Kremlin was "engaged in a full assault on media freedom, access to information, and the truth".

This sort of hypocrisy was nothing new; after all, the world's self-appointed greatest democracy has long made it clear that basic rights and freedoms are things that only its enemies must abide by. The shameless double standard enables the US to do stuff like make a ruckus over Cuba's political prisoners while simultaneously operating an illegal US prison on occupied Cuban territory - or call out China for an alleged "spy balloon" while simultaneously spying on China and everyone else on the planet.

And on Wednesday, February 21, as WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange completed one last legal attempt to avoid extradition to the US, the country's own "full assault on media freedom, access to information, and the truth" was once again on full display. If extradited, the Australian-born Assange faces up to 175 years in prison on spying charges - which again is pretty rich coming from a nation with an

extensive history of illegally spying on its own citizens. In reality, Assange's only "crime" was to utilise WikiLeaks to expose the truth of US military crimes, as in the notorious "Collateral Murder" video that was released in 2010.

The video footage, which dates from 2007, shows a massacre of a dozen people in Baghdad by upbeat helicopter-borne US military personnel, who did not find it necessary to conceal the extent to which they were getting off on the slaughter. Among the murdered Iraqis were two staffers for the Reuters news agency. Talk about assaults on media freedom.

The US insists that, by publishing such content, Assange actively endangered the lives of innocent people in Iraq, Afghanistan, and beyond. But as I have pointed out before, it would seem that one sure-fire way to not endanger innocent lives in such places would be to refrain from blowing them up in the first place. To be sure, it is common knowledge that the US has killed a whole lot of civilians in a whole lot of countries, although the official narrative still maintains that all killing is ultimately done in the name of freedom, democracy, and other noble goals - rather than for sport or fun, as might be suggested by the "Collateral Murder" production.

So why, then, the need for such

over-the-top pretences to secrecy and the super-vilification of the person of Julian Assange? In the end, the US can't afford to have its global do-gooder disguise too relentlessly or thoroughly challenged - since too much "access to information and the truth" would relieve the nation of its alibi for wreaking havoc across the world. Regardless of the final outcome, the protracted US war on Assange has already set a chilling precedent in terms of press freedom and other essential liberties.

Indeed, the calculated physical and mental destruction of Assange is meant to deter other publishers and journalists from the crime of pursuing the truth, as the US has effectively undertaken to classify reality itself. To that end, pending his extradition to the US, Assange has been held for the past five years in Belmarsh prison in southeast London, where the British government has proved faithfully complicit in the protracted efforts to bring about his demise. Shortly after Assange's arrest and incarceration in 2019, the United Nations special rapporteur on torture Nils Melzer warned that the man's life was at risk, and that he exhibited "all the symptoms typical for prolonged exposure to psychological torture".

Melzer, who is now a professor of international law at the

University of Glasgow, also remarked at the time that, "while the US Government prosecutes Mr. Assange for publishing information about serious human rights violations, including torture and murder, the officials responsible for these crimes continue to enjoy impunity." Maybe Melzer should have been jailed, too?

And as Assange's extradition battle now comes to a close, it seems the US may at long last get to definitively kill the messenger - and not just metaphorically. As his wife Stella Assange recently told reporters, "If he's extradited, he will die." But Julian Assange's persecution and torment also constitute a death sentence for any approximation of democracy and justice in the United States of America, a country whose constitution supposedly enshrines freedom of speech and the press.

At any rate, injustice has already scored a major victory with the chronic underreporting in US corporate media of Assange's trials, which National Security Agency whistleblower Edward Snowden has described as "the most important press freedom case in the world". In other words, this should be major news for the news industry itself. But disappearing the truth is another way to kill it - and in that respect, Julian Assange is already dead.

Arab News

The China Daily





# PSX stays bullish, gains 901 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Friday, gaining 901.48 points, a positive change of 1.46 percent, closing at 62,815.82 points against 61,914.34 points the previous trading day.

A total of 377,974,404 shares valuing Rs 16.011

billion were traded during the day as compared to 324,830,445 shares valuing Rs13.966 billion the last day. Some 339 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 201 of them recorded gains and 118 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 20 remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Kohinoor

Spinning with 36,167,000 shares at Rs 4.59 per share, K-Electric Limited with 26,534,263 shares at Rs 4.39 per share, and Yousuf Weaving with 16,722,000 shares at Rs 4.12 per share.

Mari Petroleum Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 52.02 per share price, closing at Rs 2,266.70, whereas the run-

ner-up was Hoechst Pakistan Limited with a Rs 29.00 rise in its per share price to Rs 1,350.00.

Reliance Cotton Spinning Mills Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 39.88 per share closing at Rs 492.00, followed by Siemens Pakistan Engineering with Rs 13.63 decline to close at Rs 586.37.

## Standard Chartered Pakistan posts record profit before tax of PKR 89.2bn

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Standard Chartered Bank (Pakistan) Limited, the country's largest and oldest International bank announced its Annual Results for 2023 today.

The Bank delivered a record performance in 2023 with a Profit before tax of PKR 89.2 billion, which is 78 per cent higher than last year. Profit after tax registered a growth of 115 per cent to close at PKR 42.6 billion, highest ever since its incorporation.

Overall revenue grew 72 per cent whereas client revenue increased by 78 per cent year on year with positive contributions from all segments. Operating expenses increased 29 per cent from last year in line with prevalent inflationary trend. Moreover, prudent risk approach coupled with recoveries of bad debts led

to a net release of PKR 163 million in loan impairments during the year.

On the asset side, the Bank achieved a milestone of crossing PKR 1.0 trillion in total assets, which grew 8 per cent from start of the year. On liabilities side, the Bank's total deposits stand at PKR 720 billion. Current accounts registered a healthy growth of PKR 34 billion (up 10 per cent) since the start of the year and comprise 50 per cent of the deposit base.

During 2023, the Bank contributed around PKR 63.5 billion to the national exchequer in lieu of direct income taxes and as a withholding agent of Federal / Provincial Tax Authorities.

With a strong Return on Equity (ROE) of 46.4 per cent for the year and Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) of 20.1 per cent, the Bank remains well

positioned for future growth. On the back of robust performance and a well-capitalised balance sheet, the Board of Directors have recommended a final cash dividend of 25 per cent (PKR 2.50 per share). This is in addition to the 65 per cent (PKR 6.50 per share) interim cash dividend announced during the year, thereby taking the total dividend pay-out to a record high of 90 per cent (PKR 9.00 per share).

Mr. Rehan Shaikh, Chief Executive Officer, Standard Chartered Bank (Pakistan) Limited said: "We are incredibly proud to announce our exceptional performance in 2023, delivering highest ever profit for the franchise."

These results are a testament to the work we have put in over the last few years to transform and grow our business. The

results also signify the strong foundations, resilient and innovative business model, trust of our clients and the value that we are creating for our shareholders.

We aim to build on this success by taking action to deliver sustainably higher returns with a focus on driving income growth and improving operational leverage. We will continue to pursue simplification and digitisation of our business with a goal to further improve our productivity, client and employee experience and create capacity to reinvest in incremental growth initiatives.

Although the external environment remains challenging, we are committed to sustainable growth in our performance, whilst delivering innovative solutions for our clients and contributing positively to Pakistan's progress."

## IBA Karachi and Synapse organize the last large assembly on creative leadership

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Office of Student Affairs (OSA) at the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi in collaboration with Synapse, Pakistan Neuroscience Institute, organized the last large assembly of this program at the IBA, Main Campus to emphasize the impact of creative leadership, on an individual and organizational level.

Speakers at the event included Founder and CEO Synapse, Dr. Ayesha Mian; Keynote Speaker and Principal, Development + Humanitarian Assistance, Miyamoto International, Unjela Kaleem; Former Chair and Professor, Department of Emergency Medicine Agha Khan University (AKU), Dr. Asad Mian; and CEO, NAPA Karachi, Mr. Junaid Zuberi. Dean Student Affairs IBA, Maheen Ghauri commenced the session and presented a welcome note.

Dr. Ayesha introduced the program and stated that its main objective was to assist the IBA fraternity to communicate better and more creatively. She emphasized that if you can inspire others to do more than you are a true leader. She also opined that fearless organizations offers psychological security to their employees so that they can voice their ideas freely.

In her keynote speech Ms. Kaleem shed light on storytelling and its role in

leadership. She said that a person's happiness depends on the quality of their thoughts and urged leaders to work cooperatively with their teams to bring out innovative ideas and solutions. She stated that to be an effective leader, one must be open to learning, criticism and failure. She urged the participants to be authentic in whatever they do. Mr. Zuberi expressed his delight on coming back to his alma mater. Sharing his thoughts on the topic, he stated that leaders must experiment and take risks to be good leaders. He underscored the importance of community engagement and said that a good leader is one who attains success with limited resources.

Mr. Asad shared the nuances of disruption and ICE (Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship).

A panel discussion ensued on 'Celebrating Failure in Leadership'. A Q&A session followed the discussion.

Earlier, Office of Student Affairs, IBA, signed an MoU with Synapse, Pakistan to launch the Tabeer - (IBA x Synapse) Program for the IBA students, staff, and faculty. The launch program took place in April 2023.

The Tabeer initiative was created with several objectives in mind. First, the IBA aims to promote compassion and empathy among IBA students, faculty, and staff. Second, it seeks to encourage effective communication and active listening within the IBA community. Third, the goal is to foster creative thinking and innovative problem-solving in leadership roles. Last but not the

least, the IBA aims to build a supportive and inclusive IBA culture that values diversity and acceptance.

The initiative consisted of several components. The first component was a series of workshops and training sessions, which educated the community on the importance of compassion, effective communication, and creative leadership. These sessions were facilitated by experts in the fields of psychology, communication, and leadership. This program concluded with a series of pitches of community-based projects that students will work on under the mentorship of faculty and staff mentors. These projects will range from hands-on-work to online virtual forums. The projects aim to bring about positive change and inclusivity amongst the IBA Community.



## Orientation session on “The Impact of Climate Change on Business” held at LCCI

LAHORE (APP): An Orientation Session on “The Impact of Climate Change on Business” held at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry, here on Friday.

The session was chaired by the Honorary Consul General of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Rao Khalid Mustafa Khan while LCCI Senior Vice President Zafar Mahmood Chaudhry, Chief Operating Officer of Beyond Carbon Pakistan Adnan Shafqat, Policy Advisor of United Nations International Trade Centre Adnan Younas Lodhi and CEO Integrated Supply Chain 4PL Solutions Mueenud Din Qazi also spoke on the occasion and shared their insights and expertise on this critical

issue. The event, organized by Beyond Carbon Pakistan in collaboration with the Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry, brought together key stakeholders to explore solutions and strategies for building a more sustainable future. Beyond Carbon Pakistan is committed to promoting sustainable development and environmental conservation in Pakistan. Through advocacy, education, and collaboration, Beyond Carbon works to address the challenges of climate change and build a more sustainable future for all.

In his opening remarks, Rao Khalid Mustafa Khan emphasized the importance of sustainable practices in ensuring the long-term viability of businesses, high-

lighting the urgent need to address climate change, citing the pervasive smog in Lahore as a stark reminder of the environmental challenges. LCCI Senior Vice President Zafar Mahmood Chaudhry emphasized the significance of working together to create a more resilient business community that can effectively tackle the challenges of climate change.

The session featured an esteemed lineup of high-ranking speakers from public and development sector organizations who shared their insights and expertise into the evolving landscape of climate change policies and their impact on businesses. Adnan Younas Lodhi, Policy Advisor at the

United Nations International Trade Centre (UNITC), discussed how CBAM (Cross Border Adjustment Mechanism) and Carbon Taxation policies are reshaping business strategies and operations.

Mueenud Din Qazi, CEO of Integrated Supply Chain 4PL Solutions (SMC-Pvt. Ltd.), addressed the pressing concerns of climate impact for business entities, discussing its direct and indirect challenges to multiple business sectors and beyond.

Their contributions added immense value to today's discussions and furthered collective understanding of the challenges and opportunities in addressing climate change.



LAHORE: Vendors arranging and displaying strawberry to attract the customers.

## Kitchen items' prices witnesses nominal increase of 0.04%

ISLAMABAD (APP): The prices of essential kitchen items increased as the weekly inflation measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed an increase of 0.04 per cent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on February 15.

According to the data of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 315.31 points as compared to 315.18 points during the past week.

As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of

30.68 per cent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs. 17,732, decreased by 0.08 percent and went down to 307.99 points from last week's 307.73 points.

The SPI for consumption groups from Rs17,732-22,888 and Rs22,889-29,517 decreased by 0.03 and 0.01 percent, whereas the SPI for the income groups Rs29,518-44,175 increased by 0.02 and above Rs44,175 by 0.09 respectively.

During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 23 (45.10%) items increased, 08 (21.51%) items

decreased and 20 (39.21%) items remained stable.

The items, which recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included onions (14.42%), eggs (11.19%), LPG (1.82%), cooking Oil 5 Litre (0.75%), wheat flour (0.36%), mustard oil (0.33%), potatoes (0.23%) and vegetable ghee 1 kg. (0.11%).

The items that recorded an increase in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included tomatoes (22.71%), bananas (7.40%), diesel (3.02%), chicken (1.22%), petrol (1.00%), sugar (0.87%), mutton (0.86%), beef (0.74%), curd (0.71%), pulse moong (0.54%), firewood (0.20%) and georgette (0.14%).

On year on year basis, the prices of commodities, which witnessed increasing trend in their respective prices included gas charges for ( 480.00%), tomatoes (199.93%), chilies powder (81.74%), wheat flour (65.29%), gents sponge chappal (58.05%), gents sandal (53.37%), sugar (50.84%), gur (48.96%), gur (48.96%), salt Powdered (39.97%), garlic (36.31%) energy saver (34.17%),

While, the prices of commodities that observed decrease including bananas (17.73%), vegetable ghee 1 KG (17.26%), mustard oil (15.98%), cooking oil 5 Litre (13.66%), vegetable Ghee 2.5 KG (12.02%), LPG (9.42%) and eggs (5.33%).

## Tea valuing \$391.408 mln imported in 07 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Tea imports into the country during the first 07 months of the current financial year grew by 7.58 per cent as compared to the imports of the corresponding period of last year.

During the period from July-January, 2023-24 over 161.823 metric tons of tea valued at \$391.408 million were imported as compared to the imports of 145,700 metric tons costing \$368.820 million of the same period of last year, according to the data of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. On month on monthly basis, tea imports

into the country grew by 22.13 per cent as 22,072 metric tons of tea valued at \$54.985 million were imported during January 2024 as compared to the imports of 17,622 metric tons worth \$45.022 million in the corresponding month of last year.

However, the imports of edible oil including soybean and palm into the country during the period under review went down by 49.85 per cent and 34.14 per cent respectively, it added.

Over 91,950 metric tons of soyabean oil valued at \$99.990 million were imported as compared to

the imports of 136,870 metric tons costing \$199.386 million in the same period of last year, whereas 1.735 million tons of palm oil worth \$1.611 billion were imported as compared to the imports of 1.927 metric tons valued at \$2.446 billion of the same period of the last year, it added.

Meanwhile, the sugar imports into the country also decreased by 42.75 per cent as about 2,260 metric tons of sugar valued at \$2.10 million were imported as compared to the imports of 4,332 metric tons worth \$3.67 million in the same period of last year.

It is worth mentioning here that during the period under review, food group exports from the country grew by 57.66 per cent as different food commodities valued at \$4.267 billion were exported as compared to the exports of \$2.706 million in the same period of last year.

On the other hand food group imports into the country during the first 07 months of the current financial year decreased by 21.09 per cent as food imports came down from \$5.983 billion in the first 08 months of the last financial year to \$4.721 billion during the same period of the current financial year.

## Next government to focus on promoting ease of doing business: Qaiser Sheikh

ISLAMABAD (APP): Newly elected Member National Assembly of PML-N and former Chairperson, NA Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh on Friday said that next government would focus on promoting ease of doing business.

He said that ease of doing business would facilitate better growth of business and investment activities in the country. He said this while talking to

the business community during his visit to the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI). Qaiser Sheikh said that new government would make business and economic policies in consultation with the business community to promote a conducive business environment and support them in business promotion.

He said that next government would try to bring further reforms in Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to

broaden the tax net and improve tax culture.

Addressing the key issues of business community, he said new government would also focus on enhancing its role in the economic development of this country. He assured that he would cooperate with the business community in addressing their concerns and facilitating them in business development.

Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President,

ICCI said that Pakistan needs to promote trade and exports to revive its economy. He urged the government to extend maximum facilitation to the private sectors in realizing the actual export potential of the country. He said that loss-making commercial state-owned entities are a huge burden on national exchequer and urged the new government to expedite their privatization process to reduce their losses and improve the performance.

## Asian markets advance after record rallies

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian shares climbed Friday following a day of record highs in Japanese, US and European markets after demand for AI-powering chips drove tech gains.

Investors celebrated on Thursday as bumper profits reported by US chip giant Nvidia, seen as a bellwether for the artificial intelligence boom, helped boost Tokyo's benchmark index past a record high set in 1989. The Nvidia and AI excitement prompted a broader rally in tech shares, with Wall Street and eurozone indices hitting fresh records.

"Investors in Asia are entering Friday's trading session riding the bull of optimism, buoyed by the U.S.-led surge in mega tech stocks that has fueled a global stock market boom," Stephen Innes, managing partner of SPI Asset

Management, said in a note. "The remarkable ascent witnessed across global markets on Thursday, driven by Nvidia's impressive 16.5% surge, is expected to set a positive tone for Asian markets on Friday."

Shanghai, Sydney, Seoul, Taipei, Wellington and Mumbai, as well as Bangkok, Manila and Kuala Lumpur were all trading higher. Jakarta and Singapore were down, while Hong Kong was flat.

Tokyo markets are closed Friday for a public holiday, following the Nikkei 225's record close up 2.2 percent at 39,098.68, boosted by Nvidia's quarterly gains. Nvidia shares on Thursday surged more than 16 percent, lifting its market value to almost \$2 trillion, after it reported quarterly profits rose to \$12.3 billion on record high revenue.

Tom Hulick at Strategy Asset Managers told Bloomberg that demand for AI was "surging worldwide across companies, industries and nations".

"We own NVDA and continue to hold the company. This is an exciting momentum play that we have been promoting and participating with for a few years now," he added.

On Thursday, three US Federal Reserve officials signalled interest rate cuts would more than likely come later this year, with one suggesting he wanted to see "at least another couple more months of inflation data" before deciding when to start lowering rates. In China, data released Thursday showed the number of foreclosed properties for sale in the country increased at a faster pace last month, according to Bloomberg,

reflecting the second-largest economy's struggling housing sector. Innes said it was too early to judge the effectiveness of Beijing's move this week to cut a key lending rate, a measure intended to support the country's beleaguered economy, but traders would be eyeing the release of Chinese house price data on Friday.

"Over the past two years, house prices in China have consistently declined year-on-year," he said.

"A reversal to growth in these prices would instill confidence among investors that the worst of the property sector downturn has passed and that the economy is on a more stable footing." Tokyo - Nikkei 225: Closed for holiday

Hong Kong - Hang Seng Index: FLAT at 16,738.46 Shanghai - Composite: UP 0.1 percent at 2,991.06





In brief

Pak Street Child Team announced

ISLAMABAD (APP): The management of the Pakistan Street Child Football Team has announced nationwide trials to take place from February 24 to March 9. The trials would be held across cities including Lahore, Karachi, Quetta, Faisalabad, Peshawar, Kohat, Nowshera, and Mirpur Azad Kashmir, according to a press release. This initiative aims to scout for exceptional talent from every corner of Pakistan for the upcoming Norway Cup 2024. The Norway Cup, one of the most prominent youth football leagues globally, was eagerly anticipating the participation of teams from around the world. The tournament was scheduled to run from July 27 to August 3 in Oslo, Norway. Having previously competed thrice in the Norway Cup, the Pakistan Street Child Football Team has demonstrated remarkable progress. In 2014, they reached the quarterfinals, followed by a runner-up position in 2016. Notably, they secured the runner-up spot once again in the 2023 edition of the tournament. The upcoming nationwide trials would give an opportunity to talented young footballers across Pakistan to showcase their skills on an international stage and continue the legacy of the Pakistan Street Child Football Team.

Hawk-Eye admits DRS error

LAHORE (PPI): Hawk-Eye has confirmed to the Pakistan Cricket Board it made a human error while declaring Rilee Rossouw as not out against Salman Ali Agha in the Quetta Gladiators versus Islamabad United match in the HBL Pakistan Super League 9 at the Gaddafi Stadium on Thursday. Hawk-Eye has admitted the system had correctly tracked the delivery in question for the Decision Review System (DRS), showing the impact as umpire's call and wickets as hitting. However, due to an operator error, incorrect ball tracking data was put to air, which meant an incorrect out was reached. "Had processes been followed as expected, this (correct ball tracking data) would have been available only a few seconds after the incorrect data was played on broadcast," Hawk-Eye explained, while also offering its regrets. Hawk-Eye is the International Cricket Council's only approved technology for ball tracking, which was first trialed in 2008 and has since been part of the DRS.

'Sports play key role in promoting peace'

DUBAI (INP): Consul General at Pakistan Consulate General Hussain Muhammad has said that all sports including cricket were key tool to promote peace and love amongst people by dispel misunderstandings and hatred. Speaking as chief guest at the post match presentation ceremony of Pakistan-India Blind Cricket T-20 international series, played at ICC Cricket Academy Dubai, UAE on Friday, the Consul General said that people of Pakistan and India always enjoy cricket matches played between the two countries. Muhammad Hussain said, "It was for the first time that I watched a live match played by visually challenged players and their talent has really impressed me a lot. Dubai is a hub for trade, sports and diplomacy that provides an ideal environment for such type of healthy and positive activities among the neighboring countries."



MULTAN: Peshawar Zalmi batter Babar Azam clean bowled by the Multan Sultans bowler Usama Mir during the PSL 9 T20 cricket match between Multan Sultans and Peshawar Zalmi at Multan Cricket Stadium.

## Zalmi end Sultans' winning streak with first triumph in PSL 9

MULTAN (Monitoring Desk): A combined batting and bowling effort led Peshawar Zalmi to a narrow five-run victory over leaders Multan Sultans in the ninth match of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9 here at Multan Cricket Stadium on Friday.

Opting to bat first, a collective effort from the Zalmi batters registered a formidable total on the board despite regular blows.

The visitors had a cautious start to their innings, specifically due to Saim Ayub, finding it hard to get going. The left-handed batter eventually perished in the fourth over after scoring a scratchy seven off 11 deliveries.

Babar Azam then partnered strongly with Haseebullah and bolstered the total. The duo added 46 runs off just 28 deliveries before Usama Mir castled the former in the ninth over with 72 runs on the board.

Zalmi's captain made 26 off 31 deliveries with the help of five boundaries.

Mir struck again in his next over to dismiss the other set batter Haseebullah, who remained the top-scorer for the Zalmi with an 18-ball 37, laced up with four boundaries and two sixes.

Later, Mohammad Haris (19), Paul Walter (16) and Rovman Powell (23) made notable contributions with brisk cameos as Zalmi set Sultans to

chase 180.

For Sultans, Mohammad Ali, David Willey and Mir claimed two wickets each while Shahnawaz Dahani and Abbas Afridi struck out a batter apiece.

PLAYING XIs  
Multan Sultans: Mohammad Rizwan (c), Dawid Malan, Reeza Hendricks, Yasir Khan, Iftikhar Ahmed, Khushdil Shah, David Willey, Usama Mir, Abbas Afridi, Mohammad Ali, Shahnawaz Dahani.

Peshawar Zalmi: Saim Ayub, Babar Azam (c), Mohammad Haris, Haseeb Ullah Khan, Rovman Powell, Asif Ali, Paul Walter, Luke Wood, Arif Yaqoob, Naveen Ul Haq, Salman Irshad.

## Lahore Qalandars determined to bounce back despite initial setbacks

KARACHI (APP): In the midst of a challenging start to their Pakistan Super League (PSL) campaign, Lahore Qalandars remain resolute in their pursuit of success. Despite suffering defeats in all three matches played thus far, the franchise's Chief Operating Officer, Sameen Rana, has expressed unwavering confidence in the team's ability to turn the tide and clinch victory in the ninth season of the tournament.

Talking to APP on Friday, Rana lauded the leadership of Shaheen Shah Afridi, hailing him as the epitome of a captain in the Pakistani cricketing landscape. He emphasized the crucial role of the team's dedicated fanbase, urging them to maintain their support as it serves

as a beacon of trust and confidence for the players.

Addressing concerns over the team's performance, Rana acknowledged the disappointment of consecutive losses but remained optimistic about future prospects. Despite the setbacks, he highlighted positive aspects such as the commendable batting display by Fakhar Zaman and the promising bowling prowess of Rashid Khan.

Reflecting on strategic decisions, Rana explained that batting orders were contingent upon prevailing conditions, demonstrating the team's adaptability to varying circumstances. He underscored the meticulous selection process despite the unavailability of certain players due to unforeseen

circumstances.

Lahore Qalandars' journey in the current season began with a defeat against Islamabad United, followed by setbacks against Quetta Gladiators and Multan Sultans. However, Rana emphasized that these initial challenges would only serve to strengthen the team's resolve as they strive for excellence in upcoming matches.

As the tournament progresses, Lahore Qalandars remain unwavering in their commitment to reclaiming their winning momentum and ultimately lifting the coveted trophy. With a blend of resilience and determination, the franchise is poised to script a compelling turnaround in the remainder of the PSL season.

## Guardiola expects Man Utd rise under Ratcliffe

Manchester (AFP): Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola is expecting a tougher challenge from Manchester United in the coming years after British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe's purchase of a minority stake in the club was completed this week.

Ratcliffe, who has taken a 27.7 percent stake in United and will have control over football operations, said he aimed to knock City and Liverpool "off their perch" within three years.

United have not won the Premier League since former manager Alex Ferguson retired in 2013 as City have become the dominant force in English football.

The blue side of Manchester have won seven Premier League titles in 12 seasons, five of which have come under Guardiola.

Ratcliffe has wasted little time in rejigging United's backroom staff, poaching Omar Berrada from City to be the club's new CEO and attempting to land Newcastle's sporting director Dan Ashworth.

"I think I am pretty sure with Sir Jim Ratcliffe and the other people, Manchester United are going to make a step forward," Guardiola said at his pre-match press conference on Friday, ahead of a trip to Bournemouth.

"I had the feeling they know exactly what they have to do, appointing people they need. With his experience in the business world it can make the project better, but that is normal."

"All the teams want (to be at the top) and we want to be there. As long as I am here we will try to be there again."

Kevin De Bruyne could return for City on Saturday as Guardiola confirmed the Belgian is "not injured."

The midfielder spent the entirety of Tuesday's 1-0 win over Brentford on the bench due to what Guardiola described as "niggles" in his hamstring.

The 32-year-old missed five months of the season after tearing his hamstring on the opening night of the league campaign.

De Bruyne had been in

scintillating form since his comeback in January, scoring two goals and providing seven assists in eight appearances.

City remain in the hunt to defend the treble of Premier League, Champions League and FA Cup they won last season.

And Guardiola believes he was right to rest De Bruyne with so much on the line in the coming months.

"He's good, not injured," said the City boss. "I don't know if he is 100 percent but we took a good decision to not take a risk, apart from the result. If the result was not good, people would ask why he didn't play. He didn't feel comfortable."

"The day after the game he didn't train and yesterday everyone was off, but he trained by himself. Today we will assess. I am sure he will travel."

With Liverpool not in Premier League action this weekend, victory for City on England's south coast would close the gap at the top of the table to just one point.

### Ahmed qualifies for ITF World Jr final

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ahmed Nael Qureshi of Pakistan moved in the boys singles final of ITF Pakistan Zainab Ali Naqvi Memorial World Junior Championship Leg-2 here at PTF-SDA Tennis Complex on Friday.

Ahmed Nael beat Jacob Kailiang Shen of Hong Kong by 6-4,6-3 in the semifinal. He would face Shijie Chen of China in the final.

In other boys singles semifinal, Shijie Chen (CHN) beat Kaigaoge Kang (CHN) by 6-2,6-4.

In girls singles semifinals, Kira Kalinouskaya (BLR) beat Stefaniya Neporent (BLR) 6-4,6-1; Paramee Tadkaew (THA) beat Ekaterina Pestereva(RUS) 6-4 (Retd). In boys doubles final, Dong Hyeon Euom (KOR), Jiwan Park (KOR) beat Kaigaoge Kang (CHN), Oscar Reilly 6-4,5-7(10-8). The girls and boys singles final would be played on Saturday.

### Dutch hockey club wins three-match friendly series

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Dutch Hockey Club Billy Ozendaal emerged victorious in the three-match series against Higher Education Commission (HEC) team by pulling off win in the third and final match here at Naseer Bunda Hockey Stadium on Friday.

The match was tied at 2-2 within the scheduled time. The Dutch team won the match with three goals to two on penalty strokes.

The diplomats from various countries watched the match along with Olympians, sports enthusiasts, university students from the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

Among the attendees were the Ambassador of Dutch to Pakistan, Henny de Vries, the Australian High Commissioner, Neil Hawkins, Acting Ambassador of Romania to Pakistan, Eduard-Robert Preda, Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan to Pakistan, Totuiaev Ulanbek Asankulovich, the High Commissioner-designate of Brunei Darussalam, Colonel (r) Pengiran Haji Kamal Bashah and Ambassador of Morocco to Pakistan and Dean of the African Corps Mohammed Karmoune were present on the occasion.

## Australia punish New Zealand to win second T20 and clinch series

AUCKLAND (AFP/APP): Australia's bowlers sliced through some reckless New Zealand batting on Friday to win the second Twenty20 international by 72 runs in Auckland and clinch the three-match series.

Leg-spinner Adam Zampa knocked over the middle order to finish with 4-34 as the home side were skittled for 102 in 17 overs at Eden Park. New Zealand lost early wickets and always looked unlikely to match the visitors, who were dismissed for 174 in the final over.

Only Glenn Phillips provided resistance with 42 but New Zealand's hopes were buried when he was caught at long-on off Zampa in the 14th over. Australia captain Mitchell Marsh said he was worried his team hadn't scored enough but was delighted with their bowling, with the T20 World Cup coming up in June.

"A great win for Australia. Our backs were against the wall, I thought we were probably 50 short but the way our bowlers performed was outstanding," said Marsh, who praised the match-winning prowess of Zampa.

"I've said it so many times before -- he's probably the most important player in this team. He was brilliant again." The Black Caps' cause wasn't helped by a thumb injury suffered

in the field by Devon Conway, which prevented the opener from batting.

The injury, sustained while he was wicket-keeping, may place Conway in doubt for Sunday's third match in Auckland.

Captain Mitchell Santner said X-rays showed Conway hadn't suffered a fracture and he hoped the experienced batsman would be available for the two-Test series starting next week in Wellington. Santner praised his bowlers but said the batting effort lacked discipline.

He promoted himself up the order but that experiment failed and he was one of eight New Zealand batsmen who didn't go past 10 as they fell to a succession of loose shots. "We were pretty happy at halfway but they bowled extremely well," he said.

Earlier, opener Travis Head blazed 45 runs off 22 balls after Australia were sent in but they stumbled through the middle stages in the face of brilliant bowling from paceman Lockie Ferguson. Ferguson claimed 4-12 from 3.5 overs as Head's dismissal sparked the loss of five quick wickets after Australia had been 84-1 in the seventh over.

Other notable scores were 26 from Marsh and a late 28 from player of the match Pat Cummins. Santner, Adam Milne and Ben Sears all took two wickets each for the hosts.



## Cas dismisses Russia's appeal against IOC ban

MOSCOW (Agencies): Russia's appeal against the International Olympic Committee's decision to suspend its membership has been dismissed by the Court of Arbitration for Sport. The IOC suspended the Russian Olympic Committee (ROC) "with immediate effect" in October for "a breach of the Olympic charter".

The ROC recognised regional organisations from four Ukrainian territories illegally annexed by Russia since its full-scale invasion began in February 2022. The suspension by the IOC means the ROC is no longer entitled to operate as a national Olympic committee. Cas said: "The Cas panel in charge of this matter dismissed the appeal and confirmed the challenged decision, finding that the IOC executive board did not breach the principles of legality, equality, predictability or proportionality."

"The Cas panel's decision is final and binding except for the parties' right to file an appeal to the Swiss Federal Tribunal within 30 days on limited grounds." Olympic councils from the regions of Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia had been recognised by the ROC.

The ROC said its suspension by the IOC was "another counterproductive decision with obvious political motivations". In December, the IOC announced that Russian and Belarusian athletes who have qualified for the Paris 2024 Olympics will be allowed to participate as neutrals.

The conditions of their inclusion include competing without flags, emblems or anthems of their country.

The IOC had been under pressure to ban Russian and Belarusian athletes from competing at Paris 2024 and Ukraine had threatened to boycott the 2024 Games if the ban was not upheld. IOC president Thomas Bach said in December that "individual athletes cannot be punished for the acts of their governments".

The 2024 summer Olympics will open in Paris on 26 July and close on 11 August. Athletes from Russia and its ally Belarus will also be allowed to compete at the 2024 Paralympics as neutrals. In September, the International Paralympic Committee voted to partially suspend the national Paralympic committees of Russia and Belarus.

### India level Pakistan in T20 Blind cricket series

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan lost the 2nd T-20 International of the three match blind cricket series to India by 46 runs at the ICC Cricket Academy in Dubai, UAE on Friday.

Winning the toss, Pakistan opted to field first, a strategic move considering the dew factor. India, seizing the opportunity, put up a daunting total of 224 runs on the scoreboard within the stipulated 20 overs for the loss of 3 wickets.

Sunil Ramesh showcased his batting ability with an impressive 87 runs off 61 balls, while Venkatesh and Ajay Kumar Reddy contributed crucial runs with 56 and 42 respectively.

Despite their efforts, Pakistan's bowlers, led by Zafar Iqbal who claimed only one wicket, struggled to break through consistently. In reply, Pakistan's batsmen started confidently but faltered under the pressure of the challenging target.

Despite valiant efforts from Salman, who scored a resilient 58 off 42 balls, and contributions from Badar Munir 30 off 16 balls and Nisar Ali's 25 runs, Pakistan fell short, reaching 178 runs for the loss of 6 wickets in their allotted overs.

Ajay Reddy, Durga Rao, and Debaraj made crucial breakthroughs for the Indian side, restricting Pakistan's chase.

Sunil Ramesh was declared Man of the Match.

### Four players from KP selected

PESHAWAR (APP): Four players from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa managed to make it to the national badminton team that would represent the country in South Asian International Badminton Championship to be commencing from March 3, 2024 at Jinnah Sports Complex Islamabad.

The players comprising Abdul Haseeb Khan and Mohammad Ayan will represent the country in the U15 category while Qari Mohammad Umar and Fahad Ahmed will represent the country in the U17 category.

These players will show their skills in the South Asian Championship to be played in Islamabad from March 3. Apart from Pakistan, teams from India, Sri Lanka, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan will participate in the Championship. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Badminton Association President Zafar Ali, Secretary Muhammad Amjad Khan, Chairman Executive Sadaqat Shah, coaches Hayat Khan, Nadeem Khan, Malik Faraz, and Bushra Khan have congratulated the players.

It should be noted that under the supervision of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Badminton Association, these players are playing in the Directorate General Sports Badminton Academy, who have got the opportunity to come forward with the joint efforts of the coaches and the association and the support of the Directorate Sports.



ISLAMABAD: Players in action during HEC-PMYP V/S The Dutch Club teams during Welkom Oldenzaalse Hockey Club Hockey Talent hunt youth sports league organized by Prime Minister'' Youth Program at Sports Complex. —APP Photo





## In brief

### Nine gamblers arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested nine gamblers on cock fights and recovered 10 mobile phones, stake money of Rs 23,850, a Suzuki Carry, 12 motorcycles, two chickens and other items from their possession during a crackdown here on Friday, informed a police spokesman. According to the details, Wah Cantt Police held nine gamblers identified as Mehtab, Waqas, Saad, Taimoor, Gul Naz, Ismail, Sakhawat, Ishaq and Zulfiqar. Police have registered a case against all the accused and further investigation is in progress. SP Potohar Nisar Nawaz appreciated the performance of the police team adding that gambling was the root of other evils and action against such elements would be continued.

### PAC organized painting competition

RAWALPINDI (APP): Punjab Arts Council (PAC) on Friday organized the first Punjab painting competition 2024 at the Government Post Graduate College Attock. According to PAC spokesman, dozens of candidates from 16 to 35 years of age participated in the competition while the topics including early marriage, small family, prosperous Pakistan, poverty in Pakistan, civilization and culture of Punjab and natural beauty of Pakistan were kept in the district-level painting competitions. Sara Hafeez, Umm Salma and Saleha Tariq won the first, second and third positions respectively in the painting competitions. Deputy Commissioner Attock, Rao Atif Raza was the chief guest of the prize distribution ceremony. Director Arts Council Waqar Ahmad, former Principal Government Post Graduate College Professor Majid Bhatti, Deputy Director Colleges were also present with him on this occasion. Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Commissioner Rao Atif Raza said that civilization and culture were the mirror of a nation and the flowers of peace and security bloom in the society with the promotion of positive civilizational and cultural values. "I congratulate the Punjab Arts Council for organizing painting competitions", he said and added that painting competitions brought forward the creativity of the youth.

### Work of RWMC's staff lauded

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chairman Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) Saqib Rafiq on Friday lauded the efforts of sanitary workers for maintaining the cleanliness of the all Metro-bus stations. During a visit to metro bus stations at IJP road, he said that due to the tireless work and dedication of the workers of RWMC, the Islamabad Rawalpindi Metro Bus Station cleanliness arrangements were up to international standards. Saqib interacted with the RWMC staff and appreciated their determinations for making the metro stations neat and clean. He said that metro bus track was being washed regularly while RWMC was also fulfilling the responsibility of cleanliness of the city with dedication. The chairman further said that sanitary workers had been deployed at the Rawalpindi cricket Stadium for the upcoming PSL cricket matches scheduled to be held in March, however he urged the residents to throw garbage in dustbins placed in every Union council of the city or put it in the waste bags and hand over to the sanitary workers.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Education, Professional Training Madad Ali Sindhi, cutting ribbon to Inaugurate the ceremony of Islamabad Model School (I-V) E-7 sector in Federal Capital.

## Senators perturbed over PMDC's lopsided criteria for foreign medical graduates

ISLAMABAD (APP): The members of the Upper House of the Parliament on Friday expressed their resentment over the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC)'s lopsided criteria set pass house job license examination meted out for medical graduates of foreign universities.

Taking the floor on the matter of public importance during the fourth meeting of the 355th Senate session, Senator Taj Haider of Pakistan People's Party Parliamentary (PPPP) apprised the forum that none of the foreign universities' graduated MBBS students had passed the PMDC examination.

Senator Haider said it was a matter of public importance that the MBBS doctors graduated from foreign universities require a license from PMDC for house job for which the passing marks criterion set was 70 percent and no student managed to achieve it in the recent examination.

However, for students graduated from Pakistani universities and medical colleges the passing marks were 50%, he said, adding, "The matter should be sent to the Senate Committee on Health."

While commenting on the issue, Senator Humayun Mohmand of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) apprised the House that the matter was discussed earlier around 3-4

times in the committee.

The forum had directed the then newly restructured PMDC alongwith its Academic Council to look into the matter. "As chairman committee, I directed to send the matter to privilege committee, as it is unjust to discriminate the MBBS graduates of foreign universities where many private medical colleges in Pakistan have lower standard than the foreign universities, and its graduates have been permitted 50% passing marks," he said. Senator Mohmand termed the issue as a violation of Article 25 of the Constitution that demanded to ensure equal opportunities to all at the same level. He recommended that the PMDC should have a unified standard in this regard. "During the farewell meeting of the Senate's Health Committee, the PMDC said their academic council has kept this issue on its next meeting agenda," he added.

Senator Sardar Muhammad Shafiq Tareen of Pashtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party (PMAP) said the PMDC had turned a deaf ear to the recommendations of the Committee and the House should give ruling on this issue to resolve the matter. Senator Prof. Dr. Mehr Taj Roghani of PTI said the issue of young doctors was a serious problem as there was globally 50% passing marks criteria while the PMDC had set a 70% benchmark that was not achieved by a single foreign graduate of

the country which was regrettable.

She also raised the issue of massive increase in drugs prices. Senator Roghani said there was a skyrocketing increase in drugs' prices from paracetamol to many painkillers and lifesaving medicines.

She added that many advanced stage cancer patients who rely on painkillers and sedations were unable to by their critical medicines to get remedy from agony due to serious disease. Senator Rubina Khalid of PPPP also mentioned that the test discussed at the forum was for getting house job license whereas there was a separate examination to get another license for clinical practice. She added that the prevailing examination criteria had deprived the foreign graduates of to even practice in the country which needed to be addressed properly.

Deputy Chairman Senate, Mirza Muhammad Afridi marked the ruling from the Houe of Senate to direct PMDC to give report to it on the matter of house job license examination and to the quarters concerned for irregular increase in the price of various drugs. Senators Zeeshan Khanzada, Shahadat Awan, Molvi Faiz Mohammad, Saif Ullah Abro and Muhammad Tahir Bizinjo also addressed the forum on the matters of public importance.

## 'All possible facilities to be ensured for Hujjaj intending hajj 2024'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed Friday said that all possible facilities will be provided to Pakistani pilgrims during this year's hajj where special training programs were also being conducted at the district level through camps managed by the religious affairs ministry.

In an exclusive interview with PTV news channel, he said that under the supervision of the Pakistan Hajj mission special catering companies were being arranged to feed pilgrims under a government scheme and will ensure quality and safety standards at every step.

Minister said that this year Pakistan Hajj mission is offering simplified transportation services to Pakistani pilgrims with standard buses ensuring round-the-clock, adding that, the transport department will fully dedicate themselves to the sacred duty.

A comprehensive transportation guidelines had also been issued at each building, he added. The caretaker government had introduced several new services for the pilgrims to help them perform the rituals with comfort and ease, he mentioned.

Monitoring Cell has been put in place to closely monitor and address any potential issues of the private Pilgrims, he said, adding, furthermore, various other specialized units, such as a Wheelchair Desk have been established to cater to the specific needs of different groups of pilgrims.

Replying to a question, he said in a bid

to improve the Hajj pilgrimage experience for travelers in 2024, the federal government has also unveiled a comprehensive update to the Hajj package, adding that, first time in history government has introduced a shorter 20 to 25-day Hajj program in which we will provide pilgrims with a more concise and efficient experience.

This change is expected to make the pilgrimage more accessible to a broader range of people, he added.

Every pilgrim will also receive a specially designed bag featuring the Pakistani flag, a QR code for easy identification, and relevant information, he mentioned.

In a move toward greater administrative efficiency, the government had launched a dedicated mobile app for online registration of Hajj applications, he said, adding, this app is streamlining the administrative aspects of the pilgrimage, making it easier for pilgrims to apply and manage their journey. To another question, Aneeq said that every pilgrim will be given a mobile SIM of a Saudi company for free which will have 180 minutes for international calls. He further said that the Caretaker government reduced the price of the official Hajj package by Rs0.1 million, adding, this year hajj is more affordable as compared to last year.

He also appealed to all pilgrims that all representatives of Pakistan should express maximum restraint and good behaviour as there would be Muslims from every nook and cranny of the world.

## NDMA alerts authorities after rain-thunderstorms

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Friday issued an advisory to alert all national and provincial disaster management

authorities and relevant departments to ensure precautionary arrangement to manage any emergency situation.

The NDMA Technical Team and Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) forecast that a westerly wave was entering from 25th February 2024 and might persist till 27th February, the advisory said. However, under the influence of the intruding weather system, rain-wind and thunderstorms

with snowfall over the hills was expected in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Gilgit Baltistan (GB), Murree, Galliat and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK).

It added that the snowfall might disrupt roads in Murree, Galliat, Naran, Kaghan, Dir, Swat, Kohistan, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Shangla, Astore, Hunza, Skardu, Neelum valley, Bagh, Poonch and Haveli during the forecast period.

The tourists were advised to remain cautious during the spell and check weather updates before traveling. It cautioned that electricity and other utility services may

get disrupted. Landslides, mudslides, isolated rain spells and snowfall may lead to potential road blockages in Upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Murree, Galliat, Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan.

The snowfall and rains would likely to cause significant drop in temperatures. In Balochistan and Southern Punjab, heavy rainfall may cause flash flooding in local nullahs.

The landslides and mudslides may lead to potential road blockages due to isolated rain spell. Moreover, the farmers are advised to remain extra cautious and plan agricultural activity accordingly during the spell.

## IESSI leads groundbreaking health initiative

ISLAMABAD (APP): On the International Day of Social Justice, IESSI spearheaded a significant initiative in collaboration with ILO Pakistan and the Labour Department ICT under which a free medical camp was setup by Commissioner IESSI.

The event boasted esteemed attendees, including Mr. Geir Thomas Tunstall, Country Head of ILO, the DG Chief Commissioner Office, Commissioner IESSI, and the Director of Labour & Industries, who collectively graced the occasion as chief guests. The ICT spokesman Dr Abdullah Tabasum on Friday said that the medical camp, held in the brick kiln community of Islamabad, witnessed active participation from Commissioner IESSI, Director (Labour), Development and Finance, and representatives from ILO, Chamber of Commerce, as well as various medical and paramedical professionals.

He further said that diverse health screenings were a highlight, encom-

passing tests for Hepatitis B and C, Diabetes, Cholesterol, and HbA1c. Meanwhile eye and breast cancer screenings added another layer to the initiative, reflecting a holistic approach to community well-being.

Beyond medical check-ups, the awareness camp addressed crucial topics such as diabetes, hypertension, child nutrition development, and the significance of using sugar and gluten-free products, he added. Commissioner (IESSI) Social Security, Rabia Aurangzeb, shared that over 500 individuals actively engaged in the free medical camp.

The event extended its impact by distributing essential supplies, including school bags, uniforms, first aid kits, and other thoughtful gifts to the children of the area. This philanthropic effort went beyond healthcare, reaching out to the community's educational and well-being needs.

In a noteworthy collaboration between IESSI, ILO Pakistan, and the Labour Department ICT, this free medical camp

exemplified a shared commitment to social justice.

The participation of key figures, including Mr. Geir Thomas Tunstall and Commissioner IESSI, elevated the event, highlighting its significance in addressing healthcare disparities.

The choice of the brick kiln community in Islamabad added a poignant touch, emphasizing the outreach to underserved populations. The various medical camps provided a comprehensive health check, while the inclusion of awareness sessions showcased a dedication to preventive care and education.

Commissioner (IESSI) Social Security, Rabia Aurangzeb, expressed gratitude for the substantial turnout, revealing the heartening impact on the local community.

The distribution of school essentials and other gifts further underscored the holistic approach taken, ensuring that the event left a lasting positive impression on the lives it touched.

## CPO orders to accelerate crackdown against kite flyers, sellers; 69 arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi district police have accelerated their ongoing crackdown against kite flyers and sellers and managed to net over 69 kite flying ban violators on Thursday night on recovery 3700 kites, 70 string rolls, said a police spokesman here on Friday.

He informed that City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi had directed police officers to accelerate crackdown against kite flyers and sellers.

Rawalpindi district police had arrested over 450 kite flyers and sellers during this season and recovered over 56,000 kites, over 900 kite flying string rolls, weapons, sound systems, liquor and other items from their possession, he said.

Police had made it clear that kite flying was banned and strict action would be taken against the violators, the spokesman added.

Rawalpindi police, on the orders of the CPO, were making all-out efforts to stop kite flying and control aerial firing. The spokesman said all police stations had been directed to speed up the ongoing operations against kite-flying ban violators while special teams under the supervision of senior police officers were also conducting raids in different areas.

Superintendent of Police, Rawal

said that all available resources were being utilized to deal with kite flying ban violators.

He said Police under the supervision of Senior Superintendent of Police, Operation, were making efforts to control kite flying, aerial firing and violation of the ban.

The spokesman further said that Rawalpindi district police had devised a plan to foil plans to celebrate the banned festival of Basant.

More than 1500 police personnel were deployed on large rooftops in densely populated areas to check kite flying on Thursday night and Friday, where they were equipped with binoculars as well as other resources to apprehend those violating the law by flying kites. Drone cameras were also being used to track those involved in aerial firing, he said.

"Keeping in mind the need to protect the citizens from any untoward incidents, more than 1500 police officials were deployed to thwart any plans for Basant and drone operators are being used to monitor kite-flying," he said. Police officials have reiterated time and again that flying kites is a potentially dangerous sport that can lead to the loss of life, and those found disregarding its cost to human lives will be prosecuted

according to law.

The parents, teachers, scholars and civil society were also taken into confidence to play their role in preventing the celebration of Basant.

The Rawalpindi police had also launched an awareness campaign about the hazards of the risky sport with the help of religious scholars, who were asked to make announcements on their respective mosques' sound systems about the demerits of kite-flying. The police had finalized arrangements for live monitoring of all densely populated areas, while all Station House Officers (SHOs) had been directed to ensure strict surveillance of kite sellers in their areas.

The police teams were trying to trace and arrest culprits involved in buying and selling killer strings and kites through social media, he said adding, that monitoring of courier services and passenger vehicles coming from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa was also being tightened, so that any kites and chemical strings being brought to the city for Basant could be seized.

SSP Operations, Rawalpindi, Hafiz Kamran Asghar said that no one would be allowed to violate the ban and strict action in accordance with the law would be taken against kite flyers and sellers.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor displaying second-hand clothes to attract customers at Khanna Pul.

## ANF recovers 331 kg drugs in 10 operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan while conducting 10 operations across the country managed to recover over 331 kg of drugs and arrested 11 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday.

He informed that 10.5 kg heroin was recovered from a parcel being sent to the UK at Cargo Office Islamabad while an accused was also arrested.

In another operation, 2.5 kg of Ice was recovered from a parcel being sent to Sri Lanka at the Lahore Courier Office. 68 Ice-filled capsules were recovered from a passenger going to Qatar at Islamabad Airport. 1.8 kg hashish was recovered from a Doha-bound passenger, arrested at Peshawar Airport.

330 grams of cocaine was recovered

from a parcel sent from Nigeria at Lahore Airport. 255 kg opium was recovered from the Galikank Mustang area and 29 kg hashish was recovered from two suspects arrested from M-1 Motorway Islamabad.

In the 8th operation, 22 kg of hashish was recovered near the Lakpas Toll Plaza Mustang area and an accused was arrested during the operation.

Seven kg of hashish was recovered from two suspects rounded up near Sher Shah Toll Plaza Multan.

In the 10th operation, one kg of hashish was recovered from three suspects held near Mohalla Usmania Gilgit.

The spokesman said that separate cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.



‘A company will invest \$27.5m’

KABUL (Ariana News): The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum on Friday announced that Ariana Highland Company will invest \$27.5 million in the extraction of Jegdalek ruby mine on the outskirts of Kabul. In a statement, the ministry said that the bidding ceremony for the mine was held again with the participation of Ariana Highland and Mirza Sultani companies, adding that the former won it by accepting 44 percent share for the Islamic Emirate.

Execution of 2 sparks intl reactions

KABUL (TOLOnews): The execution of two people in Ghazni on Thursday sparked reactions from international institutions. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) on X said that the United Nations is against executions. UNAMA said on X: “Two people were publicly executed today by Afghanistan’s de facto authorities in Ghazni province. The UN is strongly opposed to the death penalty. It is inconsistent with the fundamental right to life.”

Asia is comparable to a living body composed of soil and water. The heart that beats inside the body is Afghanistan. The destruction of Afghanistan would be the destruction of Asia. And in its progress and prosperity lies the well-being of Asia. - Allama Iqbal

# US calls on UN for roadmap to fully integrate Afghanistan into international system



KABUL (Khaama Press): The US representative for Afghanistan states that his country welcomes the continuation of the Doha meetings regarding Afghanistan, calling for UN leadership to develop a roadmap for Afghanistan’s full integration into the international system. Thomas West says that the welfare of Afghans and the common interests of the global community will guide this effort. Thomas West, the US representative for

Afghanistan, wrote on his social media platform X, on Friday, February 23, that there is a strong consensus regarding collective interests in Afghanistan. “On the next steps, the U.S. welcomes the continuation of this format as well as calls for a UN-led process to develop a roadmap for Afghanistan’s full integration into the international system. The Afghan people’s well-being, and the international community’s shared inter-

ests, must guide this work,” West said. He also added “No country wants to see the emergence of a terrorism threat from Afghanistan. All want to see women and girls return to secondary school, university, work, and public life.” West also mentioned the international commitment to help the Afghan people, pointing out that humanitarian aid was provided to over 26 million Afghans last year. However, he raised con-

cerns about the sustainability of this aid and emphasized the importance of an approach that empowers Afghans economically. He also said “Many countries acknowledged the Taliban’s implementation of a poppy ban that UNODC assesses brought cultivation down 95%. We reviewed international support for farmers seeking alternative crops and addicts in recovery – more coordination needed.” Furthermore, West appreciated the participation of Afghan civil society members, both from within and outside the country, and discussed economic and basic needs, respecting human rights, and the importance of continued engagement with Afghans, including the Taliban. The second Doha meeting on Afghanistan, hosted by Antonio Guterres, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, was held on the 18th and 19th of February. The UN Secretary-General, after this meeting, said in a press briefing that the situation of women in Afghanistan has worsened, the issue of combating terrorism havens remains unresolved, and an inclusive government has not been formed.

# First cargo flight takes place from UAE to Balkh since IEA takeover

KABUL (Ariana News): For the first time since the Islamic Emirate’s takeover, a flight from the United Arab Emirates to Maulana Jalaluddin Mohammad Balkhi Airport in Mazar-e-Sharif city was carried out through the air corridor, officials said. The airport officials said that sixteen tons of commercial goods, including electronic devices related to Bayat Power company were transferred from Dubai to Mazar-e-Sharif city. “This is the first time that a flight from Dubai to Mazar-e-Sharif has been made through the air corridor; discussions with traders are ongoing and we hope to keep this corridor active in the future,” said Abdullah Motmaen, director of customs of Maulana Jalaluddin Mohammad Balkhi Airport.

Meanwhile, Balkh Chamber of Commerce and Investment officials stress the beginning of the general process of transferring commercial commodities by air corridor.

“In the transfer of commercial goods, air corridor is so important,” said Asadullah Asadi, head of Balkh’s chamber of commerce and investment. Earlier, through the air

corridor of Maulana Jalaluddin Mohammad Balkhi Airport, Pine nuts and other commercial items were exported to the countries of the region.



# Global fund allocates \$4.7 million for health services to Afghan returnees

KABUL (Ariana News): The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria has allocated over \$4.7 million in emergency funding to provide health services for HIV, tuberculosis (TB), and malaria to the 1.3 million Afghans returning from Pakistan in the coming year. This emergency funding supplements a \$66 million grant that began on Jan. 1, 2024, spanning three years and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Annelise Hirschmann, Head of Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean Department at the Global Fund, noted the significance of the influx: “The anticipated 1.3 million people represent over 3% of Afghanistan’s population. This increase, particularly in rural and hard-to-reach areas bordering Pakistan, poses an epidemiological risk and necessitates reinforced HIV, TB, and malaria services.” The emergency funds will be used as fol-

lows: Malaria: Diagnostic services, distribution of long-lasting insecticidal nets (LLINs) in high-risk areas, and training for residents in low-risk provinces to prevent the spread from high-risk areas in Pakistan. Tuberculosis: Creation of point-of-care facilities at the border with testing equipment, expansion of active case finding, integrated sample transportation, and treatment. AIDS: Voluntary testing at border entry points, counseling, and continued

treatment for displaced individuals. Stephen Rodriques, UNDP Afghanistan Resident Representative, expressed confidence in the existing systems to meet the returnees’ immediate health needs. “With this emergency funding from the Global Fund, we can further minimize health risks for the returnees, who are in a precarious situation. We welcome this decision and anticipate continued collaboration with the Global Fund,” he said.



# IEA will attend future UN meetings if demands accepted: deputy PM

KABUL (Ariana News): Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs Mawlawi Abdul Kabir has called the recent decision of the United Nations for the participation of the Islamic Emirate at the second Doha meeting on Afghanistan “unfair” and said that if the demands of the IEA are accepted by the UN and countries in future meetings, the acting government will participate on behalf of Afghanistan, the deputy PM’s office said in a statement. Abdul Kabir made these statements on Thursday at a graduation ceremony in Kabul. Kabir added that “Afghanistan, as an independent country and Islamic Emirate as a legitimate Islamic system, assures all its neighbors and the international community that the acting government is striving for economic and development cooperation based on a balanced and moderate policy.” He also stressed that there would be no threat to anyone from Afghanistan.



While fighting against drugs and corruption, sustainable stability can only be guaranteed under the rule of the Islamic Emirate, which Afghans and the international community have understood, according to the statement. He stated that with the

arrival of the Islamic Emirate, the national budget was prepared from internal revenues for the first time, and in addition to paying the expenses of civil administrations and development projects, the expenses of the Islamic Army and security depart-

ments are also paid from the national budget. The second meeting of special representatives of countries regarding Afghanistan was held on Sunday and Monday of this week in Doha, in which the delegation of the Islamic Emirate did not participate.

# Muttaqi to Otunbayeva: Doha meeting yields no specific outcome

KABUL (Khaama Press): Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi told UNAMA head Roza Otunbayeva that their administration closely watched the Doha meeting and noticed that it didn’t produce any specific results. Spokesman Abdul Qahar Balkhi, said on his social media platform X, Muttaqi hopes that the

interactive meetings with the Taliban administration will yield positive results. Muttaqi believes discussions with the de facto authorities on Afghanistan’s matters need to be thorough for any progress. Balkhi, citing Otunbayeva, conveyed that UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres thinks

actions shouldn’t complicate engagement with the Taliban in appointing a special representative for Afghanistan. The second meeting of special representatives for Afghanistan happened in Doha on 18 and 19th of February, but the Taliban’s representatives didn’t take part. Participants in this two-day meeting dis-

cussed proposals for an independent assessment of Afghanistan and the appointment of a special representative of the United Nations for Afghanistan. However, the appointment of the special representative has been deferred to the upcoming session of the Security Council, expected to convene shortly.

# Afghan migrant killed by throwing off bridge in Tehran: Iran Right Group

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Iranian Human Rights Center announced the identity of a young man who was thrown off a bridge and killed by a supporter of the Iranian government two weeks ago on suspicion of “insulting the flag”. The Iranian Human Rights Center wrote on its social media platform X, on Thursday that 19-year-old Elias Mohammadi was killed by a “Hezbollah” individual at midnight on February 22 on Niayesh Highway in Tehran. It is reported that Iranian security forces have banned any information about the killing of Elias Mohammadi.



Elias Mohammadi, who worked in a fruit shop during the day and cleaned the streets for the Tehran Municipality at night, was killed when the murderer, suspecting him of “insulting the Islamic Republic flag,” threw him from the top of the bridge down onto the highway. The killer claimed that he attacked Elias Mohammadi to “defend the government” and threw him off the bridge. Meanwhile, several journalists said that Tehran security forces have banned any information about the killing of Elias Mohammadi, as reported by media outlets. According to these reports, after the murder, security forces, through threats to agents and witnesses, attempted to remove all identity information about Elias. According to what was published in

Hamshahri, the killer admitted, “I thought the victim intended to insult the flags and wanted to destroy them. I even called the police and reported the matter.” This person stated that after the confrontation with the victim, he pushed him off the bridge and lost his life.

# Reconstruction work on Hairatan-Mazar-e-Sharif railway starts

MAZAR-E-SHARIF (TOLOnews): An Uzbek company started the reconstruction of destroyed sections of the Hairatan-Mazar-e-Sharif railway. The officials of the Afghanistan Railway Authority (ARA) said that this project will cost more than \$6 million dollars and its work will be completed in the next three months. Said Naeem Mohammadi, finance and administrative deputy of ARA, at the opening ceremony of this project said that this railway was destroyed by “unknown people” and it is going to be reconstructed again with funding from the ARA. Mohammadi said: “This railway was damaged by unknown and ignorant people which caused a serious loss to the government, and now its reconstruction was contracted with an Uzbek company.”

Shafiqullah Mahmood, head of Balkh’s railway department, said: “Its cost is approximately \$6.3 million dollars that has been contracted.” Noorulhadi Edris, deputy governor of Balkh said: “Projects are implemented among countries from Uzbekistan to Pakistan and Afghanistan strengthen our relationship with neighboring countries.” The head of Balkh’s

Chamber of Commerce and Investment said that with the activation of this railway, congestion in the customs of this province will also decrease. Asadullah Asadi, head of Balkh’s chamber of commerce and investment, said: “After the restriction of the activities of the Hairatan-Mazar-e-Sharif railway, which caused the congestion of rail cars in Hairatan,

the restoration work has started again, and it will create ease for the merchants when it’s completed.” According to officials, the construction work of the Hairatan-Mazar-e-Sharif railway, which is more than 100 kilometers long, was completed in 2011 by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and cost more than \$128 million dollars.





