

Wife of Asfandiyar laid to rest  
F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: The funeral prayer of wife of Awami National Party chief, Asfandiyar Wali Khan and mother of ANP provincial president, Aimal Wali Khan was offered at Wali Bagh, Charsadda on Monday. The funeral prayer was attended by ANP General Secretary, Mian Iftikhar Hussain, former KP Chief Minister, Ameer Haider Khan Hoti and large number of people from different walks of life.



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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing inaugural meeting of federal cabinet.

## PM directs uninterrupted gas, power supply during Ramadan

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday directed for ensuring uninterrupted gas and power supply to the consumers during the holy month of Ramadan. He also directed for provision of every possible facilities to the private sector, local and foreign investors in the exploration of gas and oil, refining and distribution of these natural resources.

The prime minister chaired a high level meeting on petroleum sector, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The meeting was attended by Senators Ishaq Dar and Dr Musadik Malik, Sheza Fatima Khawaja, Ahad Khan Cheema, Jahanzeb Khan, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Ali Pervaiz Malik and relevant senior officers.

Addressing the participants, he said that the government was not meant for doing businesses rather its responsibility was to extend all kind of facilities to the private sector and ensure protection of the rights of the consumers especially the vulnerable segments of the society. He also asked for taking steps for promotion of global investment in exploration of Tight Gas and undersea oil and gas reserves, regretting that Pakistan's maritime area was huge in size when compared with Balochistan province but no steps were taken to explore its hidden natural resources.

He stressed upon exploration of undersea natural resources including oil and gas reserves and their full utilization was among the top priorities of the government. Emphasising to enhance the petroleum refining capacity of the country, he sought the formulation of a comprehensive strategy to do away with the circular debt of oil and gas sectors and work out a durable solution to the issue.

He also instructed to reduce the gas sector losses through smart

metering and identify and take strict action against the thieves of gas and oil. "I will not allow any more wastage of the people's hard-earned money and the loss to the national exchequer," the prime minister remarked. He instructed strict monitoring of the LPG sector to ensure provision of the commodity to the consumers at low price.

Prime Minister Shehbaz directed the relevant authorities to ensure uninterrupted gas supply to the industrial sector, besides ensuring the installation of energy efficient machinery in the industries. He also called for encouraging the domestic consumers to prefer using electricity instead of gas in their daily lives.

The prime minister also sought implementation report on the steps taken during the previous tenures for energy conservation, besides emphasising upon the uplift of administrative infrastructure of the energy sector at par with the international standards. He called for merit-based appointment of capable persons in the energy sector and sought the presentation of short, mid and long term strategies on the energy sector reforms.

The prime minister also directed for presenting a strategy on country's mineral resources, their exploration and enhancement of exports. The meeting was told that country's oil and gas reserves were depleting fast and petroleum products worth \$4 billion were being exported annually and the local exploration would save foreign exchange worth billions of dollars.

The meeting was also apprised of the reserves of tight gas and undersea oil reserves and the interest of the foreign investors in the sector. It was told that work on LPG Policy 2024 was underway and consultation with the stakeholders was in progress. The participants were also briefed about the energy consumption and mineral

sector. The prime minister instructed the relevant authorities to implement the energy sector reforms on priority basis.

**Transforming Pak-Saudi ties into strategic, economic partnership govt's priority:** Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said that his government's priority was to transform the time-tested Pakistan-Saudi Arabia ties into a mutually beneficial, strategic and economic partnership, with a focus on attracting Saudi investment for bankable projects in Pakistan.

The prime minister, in a meeting with Saudi Ambassador in Pakistan Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malki, who called on him, thanked Saudi authorities for expanding the scope of the "Road to Makkah" initiative, that would facilitate Pakistani Hajj pilgrims.

He thanked the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdul Aziz, and Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, for their kind wishes on his re-election as prime minister. Given the special fraternal relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, the prime minister said the Saudi ambassador was the first envoy he received after assumption of office. Extending an invitation to the prime minister to visit Saudi Arabia, the ambassador assured him of the Saudi leadership's full support. The envoy said that Saudi Arabia would always remain a reliable partner for building a stronger and prosperous Pakistan.

**Air Chief calls on Prime Minister Shehbaz:** Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal, Zaheer Ahmad Babar Sidhu on Monday called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here. The Air Chief congratulated the prime minister on assuming the office, a PM Office press release said. In the meeting, they discussed the professional matters of the Pakistan Air Force.

## Fazl seeks probe into ECP notification

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman on Monday filed for an investigation into a notification of an "unknown" woman on the party's reserved seat in the National Assembly by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

The electoral authority issued the notification, bearing number F6 of 2024, for the success of the said unknown woman on the NA reserved seat from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Reacting to this, Fazl submitted a request seeking the suspension of the notification and investigation into the matter. "Sadaf Sultan is neither our party (JUI-F) member nor named in our list. Notification for Sadaf Ehsan should be suspended and Ms Hina Bibi should be notified [on the reserved seat]," Fazl's request stated.

He also raised a question of whether the notification for Sadaf was issued by mistake or there was a conspiracy behind the matter. The ECP last week allocated reserved seats in the NA and all four provincial assemblies.

It may be noted that the reserved seats were distributed among other parties as the electoral watchdog ruled against allocating them to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) backed Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC). According to an ECP notification, eight women reserved seats in NA from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are given to PML-N's Sobia Shahid, Ghazala Anjum, Shela Bano and Shaheen while PPP's Asma Alamgir and Naema Kanwal and Naema Kishwar and Sadaf Ehsan of JUI-F.

## Case against Asad Toor FIA used SC's name to launch action, says CJP

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa Monday lamented that the Supreme Court's name was used to launch action against vlogger Asad Toor, highlighting the discrepancies in the First Information Report (FIR) registered by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA).

"The inquiry notice [sent to Asad Toor] stated that he is being summoned in an inquiry related to an anti-judiciary campaign whereas the FIR didn't even mention as such," the CJP Isa said. The top judge's remarks came during a hearing of a suo motu case, being heard by a three-member SC bench comprising the CJP, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Mussarat Hilali, pertaining to the harassment of journalists over FIA's summons as part of

the Joint Investigation Team's (JIT) probe into the anti-judiciary campaign.

During the hearing on Monday, Barrister Salahuddin Ahmed — who's representing the Press Association of the Supreme Court (PAS) and the Islamabad High Court Journalists Association (IHCJA) — apprised the court that Toor is currently in jail. "Why is he in jail?" the CJP questioned.

To this, the lawyer cited an FIR registered against the journalist and further urged the court to declare the government's notification regarding the constitution of the JIT as "null and void". The chief justice then questioned the applicability and relevancy of the charges included in the FIR registered against Toor, including those pertaining to the "sensitive information". Highlighting the discrepancies in the FIA's notice and the FIR against

Toor, CJP Isa said: "Neither any SC judge nor the registrar had filed any complaint to the FIA".

"The officials of FIA are bringing disrepute to the judiciary," the chief justice observed while lamenting the prospects of the judiciary's image being tarnished before the public. "Why shouldn't we send a notice to the FIA for contempt of court?" he questioned. Additionally, the top judge also censured Inspector General Police (IGP) Islamabad for his failure to report any progress and apprehend culprits. "[You] weren't able to trace the accused despite the [video] evidence? It's been four years, how much time do you need?" The whole country is looking at your performance [...] Your behaviour indicates that you are in fact a facilitator," the CJP said while hinting at the top cop's dismissal as the police chief.

## Zardari presented with guard of honour by armed forces

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari Monday was presented with a guard of honour by smartly tuned contingents of the armed forces a day after he was sworn in as the country's 14th president.

During the ceremony held at Islamabad's Aiwan-e-Sadr, Zardari, who arrived at the ceremony in the traditional horse-driven buggy, inspected the guard of honour and shook hands with the officers and staff members of the President House.

It's pertinent to mention that it is a traditional practice

that a newly elected president, as well as an outgoing one such as Arif Alvi, receives a guard of honour at the Aiwan-e-Sadr.

The development comes a day after Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa administered Zardari's oath as the country's head of state after he secured 411 electoral votes in parliament and all four provincial assemblies with the backing of allied parties against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-backed Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) nominee Mahmood Khan Achakzai's 181 votes.

It is pertinent to know that

Zardari's win came after the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) agreed to join hands over government formation in the Centre with the former playing an important role in the election of Shehbaz Sharif as the country's prime minister.

However, in exchange, the PPP got to bring its own chief minister in Balochistan as well as several constitutional posts including Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governors, Senate chairman and deputy speakers in the national and Balochistan assemblies.

## Ramazan gives lesson of empathy: President

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has said that the holy month of Ramadan gives the lesson of realizing the plight of poor, orphans, destitute and vulnerable segments of society and extending all possible support to them.

He said that the well off and prosperous sections of society need to contribute towards this noble cause by giving away Zakat and alms and support these stratas of society with financial support and continue this kind gesture throughout the year.

President Asif Zardari, in a message on the advent of the holy month of Ramadan 1445 Hijrah, also urged the international community and the Muslim Ummah to help the oppressed Palestinians and ensure immediate ceasefire and end to their genocide. The holy month brought with it message of sympathy, affection, sacrifice, brotherhood and cooperation, he observed.

The president also extended his felicitation to the Pakistani nation and the Muslims across the world on the arrival of holy and blessed month, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release on Monday. President Zardari observed that the holy month of Ramadan provided them opportunities to realize the real spirit of the holy month. The Muslims follow the commands of Allah Almighty by maintaining piety with regular praying and obeying which helped them to earn blessings and absolve them of their sins.

He also referred to the Quranic verses which had explained the reasons behind keeping fasts which also saved a faithful from falsehood, use of foul language, cheating, hoarding, adulteration in food stuff and other sins. President Asif Ali Zardari also prayed for the progress and prosperity of the country.

## 10 bodies of fishermen recovered

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Navy in coordination with Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA) recovered 10 bodies out of 14 missing fishermen of boat Al-Assad in a joint search and rescue operation.

According to PN information on Monday, Search and Rescue operation was started on 05 March 24 in open sea. Despite dense marine traffic in vicinity of accident, time lapse and choppy sea conditions the dead bodies of 10 missing fishermen were successfully recovered on Monday. The fishing boat Al-Assad with an onboard crew of 45 capsized in open sea off Hajmro creek on 5 March due inclement weather. Search operation involved multiple assets of PN and PMSA including aircraft, helicopters, ships and speed boats.

Major breakthrough of search efforts materialised today when PMSS REHMAT upon receipt of information from deployed units recovered 10 dead bodies of missing fishermen. The recovered bodies have been handed over to concerned civil authorities for further formalities. Conduct of continuous Search and rescue operation by PN & PMSA is a manifestation of PN's resolve to assist in every civil calamity at sea.

## Justice Naem takes oath as SC judge

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Justice Naem Akhtar Afghan on Monday took oath as Supreme Court judge here in a simple ceremony. Chief Justice (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa administered oath to the newly elevated judge of the apex court.

The oath-taking ceremony took place on the premises of Supreme Court and attended by judges, senior lawyers and court staff.

# 19-member federal cabinet takes oath

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: After days of intense consultation among the ruling partners, President Asif Ali Zardari Monday administered oath to the 19-member federal cabinet comprising some new faces. Earlier, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Monday recommended 19 names to the president to be inducted into the federal cabinet, according to a summary forwarded to the Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Those who were recommended for the federal ministries, under clause 1 of the Article 92 of the Constitution, include PML-N lawmakers Ahsan Iqbal, Khawaja Asif, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, Riaz Hussain Pirzada, Rana Tanveer, Azam Nazeer Tarar, Jam Kamal Khan,

Amir Muqam, Awais Leghari and Attaulah Tarar, while MQM-P's Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui and Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party's Abdul Aleem Khan are also on the list.

Moreover, Senators Ishaq Dar and Musadik Malik have also been recommended to be appointed as federal ministers under clause 9 of Article 91 of the Constitution, as both will cease to be senators on March 12 (today) following the end of their Senate term. The said clause authorises the prime minister to induct anyone into the federal cabinet who is not a member of parliament for a period of six months.

Three more names that have been recommended to be inducted as federal ministers — under clause 9 of Article 91 — include

Muhammad Aurangzeb, Ahad Khan Cheema and Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi. Meanwhile, Shaza Fatima is the only woman to be recommended for inclusion in the federal cabinet. She will take oath as a state minister under clause 1 of Article 92 of the Constitution, reads the summary.

The sources added that the premier has initially decided to keep his cabinet small, but more ministers will be inducted in the second phase. The swearing-in of the federal cabinet will come a week after PM Shehbaz took the oath of office as the 24th premier of the country, while President Zardari swore in as the head of state a day ago with all dignitaries in presence during the oath-taking ceremony.

## Moon sighted in Pakistan, first Ramadan fast today

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Ramadan moon has been sighted in Pakistan and the first Roza will be observed across the country today (Tuesday), the Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee announced on Monday evening.

Moon sighting committee chairman Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad made the official announcement following a meeting in Peshawar. The clerics from all schools of thought attended the huddle to ascertain the beginning of the ninth Islamic month. The Ramadan moon was sighted in Lahore and Peshawar before the official announcement.

Ramadan has already begun in several parts of the world, including the Middle East, Europe and other regions and as per astronomical parameters there are high chances that the moon will be sighted in Pakistan today as well. The moon sighting body had requested all the Pakistanis

for assistance in this regard with wishes that the holy month begins across the country on the same day.

Meanwhile, meetings of other zonal and district Ruet-e-Hilal committees were held simultaneously at their respective places on Shaban 29 after Asr prayers, for the Ramadan moon sighting of Hijri year 1445. The holy month, which is observed with religious fervour and zeal, will see millions of Pakistanis along with billions of Muslims around the world observing fast from dawn till sunset with the fasting hours falling between 12 to 17 hours — depending on the geographical locations across the globe.

Like many other countries, Ramadan, in Pakistan, is marked by increased charity and public food drives with the people establishing roadside stalls for people returning to their homes in the evening. Meanwhile, the Ramadan moon was sighted on Sunday evening in Saudi

Arabia, according to the local media. Therefore, the holy month has begun in the kingdom on Monday, March 11.

Earlier, Saudi Arabia had called on Muslims to sight the crescent of Ramadan. The Supreme Court called on whoever sights the crescent — either by the naked eye or through binoculars — to report to the nearest court and register their observation. Khaleej Times reported. The holy month will also begin in the UAE on Monday, March 11, as the country's moon-sighting committee said the crescent moon for the holy month was spotted on Sunday evening.

Several other countries have already announced March 12 as the beginning of Ramadan, including Australia, Malaysia, Philippines and Brunei. Oman, too, has announced that it will observe the beginning of Ramadan on March 12, as there was no sighting of the crescent moon on Sunday evening.



PESHAWAR: Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Chairman Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad addressing a press conference.

## Omar demands restoration of social media sites

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Omar Ayub Khan on Monday called on the authorities concerned to restore the social media sites in the country.

"They are blocking social media even today. We demand that the social media sites should be restored," said the PTI leader while speaking to media persons in Islamabad. X, formerly Twitter, has remained largely restricted in Pakistan since February 17 with people accessing the popular site using a VPN.

Speaking to a local media channel, former care-

taker information minister Murtaza Solangi said that the interim government had nothing to do with the X shutdown in Pakistan. "This fascist government has completely lost its mind. Different social media platforms like Facebook, X, and Instagram are being blocked and their speed has also been slowed," said Omar. He said that the sites were being blocked so that the citizens were unable to get their hands on "right and fast information". "We strongly condemn this as Pakistan cannot develop without social media and we demand to restore these sites without any obstruction and blockage," said the PTI leader.

"Our candidates were defeated through rigging," claimed the PTI leader. He also slammed Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz and the police for lodging error cases against the party workers during the protests held yesterday. He claimed that over 100 workers of his party were arrested during the protests yesterday. "PTI has always been a peaceful party and will remain one," he added. The PTI is among other parties that have rejected the 2024 general elections, claiming that the polls were rigged by their rivals. The Imran Khan-founded party had been holding protests across the country against the "rigging" in elections.







# Agri sector to make KP self-sufficient

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Minister for Agriculture Muhammad Sajjad has said that the agriculture sector is very important and to make the province self-sufficient in agriculture and increase agricultural production urging all the officers of the department to play an active role in this regard. He further said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa soil is very fertile and there was a vital need that we should pay special attention to the agricultural sector. He expressed these views while presiding over an introductory meeting with the officers of Agriculture department here in Peshawar on Monday. Secretary Agriculture Javed Marwat, DGs of all wings of the department and relevant officers were also present on this occasion. The provincial minister said that Officers should use their skills to adopt a comprehensive strategy to make Khyber Pakhtunkhwa self-sufficient in wheat crops and agricultural scientists should also use their experiences in this regard. He further added that the vision of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur is to make the country and the province economically self-sufficient by developing the agriculture sector. Keeping in mind, he said officers should make plans and arrange and perform their responsibilities honestly and efficiently so that the efficiency of the department could be improved and the problems of the landholders be solved. He further added that all decisions will be made on the basis of merit and transparency.



PESHAWAR: Center president Tribal Youth Association Murtaza Mehsood, Brig. Sami Zaman addressing a seminar.

# Agriculture infrastructure handover ceremony held

PESHAWAR (APP): The USAID's Economic Recovery and Development Activity (USAID-ERDA) on Monday formally handed over nine completed agriculture infrastructure schemes to the farming communities of tehsil Safi and Ambar, District Mohmand in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. The ceremony was attended by representatives from USAID-ERDA, the local government, and community members. These interventions irrigating 200 acres of barren land in tehsil Ambar and Safi of Mohmand District, will significantly improve the agricultural productivity of the region. USAID-ERDA provided vegetable and maize seeds to the farmers community, further supporting the program's goal of enhancing agricultural productivity. Mr. Shakil Ahmad, Additional Deputy Commissioner, District Mohmand said, "The Government of Pakistan deeply appreciates the continued support of USAID-ERDA in developing our communities. These infrastructure projects will have a lasting positive impact on the lives of the farmers in Mohmand District." "This project is a game-changer for our community. The improved water-courses and storage tanks will allow us to cultivate our land more efficiently and increase our yields. We are grateful to USAID-ERDA for their support," Malik Sahib Khan, Farmer, Tehsil Ambar, District Mohmand said. "USAID's Economic Recovery and Development Activity (USAID-ERDA) is committed to working with local communities to improve their livelihoods and build resilience. We are confident that these projects will empower the farmers of Mohmand District and contribute to the long-term development of the region," Engr. Behram Jan, Water Management Specialist, USAID's Economic Recovery and Development Activity (USAID-ERDA). Most of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's population, including those in the Newly Merged Districts (NMDs), rely on agriculture and natural resources for their livelihoods. However, these sectors face challenges due to inadequate water supply, inefficient water management and poor resource utilization. In response to these challenges, USAID's Economic Recovery and Development Activity (USAID-ERDA) has been actively working in Mohmand, Khyber, Buner, Kohat, Bajaur, Orakzai and Dera Ismail Khan Districts to improve water management infrastructure and promote sustainable agricultural practices. The handover ceremony marks a significant milestone in these efforts and paves the way for a more prosperous future for the farming communities of the region.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister Aqib Ullah presiding over a meeting.

# CTD arrests 3 suspects in raids

PESHAWAR (INP): The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) on Monday arrested three suspects in late-night raids in connection with the Peshawar blast. As per details, the CTD spokesperson said that key suspects of Peshawar blast have been arrested in the targeted raids. The CTD officials stated that the injured terrorist who was arrested at the spot of the incident has recorded his statement. However, the mobile phones and motorcycle were of no help for the investigation as the motorcycle has been completely damaged. Yesterday, two people were killed and one sustained injuries in Peshawar's 'suicide' blast. According to SSP Operations Kashif Aftab Abbasi, the blast that occurred in Board Bazar was a 'suicide' attack. Rescue 1122 staff reached the site soon after the blast. They moved the dead and the injured to a nearby medical facility. Police and security agencies cordoned off the area and have started investigations. No group has so far claimed responsibility for the blast. Later, the blast occurred when the terrorist were carrying the explosives to another location.

PESHAWAR: In line with the directives of the provincial government, the Deputy Commissioner Peshawar Afaz Wazir along with the District Officer of Social Welfare, conducted a comprehensive visit to the Pajagai Road shelter house. The purpose of the visit was to oversee the arrangements and facilities being provided at the shelter house. During the visit, detailed briefings were provided to the Deputy Commissioner regarding the arrangements being made at the shelter house. It was highlighted that on a daily basis, homeless individuals are provided with both sehri (pre-dawn meal) and iftar (evening meal) at the government-run shelter house. Additionally, free bedding is also provided for those staying overnight. Under the supervision of the Peshawar district administration, similar arrangements are being made at Lady Reading Hospital and Moulvi Ji Hospital for patients and their attendants. Daily sehri and iftari are being arranged for them as well, with all necessary arrangements already completed. On this occasion, the Deputy Commissioner instructed that the best facilities and food should be provided during sehri and iftar in accordance with the directives of the provincial government. He emphasized the importance of collecting daily reports on the arrangements made, ensuring accountability and efficiency in the process. These efforts reflect the commitment of the provincial government and local administration to provide necessary support and facilities to the less fortunate members of society, especially during the holy month of Ramadan.

# President's house open for all parties

PESHAWAR (INP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leader Faisal Karim Kundi said that newly elected President Asif Ali Zardari can bring together all stakeholders and political parties. He said that in 2010, the PPP got the 18th constitutional amendment passed unanimously despite not having a simple majority in the parliament. "This shows that Asif Ali Zardari can bring all stakeholders and political parties together," he added. The PPP leader said that the process of election is now over and all efforts would be made to bring everyone together and take the country forward. He said that all parties including the opposition would be invited on national issues. "The doors of the President's House are open for all political parties. Asif Zardari will play an important role in taking the country out of crises," Faisal Karim Kundi said. Responding to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) protest, the PPP leader said that peaceful protest is a democratic right but no one could be allowed to take the law into their hands. "Those who damage government property cannot be spared," he added. Faisal Karim Kundi also criticised the PTI over 'hulalaboo' in the parliament and said that the opposition should also contribute and give its suggestions in the legislation. Earlier in the day, Pakistan People's Party (PPP) co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari, took oath as the 14th President of Pakistan. The oath-taking ceremony was held at Aitwan-e-Sadr in Islamabad on Monday.

PESHAWAR: An Inter-Colleges Science and Art Exhibition was organized by Peshawar Model Degree Colleges at City University of Science & Information Technology Peshawar. The aim and objectives of this event was to bring together the scientific and artistic abilities of the students and to encourage them for creativity and innovation in specific fields. Students from different colleges enthusiastically participated in the event and showcased their scientific ideas and artistic models including drawing, sketching and live painting. This spectacular event was made more glamorous by the presence of Mr. Professor Nasrullah Khan Yousafzai, Chairman BISE Peshawar as chief guest. The chief guest admired the scientific concepts and artistic idea of the students and appreciated the efforts of administration for arranging such an innovative event. The chief guest awarded certificates and shields to the winners' students. At the end, Director Peshawar Model Degree Colleges Muhammad Sohail presented college souvenir to the Chief Guest.

PESHAWAR (APP): Health Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah undertook a formal visit to the Health Department on Monday, assuming his responsibilities with a comprehensive tour. Secretary Health, Mehmood Aslam Wazir, along with DGs and Program Heads, warmly welcomed him upon his arrival. An introductory session with the health department staff was held, fostering connections. During the visit, Secretary Health Mehmood Aslam Wazir presented a detailed overview of the Health Department to Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah. The minister was briefed on all ongoing develop-

mental projects and the current state of affairs within the department. Detailed insights on Health Card, medical teaching institutes, and other autonomous institutions were also provided. Syed Qasim Ali Shah was informed that the Health Department's budget exceeds 207 billion. He acquired detailed information on Health Card Plus, Chief Executive Sehat Card Plus Dr Riaz Tanoli replied that a comprehensive briefing on the initiative will be presented to the Health Minister soon. Following this, Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah proceeded to the Directorate General of Health Services for an official tour.

DG Health Dr. Shaukat Ali presented a floral arrangement to Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah, extending a warm welcome. DG Health briefed the minister about the Directorate General and organized an introductory session with directors. After receiving a detailed briefing from DG Health, Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah issued directives emphasizing the essential provision of free and necessary medications in hospitals. Ensuring uninterrupted delivery of healthcare services, including the utilization of donors for a robust supply chain, was highlighted.

Priority areas discussed included polio eradication, provision of free medicines, and the delivery of top-notch healthcare services, especially through Health Card, in remote regions. DG Health shared successful achievements in improving service delivery within the Health Department. Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah expressed the importance of enhancing healthcare services, emphasizing the commitment to ensuring the availability of essential medicines in hospitals. The relentless pursuit of excellence in service delivery within the Health Department was commended.



PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur chairing a meeting of Local Govt Department.

# DC Peshawar visits Pajagai Road shelter house

Syed Adnan

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# Inter-Colleges Science and Art Exhibition organized

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# Minister conducts official visit to Health Department

PESHAWAR (APP): Health Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah undertook a formal visit to the Health Department on Monday, assuming his responsibilities with a comprehensive tour. Secretary Health, Mehmood Aslam Wazir, along with DGs and Program Heads, warmly welcomed him upon his arrival. An introductory session with the health department staff was held, fostering connections. During the visit, Secretary Health Mehmood Aslam Wazir presented a detailed overview of the Health Department to Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah. The minister was briefed on all ongoing develop-

mental projects and the current state of affairs within the department. Detailed insights on Health Card, medical teaching institutes, and other autonomous institutions were also provided. Syed Qasim Ali Shah was informed that the Health Department's budget exceeds 207 billion. He acquired detailed information on Health Card Plus, Chief Executive Sehat Card Plus Dr Riaz Tanoli replied that a comprehensive briefing on the initiative will be presented to the Health Minister soon. Following this, Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah proceeded to the Directorate General of Health Services for an official tour.

DG Health Dr. Shaukat Ali presented a floral arrangement to Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah, extending a warm welcome. DG Health briefed the minister about the Directorate General and organized an introductory session with directors. After receiving a detailed briefing from DG Health, Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah issued directives emphasizing the essential provision of free and necessary medications in hospitals. Ensuring uninterrupted delivery of healthcare services, including the utilization of donors for a robust supply chain, was highlighted.

Priority areas discussed included polio eradication, provision of free medicines, and the delivery of top-notch healthcare services, especially through Health Card, in remote regions. DG Health shared successful achievements in improving service delivery within the Health Department. Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah expressed the importance of enhancing healthcare services, emphasizing the commitment to ensuring the availability of essential medicines in hospitals. The relentless pursuit of excellence in service delivery within the Health Department was commended.

# Courts and historical wrongs

Barrister Asad-ul-Mulk

This March the Supreme Court held in a reference filed by the President of Pakistan that the proceedings of the trial by the Lahore High Court, and of the appeal by the Supreme Court, which lead to the conviction of former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and ultimately his hanging, did not meet the requirements of the fundamental right to a fair trial and due process. In the same breath the Supreme Court opined that in spite of the egregious lapse, there was no mechanism under the law to set aside the judgment whereby Mr. Bhutto was convicted and sentenced. However, it added that the Supreme Court would; "identify the major constitutional and legal lapses that had occurred with respect to fair trial and due process". The advisory jurisdiction of the Supreme Court under Article 186 of the Constitution is a unique jurisdiction. It allows the President to file a reference and "obtain the opinion of the Supreme Court on any question of law which he considers of public importance". While it is hard to contend that there was 'no evidence at all' to implicate Mr. Bhutto in the murder with which he was charged, there certainly was evidence to this effect, it goes without saying that there was perhaps insufficient and incredible evidence based on which to procure his criminal conviction. Moreover, the way and manner in which his trial and conviction were procured rendered the same unsafe and a miscarriage of the criminal justice system. Thus, the conviction of Mr. Bhutto, viewed against the backdrop of Pakistan's tumultuous political history, constitutes a historical wrong. Historical wrongs perpetrated by Courts are not unique to Pakistan or the case of Mr. Bhutto. The decision of the US Supreme Court in Dred Scott v. Sandford (1857) is a classic example of a historical wrong. In the said case, the legal question was "Can a negro, whose ancestors were imported into this country, and sold as slaves, become a member of the political community formed and brought into existence by the Constitution of the United States, and as such become entitled to all of the rights, and priv-

ileges, and immunities, guaranteed [sic] by that instrument to the citizen?". The Court answered in the negative disenfranchising millions of people of colour and generations to come. Another example would be Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) in which the US Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation laws did not violate the US Constitution. In Buck v. Bell (1927) the US Supreme Court held that a state statute permitting compulsory sterilization of the unfit, including the intellectually disabled, "for the protection and health of the state" was constitutional and in accordance with the Bill of Rights. Courts around the world are empowered to re-interpret legal and constitutional texts, and 'overrule' past precedents, which unless overruled will result in the perpetuation of a historical wrong. The 'overruling' of a previous judgment is different and distinct from the 'setting aside' of that judgment. A judgment is said to be 'set aside' when the ultimate decision in that judgment, as well as the logical basis for it are declared to be flawed. Conversely a judgment is said to be 'overruled' when, a fresh case different and distinct from the original one in which the judgment was delivered comes before the Court for adjudication, and the Court rules that the logical basis of the original judgment is flawed and will not be followed in the fresh case or any future case. Overruling does not disturb the original judgment, but it puts an end to the perpetuation of a historical wrong by preventing the future application of law in a manner which has subsequently been found to be flawed. This was essentially the device which was employed by the US Supreme Court in Brown v. Board of Education (1954) to effectively overrule Plessy v. Ferguson (1896). While the Supreme Court of Pakistan is correct in opining that there is no mechanism to set aside the conviction of Mr. Bhutto, it is hard to imagine that the Constitution ever envisaged the advisory jurisdiction of the Supreme Court to be invoked in respect of a case in which the Supreme Court has already delivered a judgment. Any opinion of the Supreme Court which differs from or casts aspersions on the legality and propriety of a decided case, would necessarily be based on the reevaluation of evidence before and the examination of the procedure followed by the Court which decided the original lis. And to undertake such an exercise would mean inverting the notion of 'finality of proceedings' on its head. The judgment in Mr. Bhutto's case carries with it an irrefutable legal presumption of being in accordance with the fundamental right to a fair trial and due process, even if it is in fact not. For the Supreme Court in its advisory jurisdiction to opine otherwise would mean casting aspersions on that irrefutable legal presumption. "We are not final because we are infallible, but we are infallible only because we are final", those are the famous words of Justice Robert Jackson of the US Supreme Court in Brown v. Allen (1953). Courts make mistakes, sometimes those mistakes are egregious, sometimes so egregious that they constitute historical wrongs. But to condemn historical wrongs, the Court should not turn the law on its head or pretentiously stretch the meaning of the Constitution.

It is widely believed that Dr. Samuel Mudd, was wrongly convicted for conspiring with John Wilkes Booth in the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln in 1865. The assassination of President Lincoln is perhaps the most famous assassination in the history of the US. Subsequent research has revealed that Dr. Mudd was indeed innocent. The state legislatures of Maryland, Michigan, Massachusetts, Oklahoma and Florida have passed resolutions declaring Dr. Mudd's innocence. In 1979, President Jimmy Carter wrote to the grandson of Dr. Mudd a two-page letter supporting his position about Dr. Mudd's innocence, however he regrettably added he "had been advised [that] the findings of guilt and the sentence of a military commission that tried Dr. Samuel Mudd are binding and conclusive judgments and there is no authority under the law, by which, I, as President, could set aside his conviction". Ten years later in 1987, President Ronald Reagan in his own note echoed a President's legal inability to change a military Court ruling, and inscribed; "In my efforts to help, I came to believe as you do that Dr. Samuel Mudd was indeed innocent of any wrongdoing". Thereafter an attempt was made inviting the US Supreme Court to undo the historical wrong done to Dr. Mudd, and remove his unsafe conviction in the commission of nation's most famous murder, but the US Supreme Court refused citing grounds of limitation and other legal hurdles. Historical wrongs are condemnable. The appropriate place to condemn them is in society and politics. The Courts may also condemn historical wrongs, but only when that is possible, and in a manner which is envisaged by law. The employment of the Supreme Court's advisory jurisdiction, which was conceived for an altogether different purpose, to expose a historical wrong seems quite a stretch of that jurisdiction. A society and nation that is conscious, needs the affirmation of no Court to establish the wickedness of a historical wrong. And a society and nation that is not conscious, will in spite the affirmation of a historical wrong by a Court, recommit it.





## In brief

### Police arrests alleged rapist F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: According to details, the police arrested Abdullah son of Nawaz, a sexual predator who raped a young child in the limits of police station City Toba Tek Singh. Mohammad Hammad Razzaq son of Razzaq residential Gulistan Colony Toba Tek Singh, appeared in front of SHO Police Station City Toba Tek Singh and told That the petitioner's son Subhan son of Hammad aged 4 years was playing in the street. Accused Abdullah took my son inside the house under construction and sexually assaulted him. SHO Nadeem brought the whole incident to the notice of DPO Toba Tek Singh ibadat Nisar, upon which DPO immediately ordered the registration of a case and the immediate arrest of the accused. On which the case number 320/24 Bajram 376 was registered in Police Station City Toba Tek Singh.

### Two butchers booked F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Two shopkeepers of beef sellers were put behind the bars for charging additional price in Landi Kotal bazaar on Monday. On eve of Ramadan, the Assistant Commissioner (AC), Landi Kotal, Irshad Mohmand flanked by Tehsil Chairman Haji Shah Khalid, Tehsildar Temoor Afridi and Additional Station House Officer Azmat Wali paid a surprised visit of the bazaar and check official price list of various edibles. During examination two butchers who were selling beef at extra-price were caught and sent to lock up in violation of the official price list. Speaking on the occasion AC Irshad Mohmand said that providing relief to laymen in the holy month was their priority and no one would be allowed to charge additional price for food items. Official list of edibles had been publicized and those found guilty of violating it would be granted punishment of imprisonment and fine, he remarked.

### Free medical camps organized F.P. Report

QUETTA: Pakistan Army in collaboration with FC Balochistan organized free medical camps in different areas of Balochistan. According to a report on Monday, these camps were organized in remote areas of Qila Saifullah, Zhob, Dukki, Sibi, Badini, Sangan, and district Chaman. Over four thousand two hundred patients were provided medical treatment facilities including tests and medicines free of cost. Meanwhile, the FC Balochistan is also successfully running eighty three schools and colleges including twenty nine free shelter schools. More than fifteen thousand students are being provided education in these schools and colleges, while students are also being given books, uniform and stationery items free of cost. A Girls Primary School was also constructed in Tehsil Dobandi of district Qila Saifullah. The school will provide education to girls of the area free of cost. Similarly, supply of computers at Government Girls Degree College Noshki is also being carried out by FC. It is also busy in construction of boundary wall, and repair and maintenance of playground of the college. The FC Balochistan distributed free Ramadan Bags among deserved and needy people of Soghatpur, Chaman, Sangan, Qila Saifullah, and Kohlu.



QUETTA: A view of traffic jam on roads as people busy in shopping for Ramadan.

## Provision of facilities to bus terminal directed

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Commissioner Mardan Division Shaukat Ali Yousafzai on Monday directed the concerned authorities to ensure the provision of all necessary facilities to the transporters and passengers at Chamtar Bus Terminal as soon as possible.

He along with the newly elected Member of Provincial Assembly Abdul Salam Afridi and Deputy Commissioner Mardan Mohammad Fayyaz Khan Sherpao was talking to the concerned government officials and transporters on the occasion of their visit to Chamtar Bus Terminal.

Secretary RTA Wajid Khan, AAC Junaid Khan, Regional Municipal Officer, TMO Mardan, C&W officials and transporters Haji Akbar Ali, Walid Mir Kashmiri and others were also present on the occasion. Commissioner Mardan instructed the concerned authorities that all the stakeholders, the newly elected members of the assembly and the authorities should come together to find a lasting solution to the problems in order to remove the hindrances in making the new bus terminal a success.

He said that the provincial government has established a new bus terminal at a cost of crores of rupees on a vast area of 7732 kanals where all the bus and flying coach bases located in the center of the city have to be shifted.

This will provide convenience to the transporters and passengers one hand and will solve the traffic problems in the city on the other hand. On this occasion, it was decided that a meeting will be held in Pakhtunkhwa House on March 12 in this regard, in which the necessary steps regarding the transfer of the stands will be finalized.

**Officials visit various bazaars to check prices of items:** Additional Assistant Commissioner Buraq Awan operations in different areas on the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Mardan Muhammad Fayaz Sherpao to ensure the sale of food items to the citizens in accordance with the official price list in the holy month of Ramadan.

The Additional Assistant Commissioner, while inspecting the food shops, checked the sale of expired and unsanitary items, cleanliness, charging the official price list and selling accordingly also checked the selling price of meat, poultry and weight of bread as per government fixed prices. Imposed fines for poor sanitation, violation of official rate list and issued instructions to enforce health principles.

## Officials directed to keep close watch on profiteers

F.P. Report

BUNER: The Deputy Commissioner Hamid Ali Khan has said that special price magistrates have been appointed to keep an eye on illegal profiteering and hoarding in the blessed month of Ramadan. He said as per the orders of the provincial government, in Swari Pir Baba Torwarsak the big markets, monitoring teams have been deployed in and complaint cells have also been established in which staff will be present from morning to evening and these staff will act on public complaints and periodically go to the market and ask prices of various items from the vendors.

The Deputy

Commissioner has further said that ADC Relief and Human Rights Syed Akram Shah will be given the powers of District Price Magistrate and other sub-divisional magistrates have given the powers of price magistrates in their sub-divisions and he himself to visit the markets. He said on Monday he had went to Swari Bazar and went shop-to-shop with the Bazar president to inform everyone that they have decided to make sure selling the goods at the fixed official rate and do not give the fasting people a chance to complain, otherwise strict action will be taken against the profiteers.

In order to maintain moderation, he has also told about fixing the price list

based on reality in the prices review meeting was held before the advent of Ramadan with bazaar president and different items union leaders and hoped that the market presidents and shopkeepers will adhere to it and in case of violation strict action will be taken against the illegal profiteers and hoarders.

The DC made it clear those found guilty of the agreed prices lists to pursue the option of imprisonment and fines. The DC has asked the public to avoid fight over price issue with shopkeepers rather take complaints to complaint centers established in markets and assured Immediate action will be taken against the illegal profiteers.

claimed offenders of category-A, car lifters, killers, bandits and other street criminals to book.

He directed to ensure protection of life and properties of the people being their first prime responsibility besides launching effective patrolling duties in their jurisdictions. He also advised all the office officers to eradicate the theft dacoities, theft cases minimizing the sense of insecurity among the people.

## One-day awareness seminar held F.P. Report

TANK: Population Welfare Department Tank on Monday organized a one-day awareness seminar for its field staff. The one-day training workshop was organized on the special directives of Provincial Government, Secretary Population.

The seminar was held in the supervision of Deputy Commissioner Tank. District Population Welfare Officer Tank Dr Muhammad Tariq said that Pakistan is the fifth largest country in the world in terms of population and the first among Muslim countries. If the growth of our population remains continues at this rate then after 29 years the population of our country will double.

He said that the population of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is currently more than 40 million, which is increasing by one million people every year, due to which our country is unable to bear the burden of it. Cities are expanding and agricultural land is shrinking, and the gap between food supply and demand is widening.

Social evils are on the rise and urged the people to fulfill their responsibilities well and keep a gap of three years between the birth of children to balance the resources and population. He said that family planning centers have been opened at the village level where facilities are being provided to the public including awareness. At the end of the seminar, certificates of appreciation were also distributed among the participants.

## SBB Press Club body elected F.P. Report

LARKANA : Martyred Benazir Bhutto Press Club Larkana was elected for the year 2024 in which President Muhammad Nawaz Umrani, Senior Vice President Muhammad Ayub Soomro, Vice President Sahil Lund, Vice President I.

Abdul Khaliq Jagirani, General Secretary Mashuq Khoso, Deputy General Secretary Sarfaraz Saleem Pulpoto, Information Secretary Abdul Majeed Adhano, Joint Secretary Adel Jarwar, Finance Secretary Muhammad Bakhsh Umrani, and Executive Chairman Abdul Hameed Sheikh, Saeed Noor Wagan, Muhammad Sulaiman Memon, Dalmarad Kosu were elected as members.

Ajit Kumar Bashani, Ghulam Mujtaba Jatoi, Fida Hussain Sheikh. The program was started with the recitation of Kalam Pak. On this occasion, President Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Press Club Larkana Muhammad Nawaz Umrani said that this body will play an important role in conveying the voice of the poor and needy people to the higher houses, God willing.

And he added that if any official or member violates the rules of the press club, the executive committee will decide to remove him. The President of the Press Club further said that the officials and members of the Press Club are respectable to me, with whom I will have a brotherly friendship relationship and will not leave any of my friends alone for their legitimate problems.

# Traders fined for fleecing people in Lakki Marwat

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Scores of traders were fined for fleecing people in the city bazaars here on Monday. Taking notice of public complaints, assistant commissioner Yasir Nazir visited bazaars and markets in Lakki city and checked availability of official price list there.

During the inspection visits, he found shopkeepers involved in the violation of official price list. In several outlets, the official price list was not available and the hygiene condition was very poor. Yasir also checked quality and expiry of food items and imposed fines on violators.

On the occasion, some buyers told the assistant commissioner that they had bought edible items on higher rates than those reflected in the official price list. The assistant commissioner asked the traders to adhere to official rate list otherwise they would face fines and

imprisonment.

Meanwhile, the district administration has stopped miners from illegal excavating sand from the riverbed near Lakki city. An official said on Monday that local miners were engaged in the practice of excavating sand from the Gambila riverbed flowing near Lakki city.

The sand excavated from the place is used in construction works", he maintained. He said that assistant commissioner Yasir Nazir took notice of reports and visited the site where he found miners engaged in excavation of sand and transporting it to the construction sites. The assistant commissioner stopped mining activity as the miners could not produce relevant documents issued by the concerned authorities.

He asked the miners to produce no objection certificates (NOCs) and other relevant documents, otherwise the administration would initiate legal action

against them.

**Two suspects arrested:** Police on Monday claimed to have arrested two suspects involved in obscene acts with a minor student in Bitanni subdivision of Lakki Marwat district. On Feb 26, the suspects took a minor student of a private school to a house on their motorcycle after school closure and committed obscene acts with him.

The victim had told police in his preliminary report that one of the suspects was his relative who along with his accomplice picked him from outside the school to drop him at home. "But they took me to another house where they committed obscene acts with me", he claimed.

Police said that acting on a tip off, a party of Azadkhal police station raided a suspected hideout and arrested the assaulters identified as Waseem and Asif. They said that both arrested men had been shifted to the police station.

## Agri infrastructure handover ceremony held

F.P. Report

GHALANAI: The USAID-ERDA's Economic Recovery and Development Activity (USAID-ERDA) formally handed over nine completed agriculture infrastructure schemes to the farming communities of tehsil Safi and Ambar, District Mohmand in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province today. The ceremony was attended by representatives from USAID-ERDA, the local government, and community members.

These interventions irrigating 200 acres of barren land in tehsil Ambar and Safi of Mohmand District, will significantly improve the agricultural productivity of the region. Additionally, USAID-ERDA provided vegetable and maize seeds to the farmers community, further supporting the program's goal of enhancing agricultural productivity.

Shakil Ahmad, Additional Deputy Commissioner, District Mohmand "The Government of Pakistan deeply appreciates the continued support of USAID-ERDA in developing our communities. These infrastructure projects will



have a lasting positive impact on the lives of the farmers in Mohmand District."

"This project is a game-changer for our community. The improved watercourses and storage tanks will allow us to cultivate our land more efficiently and increase our yields. We are grateful to USAID-ERDA for their support." Malik Sahib Khan, Farmer, Tehsil Ambar, District Mohmand said.

"USAID-ERDA is committed to working with local communities to improve their livelihoods and build resilience. We are confident that these projects will empower the farmers of Mohmand District and contribute to the long-term development of the region." Engr. Behram Jan, Water Management Specialist, USAID-ERDA.

Most of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's population, including those in the Newly Merged Districts (NMDs), rely on agriculture and natural resources for their livelihoods. However, these sectors face challenges due to inadequate water supply, inefficient water management and poor resource utilization.

In response to these challenges, USAID-ERDA has been actively working in Mohmand, Khyber, Buner, Kohat, Bajaur, Orakzai and Dera Ismail Khan Districts to improve water management infrastructure and promote sustainable agricultural practices. The handover ceremony marks a significant milestone in these efforts and paves the way for a more prosperous future for the farming communities of the region.

## Afghan patients without visa restrict at Torkham

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Entry of Afghan patients into Pakistan without proper visa and passport was restricted due to security reasons since last day at Torkham border. An official said on Monday that the border security officials confined entry of Afghan patients via Torkham crossing while Afghan pedestrians with proper visa and passport could cross the border into Pakistan.

Due to the firing incident from across the border at Khar Lachi check point last day, the border was sealed

for Afghan patients, a security official said. On the condition of anonymity, a health official in Pak-Afghan friendship hospital, Torkham said that as per direction of the government, entry of Afghan patients without visa had been banned since last day till further order.

The Pakistani government as a good gesture had granted visa-exemption to the Afghan patients at the border and according to the health official 90 to 105 Afghan patients along with one or two attendants were daily permitted to cross into Pakistan to get treatment for their disease somewhere in

the country.

As per information, the health officials at Pak-Afghan friendship health center could examine case history of an Afghan patient, passed on by the Afghan doctors at the border and then decide either to send him or her back or to refer to down towns' hospitals in Pakistan. Following Army Public School on 16 December, 2015 mishap, passport and visa policy had been made compulsory at Torkham border; however Afghan patients and the drivers had been exempted from proper visa documents.

## PML-N leadership urged to play role in ending internal rifts

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz Lower Dir activists have demanded of the party chief Mian Nawaz Sharif to Prime Minister Mian Shabbaz Sharif to play their role in bringing the party Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chapter on the same page and woo the disgruntled party leaders.

Talking to local journalists at the Timergara press club here the other day, the PML-N district secretary information Bahramand Syed and other party activists complained that internal differences in the KP chapter of the party had badly affected its performance in the general elections.

The PML-N activists said that party disgruntled leaders like Sardar Mehtab Abbasi, former provincial minister

Abdus Subhan Khan, former interior minister Chudhary Nisar Ali Khan and former Prime Minister Shahid Haqqaan Abbasi had made great sacrifices for the party in critical periods. They said that those leaders had never left the PML-N when it was passing through crucial times. They said the party leadership, unfortunately ignored them during the Feb 8 general elections.

The PML-N activists said the party leadership should bring all these disgruntled leaders again into party folds. They demanded the party supremo Mian Nawaz Sharif to form a competent committee for convincing all those leaders. They suggested the party leadership itself should hold talks with them so that the party could compete well with others, especially in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

province.

Meanwhile the PML-N activist Malik Sher Hayat demanded the party leadership to appoint Malik Farooq Iqbal as the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governor. Talking to local journalists at Timergara he said that Malik Farooq Iqbal, the party district president in the Lower Dir district had made a great contribution for the party. He said that Malik Farooq would also play its active role in strengthening the party in the region.

**DEO vacancy:** The Lower Dir female teachers and their relatives have demanded the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and the newly appointed minister for education to immediately fill the vacant post of the district education officer (DEO) female in the district.





Tuesday, March 12, 2024



**PADANG:** A man attempting to remove logs that block a street following a flash flood in Langgai, West Sumatra, Indonesia.

## 26 dead after flash floods in Sumatra island

PADANG (AP): Rescuers recovered more bodies as waters began to recede after flash floods and landslides caused by torrential rains on Indonesia's Sumatra island, which have killed at least 26 people and left 11 missing, officials said Monday.

Monsoon rains and rising rivers have submerged nine districts and cities in West Sumatra province. A major mudslide caused a river to breach its banks and tear through mountaintide villages in Pesisir Selatan district. Relief efforts for have been hampered by power outages, damaged bridges and

roads blocked by thick mud and debris, the National Disaster Management Agency said. Agency spokesperson Abdul Muhari said rescuers recovered more bodies, mostly in the worst-hit villages in Pesisir Selatan and its neighboring Padang Pariaman district, bringing the death toll rose to 26.

Landslides buried at least 14 houses, he said. At least two villagers were injured and rescuers were still searching for 11 people missing. Monsoon rains in West Sumatra province have submerged more than 37,000

houses and buildings, Muhari said. At least three houses were swept away by flash floods and 666 others were damaged. Floods also damaged 26 bridges, 45 mosques and 25 schools; and destroyed 13 roads, two irrigation system units, which in turn submerged 113 hectares (279 acres) of rice fields and 300 square meters (3,220 square feet) of plantation, the agency said. Heavy rains cause frequent landslides and flash floods in Indonesia, an archipelago nation of more than 17,000 islands where millions of people live in mountainous areas or near floodplains.

## Sudan army general rules out Ramazan truce

KHARTOUM: Senior Sudanese Armed Forces General Yasser al-Atta has said there will be no truce in Sudan during the Muslim holy month of Ramazan unless the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary group leaves the homes and sites of civilians. The statement follows an appeal by the United Nations Security Council for a truce during Ramazan, which begins this week. The RSF said it welcomed the truce call.

Al-Atta's statement, issued on the army's official Telegram channel, cited recent military advances by the army in Omdurman, part of Sudan's wider capital. It said there could be no Ramazan truce unless the RSF complied with a commitment made in May last year at Saudi and US-mediated talks in Jeddah to withdraw from civilian homes and public facilities. It also said Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, the RSF leader commonly known as Hemedti, should not play a

role in Sudan's future politics or military. The statement follows the UNSC's appeal for a respite from the 11-month-old conflict during Ramazan, depending on the sighting of the crescent moon. Fourteen countries on the 15-member council backed the resolution proposed by the United Kingdom, with only Russia abstaining from the vote. The resolution called on "all parties to the conflict to seek a sustainable resolution to the conflict through dialogue".

Fighting between the army, led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the RSF erupted in mid-April 2023. Tens of thousands of people have since been killed, 8.3 million have been forcibly displaced, and the UN says nearly 25 million people - half of Sudan's population - are in need of aid. The army has been on the back foot militarily for much of the conflict. In the first days of fighting, the RSF occupied large parts of

the capital, Khartoum. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has urged the warring sides for a truce following the adoption of the UK-drafted resolution by the UNSC. However, the mechanism for implementing the resolution remains unclear. Sudan's UN ambassador, Al-Harith Idriss al-Harith Mohamed, told the council that the president of the country's transitional council commended Guterres's truce appeal. However, he said the leader is "wondering about how to do this".

Welcoming the truce call, the RSF said in a statement, "In embracing the proposed humanitarian ceasefire, we express our readiness to partake in discussions concerning the establishment of mutually agreed upon monitoring mechanisms." "These mechanisms are crucial for ensuring the effective implementation of the ceasefire and for achieving the humanitarian objectives intended by this resolution." — Aljazeera

## South Korea deploys mily doctors in hospitals

SEOUL (Reuters): South Korea will start deploying military physicians and doctors from public health centres to strike-hit hospitals on Monday to help care for patients affected by the walkout of nearly 12,000 trainee doctors from 100 hospitals over government reform plans.

Twenty military surgeons along with 138 public health doctors will be assigned to 20 hospitals for four weeks. Health Minister Cho Kyoo-hong said at a meeting. The number of military physicians called on to help so far was only a small fraction of the roughly 2,400 military doctors, according to a defence ministry briefing. The government has denied the walkout which started on Feb. 20 has caused a full-blown health crisis but some hospitals have had to turn away patients and delay medical procedures.

Nearly 12,000 protesting doctors at 100 hospitals had left their posts in a dispute over a government plan to increase medical school admissions, health ministry data showed, defying pressure from authorities to return to work. South Korean authorities have been trying to coax the doctors to return to work by warning them that their medical licences could be suspended but so far appear to have had little success with the tactic. The health ministry said notices had been sent to more than 4,900 doctors to instruct them that authorities could start suspending licences if they did not explain their action. Doctors who returned to work before the administrative measure to suspend licences was complete would be "given leniency", Cho told KBS Radio on Monday. The government has the power

to order doctors back to work if it deems there is a serious risk to lives and public health. The government has said the plan to increase annual medical school admissions by 2,000 starting from 2025 is vital to remedy a shortage of doctors in one of the world's fastest-ageing societies. The striking doctors argue that simply adding medical students will not address pay and work conditions, and could possibly exacerbate the problems. Critics of the policy also accuse President Yoon Suk Yeol of picking a fight over medical reforms to benefit his party ahead of parliamentary elections in April. A survey published last week by the Yonhap news agency found 84% of respondents supported adding more doctors, while 43% said striking physicians should be sternly punished.

## Tibetans march on New Delhi streets asking China to leave Tibet

NEW DELHI (AP): Hundreds of Tibetans in exile marched on the streets of New Delhi to commemorate the 65th Tibetan National Uprising Day against China. Over 300 protesters gathered near India's Parliament House and chanted slogans including "Tibet was never a part of China" and "China should leave Tibet".

The protesters carried Tibetan flags and photographs of their spiritual

leader, the Dalai Lama. The 88-year-old Dalai Lama has made the Indian hillside town of Dharmasala his headquarters since fleeing from Tibet after a failed uprising against Chinese rule in 1959. India considers Tibet to be part of China, though it hosts the Tibetan exiles. The Dalai Lama denies China's claim that he is a separatist and says he only advocates substantial autonomy and protection of Tibet's native Buddhist culture.

The Tibetan government-in-exile in India accuses China of denying the most fundamental human rights to people in Tibet and vigorously carrying out the extermination of the Tibetan identity.

The Tibetan Youth Congress, which organized the New Delhi protest march, said that in 1959, the Chinese Communist regime perpetrated an occupation of Tibet, resulting in Tibetans rising in revolt.

## Luis claims victory in Portugal's elections

LISBON: Luis Montenegro, the leader of Portugal's opposition centre-right Democratic Alliance (AD) party, has claimed victory in the country's snap general election after a close-run race against the incumbent Socialists. Montenegro declared victory early on Monday morning, shortly after the Socialist Party (PS)'s leader Pedro Nuno Santos conceded defeat, but it was unclear whether he would be able to govern without the support of the far-right Chega party, with whom he again refused to negotiate.

The AD and its conservative allies in Madeira won at least 79 seats in the 230-seat parliament, ahead of the PS's 77. Chega's parliamentary representation more than quadrupled to at least 48 lawmakers, giving the combined right a majority. Four seats remained to be attributed after the final count of ballots from abroad. "It seems inescapable that the AD won the elections and that the Socialists lost," Montenegro told excited supporters who had gathered in the capital, Lisbon. It was crucial for political parties in the new parliament to act responsibly and "comply with the wish of the Portuguese people", he added.

Snap election, triggered by Socialist Prime Minister Antonio Costa's sudden resignation amid a corruption investigation, was marked by a surge in support for Chega, which positioned itself as an alternative to the two parties that have long dominated Portuguese politics, promising to crack down on corruption and expressing hostility to what it sees as "excessive" immigration. It took place against a backdrop of low wages and a high cost of living - worsened last year by surges in inflation and interest rates - coupled with a housing crisis and failings in public healthcare.

Portugal is the latest country in Europe to shift towards the far right. The country returned to democracy 50 years ago after the fall of the fascist dictatorship of Antonio de Oliveira Salazar. "We have a society with no memory," 21-year-old law student and PS member Alexandra Ferreira told the Reuters news agency, adding that the far-right's growth made her "very sad". Chega leader Andre Ventura, a former law professor and television football pundit, has said he is prepared to drop some of his party's most controversial proposals - including chemical castration for some sex offenders and the introduction of life prison sentences - if that enables his party to be included in a governing alliance with other right-of-centre parties. — Aljazeera

## US military airlifts some embassy staff from Haiti

PORT-AU-PRINCE: The US military says it has carried out an operation in Haiti to airlift non-essential embassy personnel from the Caribbean country amid a state of emergency. It also brought in additional personnel to boost security at the compound in Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince.

"This airlift of personnel into and out of the embassy is consistent with our standard practice for embassy security augmentation worldwide, and no Haitians were on board the military aircraft," the US military's Southern Command said in a statement. Haiti is spiralling deeper into gang violence, which threatens to bring down the government and has led thousands to flee their homes.

The escalation began a week ago after Haiti's embattled Prime Minister Ariel Henry agreed to hold general elections in mid-2025 while attending a meeting of Caribbean leaders in Guyana. Henry has faced a crisis of legitimacy since he took up his post less than two weeks after the 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moise. In the past week, Henry flew from Guyana to Kenya - and gangs in Haiti set fire to police stations, attacked the main international airport, which remains closed, and raided the country's two largest prisons, where they freed more than 4,000 inmates. — Aljazeera

## Fears of mass migration from Myanmar as military plans to draft thousands

YANGON: Ko Naing\* is just the sort of young man Myanmar's military is looking for. Hoping to make up for recruitment shortfalls and battlefield losses against armed groups fighting to reverse its 2021 coup, Myanmar's military last month announced plans to enforce a years-old conscription law. Starting in April, the military says, all men aged 18 to 35 years and women from 18 to 27 years must serve at least two years in the armed forces.

Doctors and other professionals in especially short supply in the military's ranks may be drafted until they are 45 years old. The country's military rulers hope to call up approximately 60,000 recruits by the end of the year. As a doctor, and at a healthy 33 years old, Ko Naing fits the bill for conscription. Like many of Myanmar's young men and women, Ko Naing said he had no intention of answering the call and would instead do whatever it takes to avoid the draft. "The one sure thing is I won't serve. If I'm drafted by the military, I will try to move to the remote areas or to another country," Ko Naing told Al Jazeera from Myanmar. "Not only me, I think everyone in Myanmar is not willing to serve in the military under the conscription law," he said. "The people believe it is not legal because the people believe the military is not their government." The 2021 coup that removed the democratically elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi has plunged Myanmar into a brutal civil war pitting the military against a patchwork of deep-rooted, well-armed ethnic minority armies and a new crop of local armed groups set up to remove the military regime from power. Having already stretched the military thin across the country, these ethnic armies have forced the military to retreat from dozens of towns and bases since October, mainly in the east. The six-month-old campaign, dubbed Operation 1027, has handed the ruling generals their worst string of defeats of the war. "The timing of the activation of the conscription law indicates its desperation," said Ye Myo Hein, an adviser to the US Institute of Peace and fellow at the Wilson Center in Washington, DC. "Following Operation 1027, the junta

has faced continuous and significant military losses, resulting in a substantial depletion of its human resources and a serious shortage of manpower. In response to this situation, the military has opted to activate the conscription law to replenish its declining manpower," Ye Myo Hein said. He also doubts the draft will do the military much good. The intake of recruits may help boost the morale of commanders on the front lines running short of soldiers, Ye Myo Hein said, but is unlikely to stem the military's losses. "The new recruits may not be effective fighters in the short term. If deployed on the battlefronts, they could end up as cannon fodder," he said. Ye Myo Hein said the draft could also backfire on the military by filling its ranks with resentful soldiers who could pose a threat from within, and by driving more young people into the arms of the resistance. The military says the draft will start next month with an initial batch of 5,000 conscripts. Unofficially, though, it may have started already. In a recent statement, the United Nations special rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, Tom Andrews, relayed reports of young men being effectively "kidnapped" off the streets by the military and forced to the front lines. The New Myanmar Foundation, a charity based in Thailand helping those fleeing the war, says it has also heard of soldiers and police raiding teashops across the country in recent weeks in search of young men and women to press them into service.

"They are now losing, so they need the youth to fight for them," the foundation's executive director, Sann Aung, told Al Jazeera from the Thai border town of Mae Sot. Activists, journalists and others in the military's crosshairs have been fleeing the country - many of them by irregular means - amid a crackdown on critics and dissidents since the coup in February 2021. Now it is feared that the new conscription drive will turn a stream of political migrants into a flood. In his statement, UN rapporteur Andrews warned that the numbers leaving Myanmar would "surely skyrocket" because of the draft. Ye Myo Hein also warned of a "mass exodus". "People living in urban areas have been attempting to nor-

malise their lives amidst the post-coup abnormality to some extent. However, the conscription law unequivocally gives the signal that no one, even those outside conflict zones, is exempt from the repercussions of the military coup and is safe," he said. Sann Aung said he has already seen the numbers fleeing to the Thai border swell and echoed the forecasts of a growing surge. He said many travel to the relative safety of Myanmar's rugged and remote borderlands, where some of the country's strongest ethnic armies have over the decades carved out enclaves largely independent of the central government. Some go to join the fight against the military, others just to hide. "This is the cheapest and the most convenient way for them," Sann Aung said. "But some people who [may] have more ... money and cash, they move to the neighbouring areas, neighbouring countries, including Thailand and India and maybe China." He and other close observers say that most of those fleeing are heading to Thailand, drawn by a large diaspora from Myanmar from before the coup, as well as better job prospects and a government in Bangkok that has kept Myanmar's military at a distance - at least compared with China and India, which have been arming the generals. Phoe Thingyan of the Overseas Irawaddy Association, another charity for the displaced based in Mae Sot on the Thai border, said since news of the conscription plan emerged, the numbers arriving at the border or crossing over have been "increasing every day". Overwhelmed by a recent surge of visa applicants at its embassy in Myanmar, Thailand has capped the number of people allowed to apply for an entry visa per day at 400. Even after doubling that daily limit to 800, application places have filled up for weeks ahead. Newly desperate to get travel documents to leave the country, hundreds of people swarmed a passport office in Mandalay, the country's second-largest city, on February 19, and accidentally killed two queue tokens vendors in the crush. Phoe Thingyan and Sann Aung say those crowded out of the visa and passport process will probably leave anyway, however they can. — Aljazeera

## Nigeria abductions: More pupils snatched as army hunts for missing

ABUJA: Armed men have kidnapped 15 pupils from a boarding school in north-western Nigeria days after more than 280 students were abducted from another school with the army still searching for them. The men broke into the Islamic seminary in the village of Gidan Bakuso in Sokoto state and seized 15 children from the hostel as they slept, police told The Associated Press news agency.

Limam Abubakar, the head of the seminary, said the pupils were aged between eight and 14. Sokoto police spokesman Ahmad Rufai told the AP that one woman was also abducted from the remote village, adding that a police tactical squad was deployed to search for the students. It was the third incident of mass kidnapping in northern Nigeria since late last week, when more than 200 people, mostly women and children, were abducted by suspected fighters in Borno state. At least 287 students were taken hostage from a government

primary and secondary school in Kaduna state. Kidnappings come as the Nigerian government launched a search and rescue mission for 287 missing children who were taken from Kuriga, in northwestern Kaduna state in the largest mass abduction in three years. Kuriga residents told Al Jazeera's Ahmed Idris that the children were seized by more than 100 attackers shortly after their daily assembly as they spoke of feeling abandoned by the government.

"They shot indiscriminately, herding us like cows and beating us," Mustafa Abubakar, a student who managed to escape, told Al Jazeera in Kuriga. Abubakar recalled military jets flying over them twice before he escaped. "There was a long burst of gunfire at one point, but I'm not sure if it was from the aircraft or from the bandits," the still-dazed student said as he returned to the school from where he was taken. Teacher Nura Ahmad said 187 pupils were kid-

napped from the Kuriga secondary school and 100 others from the primary school. Reporting from the compound that houses both primary and secondary schools, Idris said it was moved as the "earlier location was vulnerable to attacks and mass abductions which have forced the closure of many schools in northern Nigeria". This has "caused the region to lag behind the rest of the country in student enrollment", Idris reported, adding that the government and aid agencies are concerned about the future of millions of children in Nigeria.

Kaduna Governor Uba Sani insisted security forces were "working round the clock" to bring back the children. "There is no peace or peace of mind in this family," parent Shehu Lawal told Al Jazeera. "None in the village. We hardly eat or sleep. We only come home in daytime and find a safer place to stay the night. That's our lives since the abduction," said Lawal, whose child is missing. While Nigeria's

President Bola Tinubu ordered security forces to pursue the attackers, the military has been hampered by a multitude of crises across Africa's most populous country and is spread thin, and local vigilante groups are not enough of a bulwark against the armed gangs.

Kidnappings are common in northwestern and central Nigeria where criminal gangs occupying vast, remote forests terrorise residents. Known as bandits, these groups loot villages, and kill and kidnap residents, especially students, for huge ransoms. Some 1,400 children have been abducted in Nigeria since 300 girls were taken from the north-eastern town of Chibok in 2014, sparking widespread international condemnation. Attackers also took 150 children in Kaduna in July 2021, the previous major abduction. The students were reunited months later after their families paid ransoms. — Aljazeera

## ‘Anybody but Putin’: Russians in Serbia vote without hope

MOSCOW (AFP): Konstantin fled Russia to avoid being drafted into the army to fight in Ukraine. But he still wants to have his voice heard in Russia's elections later this month -- even though he has no one to vote for. Like many of the thousands of Russian exiles now living in Serbia, he remains deeply engaged with his homeland even if there is little hope that the political situation there will change anytime soon.

Broke and living in a threadbare apartment in Belgrade, life abroad has had its challenges. But exile has given the 26-year-old political breathing space unimaginable back home. "In Russia you will be arrested for anything," he said. "It's not a question, it's a strong fact," he told AFP. With anti-war candidate Boris Nadezhdin disqualified, Konstantin said he planned to cast a blank ballot in protest.

"These elections are not democratic elections. They

are authoritarian elections," he said. Millions of Russians living abroad are eligible to vote in the poll, largely viewed as a rubber stamp for Russian President Vladimir Putin to tighten his grip on power. Voting is being held in countries where Moscow has diplomatic missions -- including states it considers "unfriendly". Around 280 polling stations will be open in some 140 territories, according to the Central Election Commission's website. Most will be open during the same three-day period as back in Russia -- from March 15 to 17 -- while some embassies will provide the opportunity for early voting, according to the TASS news agency. "It's my civil obligation," said Viktor, a 35-year-old Russian living in Novi Sad, north of Belgrade. "I will vote for anybody but Putin."

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, tens of thousands of Russians have settled in Serbia, where the community has largely flourished. Some have opened restaurants or started tech companies and other businesses, making a noticeable and buzzy impact on the Serbian capital.

Serbia has also offered room for political activists still angling to remain relevant in Russia. In recent weeks Russian expats have organised protests against the war in Ukraine, held memorial ceremonies following the death of opposition leader Alexei Navalny, and petitioned for Nadezhdin's candidacy. "Here we have an opportunity to stay on the street and say the things we say to you today," Ksenia Kuznetsova, a 33-year-old Russian, told AFP on the sidelines of an anti-war protest. "All of my friends, all of my family [that] stayed in Russia, have no voice. And I feel an obligation to do it instead of them," she added.

While she planned to vote, Kuznetsova is worried about having to go into the

Russian embassy to cast her ballot. Some also worry that Moscow is ramping up pressure on the Russian diaspora across the world. For Elena Koposova and her family of four, that fear is all too real. They faced imminent deportation from Serbia after their residency permit was rejected without explanation. The rejection follows years of living lawfully in Serbia after leaving Russia nearly a decade ago.

Koposova's family had invested in a business, sent their children to Serbian schools, learned the language and largely stayed out of politics. "We are very law-abiding people, very quiet in our life," she told AFP. "I've never been politically active in Serbia, nor in Russia..." With one exception, Koposova admitted. She signed an anti-war petition. This might have been enough to catch the attention of Russian intelligence agencies, she suspects, who pressured their Serbian allies to act.



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## Flash floods need proactive mitigation

**T**HE heavy showers left main roads and streets flooded with knee-high water and submerged low-lying areas in Gwadar, Kech, Kharan, Turbat, Parni, Jiwani, and adjoining districts of Balochistan. Heavy rains suspended traffic and blocked connecting roads causing an urban flood-like situation in most cities in the province. Meanwhile, the Metrology Department has warned of flash flooding in the local nullahs of Gwadar, Kech, Turbat, and Panjgur, adding that snowfall may disrupt traffic in northern Balochistan. The Met department further informed the citizens that several other regions including Chagai, Noshki, Washuk, Mastung, Sibbi, Nasirabad, Zhob, Sherani, Barkhan, Musakhel, Kohlu, Jhal Magsi, Loralai, Ziarat, Quetta, Chaman, Pishin, Qila Abdullah and Qila Saifullah are likely to witness similar weather spill, with snowfall on hills, till March 13.

Pakistan's Southern region including some parts of Sindh and Balochistan bracing for serious repercussions of heavy rains with urban flooding in Gwadar, Ormara, Sibbi Nasirabad, Zhob, and Qila Saifullah. The heavy rains inundated vast swathes of the province blocking road connectivity with the rest of the country as well as causing serious disruption in rescue and relief operations by the authorities. The provincial government and the NDMA have already launched relief activities in affected parts of the province. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has recently paid an emergency visit to a rain-hit region, offered condolences over losses, and announced significant aid and compensation for flood victims in Balochistan. The NDMA in collaboration with King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KS Relief) Pakistan, has mobilized an emergency relief program to support the flood victims of Gwadar, while Pakistan military and several NGOs also kicked start rescue and relief operations in rain-hit areas in Balochistan.

Pakistan is highly vulnerable to global warming and natural disasters because of its geographical location, topography, acute weather conditions, irregular growth, and untidy governance. Climate change has had significant impacts on Pakistan, particularly in the form of extreme weather events, water scarcity, glacial melt, and periodic heat waves in the country. Historically, our nation has been facing climate-induced weather events regularly that caused significant damage to the country's infrastructure, economy, and population. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has revealed in its report that Pakistan is among the most vulnerable countries to climate change which has been causing a \$2 billion loss annually to the South Asian nation since 2000. As said, climate change affects four million people every year, while super-floods in 2022 impacted 30 million people and perished 1,700 lives causing the bulk of economic losses, and displacement. The report highlighted that Pakistan's economy may be affected by natural disasters by up to 9% by the year 2050.

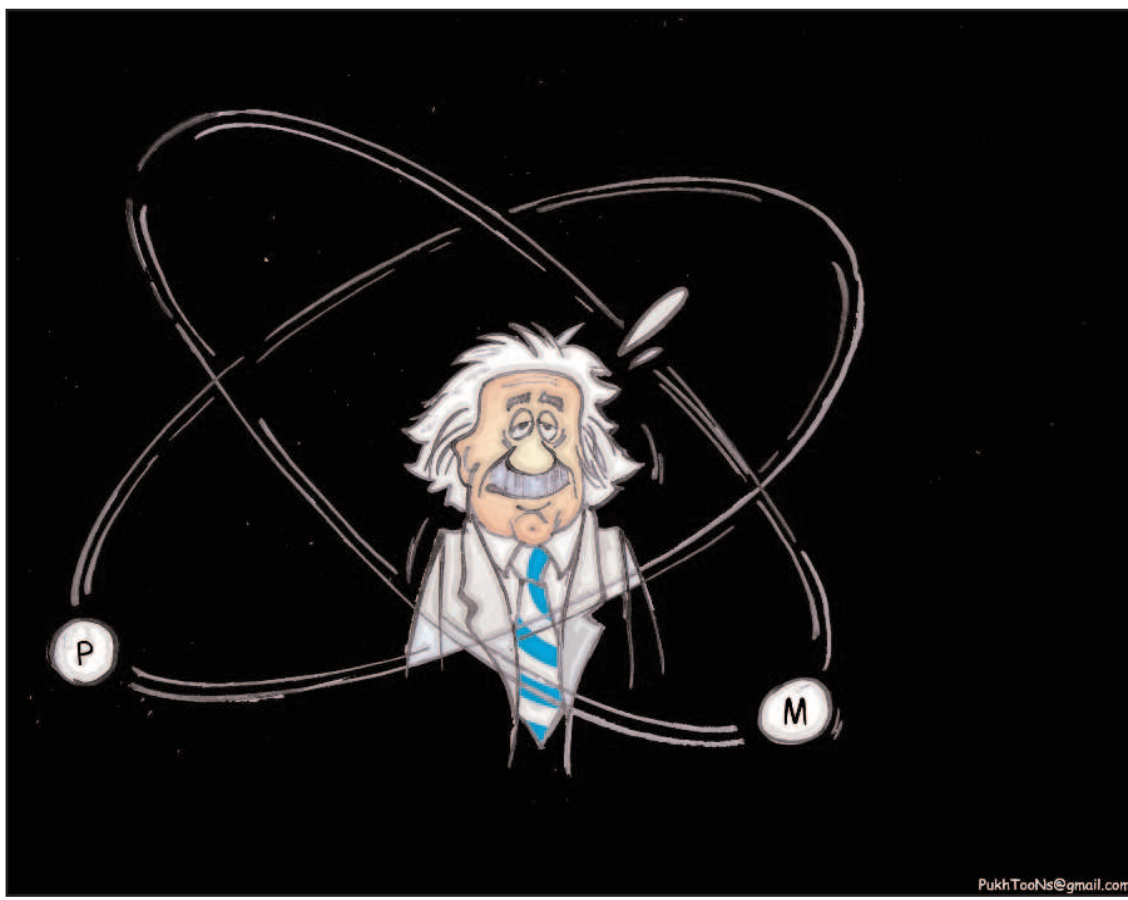
The climate-induced droughts, recurrent floods, glacier melt, and other natural disasters become customary in today's Pakistan, but our leaders and governments were not well prepared to tackle those challenges effectively. In fact, half of the problem is the self-creation of the public and its leaders. No proper sanitation and drainage systems coupled with heavy encroachment in the cities, alongside waterways, and sewerage nullahs, and illegal construction in the rivers' bed or on the bank of ravines, not only regularly obstruct waterways but cause floods in urban and hilly areas, resulting in significant human and economic losses on an annual basis. Each year, provincial governments allocate bulk funds for flood prevention that only quench the thirst of corrupt bureaucracy, Tahsildars, and patwaris in all four provinces. Presently, global warming has caused serious survival risks for the country, as monsoon floods have become a recurrent phenomenon on an annual basis. The reconstruction and rehabilitation work of the past super-floods has not yet been completed since a new wave of torrential rains exposed the government's mismanagement and poor deliverance to the public. The government must reprioritize its PSDP, with a particular focus on infrastructure development, and flood prevention measures including removal of encroachment, broadening and clearance of sewerage passages, drainage lines, etc along with the construction of water reservoirs to stall flood risk and avoid huge economic losses to the country. The recent torrential rains in Sindh and Balochistan remind us of the devastation of monsoon flooding, leaving ample time on disposal to prepare for that challenge. It is a shared task and collective responsibility of the leaders as well as the public which must be taken as the priority, otherwise, ad-hoc measures, and post-flood scream are worthless and futile.

## Ramadan season; profiteers versus public

**T**HE Pakistani nation braces with an unimaginable hike in prices of essential commodities, including kitchen items like vegetables, ghee, sugar, edible oil, meat, eggs, and pulses. This substantial increase in prices of essential commodities has added to the economic sufferings of low- to middle-income consumers. In the absence of an effective price control and monitoring system, the public is bound to pay a two to three-fold increase in the prices of daily-use commodities. In the current scenario, meat, fish, and all kinds of fruits have now become out of reach for middle-class families in the country. Market experts foresee a further hike in commodity prices during the holy month of Ramadan, with a general surge of 31.5% in recent months. Several food items may witness up to a 60% increase in their rates from their pre-Ramadan levels.

The provincial and local governments entirely gave up to the hoarders and profiteers with no writ of the government on the ground. The system of district local price control committees, food inspectors and duty magistrates has now practically collapsed as the traders and shopkeepers adjust profit for themselves and nobody dares to implement the decree of the government. The newly throned Primer Minister Shehbaz Sharif has increased the volume of the Ramadan Package from Rs7.5 billion to Rs 12.5 billion, and directed the authorities to enhance their outreach to facilitate the majority of the masses during the holy month. As said, the government has arranged mobile units to provide edible items at subsidized rates along with ensuring their availability through USC and BISP. The authorities claimed that the latest technology such as mobile application and GPS will be used to ensure that foodstuffs reach the most deserving people and no theft, misappropriation or pilferage occur at any cost.

The responsibility of ensuring affordable and accessible food lies with the government. Historically, governments have aimed to stimulate the production and distribution of inexpensive food, particularly staple commodities through enforcement of uniform commodities' rates, and prevention of hoarding and unlawful profiteering in the country. However, Pakistani leaders handed over the entire nation to the horde of illegal profiteers while taking the charge of Utility stores and mobile supply trucks etc. Presumably, the rest of the country neither falls under their responsibility nor voted for them by providing relief to nearly 10 % population through Utility stores or BISP the government could not elude from its responsibility concerning the rest of the public. The government leaders must abandon such ready-made bureaucratic solutions and endeavours to enforce writ of the law and state regulated prices of the commodities in all parts of the country. Otherwise they might have lost their right to represent the public and rule the country.



## This is not 'Netanyahu's war', it is Israel's genocide

Ahmad Ibsais

**I do not blame Benjamin Netanyahu. I do not blame the Israeli prime minister for what is happening to my people. I do not blame him today, as Israeli bombs destroy every corner of Gaza, and children die under the rubble. I did not blame him back in 2013, when I had to watch the slaughter of my people in Gaza on the evening news, either.**

My mother did not blame him when snipers perched on rooftops shot at her as she tried to make her way to work in the West Bank. My grandfather, God rest his soul, did not blame him as he died without ever returning to the land settlers stole from him in the 1980s, either.

For me, for my family, for my people, what we are witnessing in Palestine today is not "Netanyahu's war". It is not his occupation. He is nothing but another cog in the relentless war machine that is Israel. Yet if you were to ask senators Bernie Sanders or Elizabeth Warren, the supposed champions of Palestinian rights and progressive humanitarianism in the United States, everything that has happened to us in the past 75 years, and everything that is happening to us today, can be blamed on one man, and one man alone: Netanyahu.

Sanders insistently calls the ongoing Israeli assault on Gaza "Netanyahu's war", and demands that the US "not give Netanyahu another nickel". Meanwhile, Warren denounces "Netanyahu's failed leadership" as she calls for a ceasefire. For these progressive senators, the cause of all the pain and suffering in Palestine is clear: a far-right, hawkish prime minister hell-bent on continuing a conflict that keeps him in power.

Sure, Netanyahu is evil. Sure, he committed countless crimes against Palestinians and against humanity, throughout his long career. Sure, he is continuing to fuel the carnage in Gaza today in part for his own political survival. And he should be held accountable for everything he has said and done that caused harm and pain to my people. But the racism, extremism and genocidal intent that is on display in Gaza and across the occupied Palestinian territory today cannot and should not be blamed on Netanyahu

alone. Blaming Israel's blatant human rights abuses, disregard for international law, and open celebration of war crimes on Netanyahu alone is nothing but a coping mechanism for liberals like Sanders and Warren. By blaming Netanyahu for the suffering and oppression of the Palestinian people, past and present, they keep alive the lie that Israel was built on progressive ideals, rather than ethnic cleansing.

By blaming Netanyahu, they whitewash their seemingly unconditional support for a state blatantly committing war crimes and crimes against humanity. By blaming Netanyahu, and casting Israel as a progressive, well-meaning state that would respect international humanitarian law but is currently taken over by a bad leader, they are absolving themselves - and the US at large - of complicity in Israel's many war crimes. Of course, Sanders, Warren and all the others pushing this line know well that the "conflict" in Israel-Palestine would not magically disappear and Palestinians would not immediately achieve liberation and justice if Netanyahu were gone. After all, they've seen a similar scenario play out in the US only a few years ago. People had said if only Trump was removed from the White House, problems that he fuelled and provoked would disappear. The American democracy would be saved and everything would be just fine.

But did that happen? It has been almost four years since the eventual end of Trump's presidency, but we can still see rampant racism, inequality, gun violence and poverty across the country. These problems have not been magically fixed after Trump's presidency, because they were not created by Trump. These were never "Trump" problems, but American ones. Furthermore, there is a very real chance that Trump will return to the White House next year because millions of Americans support him and his agenda. The same is true for Netanyahu and Israel. The suggestion that Netanyahu betrayed Israel's progressive, democratic foundations and caused the "humanitarian catastrophe" we are witnessing in Gaza

today, ignores the systemic oppression that is inherent to Israel as a settler colony. Sanders and others may want to believe the Zionist myth that Israel is an essentially progressive country with socialist foundations, built on a "land without people" by a people without land. But they cannot escape the fact that Palestine has never been a "land without a people". Indeed, the founding of Israel required the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who are Indigenous to the land, and the survival of Israel as a "Jewish Nation", as stated in its Nation State Law, requires the continued oppression, disenfranchisement and abuse of Palestinians.

Today, millions of Palestinians continue to live and die under Israeli occupation, and they - alongside Palestinian citizens of Israel - are subjected to what is widely described as an apartheid system. This untenable and unjust dynamic is hardly the creation of Netanyahu and his government. From the very beginning, the state of Israel tied its long-term survival to the ethnic cleansing of Palestine, complete erasure of the Palestinian identity, and the oppression of Palestinians who remained on their lands. Former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir wrote in a Washington Post op-ed that "There is no such thing as Palestinians" in 1969, decades before the beginning of Netanyahu's reign. Sure, the Israeli left promote their agriculture-based communal living situation in "kibbutzim" as a socialist dream, and many Israelis take pride in their country's "democracy". But all this is true only if you ignore the humanity of Palestinians who have been ethnically cleansed from their lands to make way for the socialist kibbutzim, and who cannot participate in Israel's democracy despite living under full Israeli control in illegally occupied territory. Before the beginning of the genocide in Gaza, Israelis protested en masse against what they deemed to be an attack on the country's legal system and democracy by Netanyahu for months. Yet they have never protested in such numbers and with such force the occupation,

murder, and brutalisation of Palestinians by their own state and military. In November, a full month into the genocide, only 1.8 percent of Israelis said they believed the Israeli military was using too much firepower in Gaza, and now, five months into the genocide, some 40 percent of Israelis say they want to see a revival of Jewish settlements in Gaza.

It seems the images of thousands of dead and maimed Palestinians do not mean much to Israelis. They are not moved by the videos of fathers carrying the remains of their children in plastic bags, or mothers crying over the bloodied bodies of their murdered babies. They do not care about hungry children stuck under the rubble, or toddlers being poisoned by the bird feed they are forced to eat amid a man-made famine. They are not merely indifferent to the suffering their military inflicts on innocents - thousands of them actually protest at the border gates to ensure no aid reaches Palestinians on the brink of starvation. Many of these are the very same Israelis who took to the streets less than a year ago to protest against Netanyahu's so-called attack on their democracy.

So, no - what we are witnessing in Palestine today is not "Netanyahu's war" as Sanders and Warren insistently claim. This conflict, this genocide, did not start with Netanyahu's rise to power and it will not end with his inevitable fall from grace. Settlers began stealing Palestinians' lands, homes and lives long before Netanyahu became relevant in Israeli politics. Palestinians have been stuck in open-air prisons since long before he was prime minister. The Israeli military did not start abusing, harassing, maiming and killing Palestinians when Netanyahu became their commander.

The problem is not Netanyahu or any other Israeli politician or general. The problem is Israel's occupation. The problem is the settler colony whose very security and long-term viability are reliant on a system of apartheid and the never-ending occupation, oppression and mass killing of an Indigenous population. This is not Netanyahu's war, it is Israel's genocide.

## What Turkiye's deals with Turkmenistan mean for region's gas

Yasar Yaki

**T**WO preliminary documents on natural gas cooperation were signed by Turkiye and Turkmenistan during the Antalya Diplomacy Forum last week. One was a memorandum of understanding and the other a letter of intent. These documents are considered to be the preparatory stages for a full-fledged, binding agreement.

Figures are not always consistent about the size of the natural gas reserves per country, especially because of the discovery of shale gas reserves. However, the order of the countries with the biggest reserves is roughly as follows: Russia (47,800 cubic km), Iran (34,000 cubic km), Qatar (23,900 cubic km), the US (17,710 cubic km) and Turkmenistan (10,000 cubic km).

The main focus of this article is the Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline. It took too long for the various parties to overcome their disputes on the delineation of the maritime jurisdiction areas and the seabed in the Caspian Sea. Russia and Iran tried to get the lion's share of control of the sea because it was previously shared only by the Soviet Union and Iran. The dispute was eventually solved when the littoral countries agreed that the laying of gas pipelines along the seabed would only require the approval of those countries whose maritime jurisdiction the pipeline passes through, not all Caspian Sea countries. There are two main pipelines already operational in the region that will ultimately allow the transport of gas from the Shah Deniz sources of Azerbaijan in the Caspian Sea to the southernmost point of Italy. One is the Trans-Anatolian pipeline, which crosses Turkiye from east to west, and the other is the Trans Adriatic Pipeline, which transports gas through northern Greece, Albania and the Adriatic Sea to Italy.

During the Soviet era, the bulk of Turkmen gas was sent to Russia and a smaller quantity to Iran. After the dismemberment of the Soviet Union, Turkmenistan started to export gas to China and India. It is now aiming to diversify its markets. Until the outbreak of the Ukrainian war, one of the alternatives was to send Turkmen gas to Europe through Russia and Ukraine. Now that the Russian route is blocked because of the war, the most suitable route is to go through either Georgia or Armenia.

At one stage, there were misgivings about the relevance of a trans-Caspian pipeline. However, Turkmenistan now seems to be interested in going through Turkiye. Another reason for ambivalence toward the project was the determination of the international status of the Caspian Sea. This problem now seems to have been eased thanks to the reaching of an agreement. There were three possible routes for the Belt and Road Initiative that China introduced. One was the land and sea route that would go through the Middle East. The second was the route that went through China and Russia, ending up in the Nordic countries. The third was called the "Middle

Corridor," which would go through the South Caucasus and, more precisely, through Azerbaijan and Armenia. This route has now become the most economical because of the problems on the other routes. The Russian route has several problems because of the Ukrainian war. As a result, another route - the Caspian Sea route - came to the forefront. This is also called the Middle Corridor and will go either through Armenia or Georgia. This route has its problems but, as it stands, it looks the most suitable route under the present circumstances.

There is more than one alternative for the Middle Corridor. If the Azerbaijani-Armenian problem ends up with a compromise, the Meghri Corridor, which goes through the south of Armenia, could solve several problems at the same time. When Russian President Vladimir Putin brokered a ceasefire in 2020, he insisted on opening the north-south and east-west corridors through the Armenian territories in order to bring enormous economic activity to the region. If Armenia drags its feet, the oil and gas pipelines will likely avoid the country and instead follow the line that goes from the Caspian Sea to Georgia and from there to Turkiye. The losing side will be Armenia. A similar controversy emerged in the early 1990s, when the shortest route for the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline project was being debated. Because of Turkiye and Azerbaijan's mistrust toward Armenia, a longer route that circumvented its territories was decided on. Once the Armenian problem is solved, the remainder of the route to the European oil and gas networks is ready, thanks to the pipelines across Anatolia and the Adriatic.

There is another important project on this route. This is Turkiye and Russia's idea to make Istanbul, or Thrace, an important hub for oil and gas transit. Russia has raised this issue several times. Whether it will eventually materialize is still to be decided.

Turkmenistan's oil and gas supplies were mismanaged for decades by the Soviet Union and later by the Russian Federation. It is now on the threshold of a sprint forward, if Turkmenistan does not fall into political instability. Saparmurat Niyazov, the first post-independence president of Turkmenistan, wasted the country's resources by mismanaging the economy. With reasonable governance, it could overcome many of its problems. Another important subject that was raised during the Antalya Diplomacy Forum was Turkmenistan's potential membership of the Union of Turkic States. This organization is composed of Turkiye, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

Although Turkmenistan is a Turkic state, it is not a full member but an observer state, as it is permanently neutral like Switzerland. Whether a permanently neutral state like Turkmenistan can become a member of a union in which NATO's Turkiye is also a member is a debatable subject.

## China does not have the leverage to end the Red Sea crisis; the US does

William Figueroa

**I**N the beginning of Israel's devastating war on Gaza, China appeared to be on the same page with its regional partners, Saudi Arabia and Iran, when it came to the big questions. All three condemned the Israeli aggression, called for a negotiated settlement addressing Palestinian grievances and held conferences and summits together to express their collective opposition to the conflict.

But the Houthi attacks on shipping routes in the Red Sea have upset this consensus. As Iran officially denies any direct involvement despite its unquestionably close relationship with the Houthis and Saudi Arabia remains strategically quiet after the end of its protracted and costly conflict with the armed group, Beijing finds itself in an awkward position. China has a great deal at stake and has made no secret of its opposition to the attacks. As the world's

largest exporter of goods and one of the top players in the global shipping industry, it has a tremendous economic stake in maintaining the security of shipping lanes.

In this context, the United States has tried to cajole China into bringing its influence to bear on Iran to stop the attacks, but there has been no major movement from Chinese diplomats in that direction. This reflects the reality that Beijing has only limited sway over Tehran and the US itself is much more capable at bringing the Red Sea crisis to an end by simply using its leverage over Israel. The importance of the Red Sea shipping lanes for China cannot be overstated. The majority of Chinese exports to Europe pass through the Suez Canal, and Chinese companies have just recently signed \$8bn worth of investment deals in the Suez Canal Economic Zone.

Although the Houthis have pledged not to attack Chinese ships (as long as

they are not bound for Israel), China has still suffered substantial economic damage from the crisis. Shipping and manufacturing have been impacted across the country with many businesses at all levels of the supply chain complaining of devastating losses. China has been reluctant to directly condemn the Houthis or publicly link them to Iran, but it has repeatedly voiced its disapproval, calling on all parties to respect the freedom of navigation and "stop attacking and disturbing civilian ships". In January, the Chinese media outlet Global Times reported that Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi had said, "China has been making active efforts to ease the tension in the Red Sea."

Then a Reuters article claimed that China had communicated a vague but threatening statement to the Iranians: If Chinese vessels or economic interests were

to be impacted by the Houthi attacks, it could harm Sino-Iranian business relations.

Finally, while China has committed itself to a number of investment projects in Iran, it hasn't actually followed through, and Iran lags far behind other Middle Eastern nations in terms of Chinese foreign direct investment. In short, China has some influence with Iran but has difficulty converting it into leverage. And yet, the US continues to insist that China can press Iran on the situation in the Red Sea. Washington seems convinced that Beijing is unwilling to place any meaningful leverage on Iran. One senior official told reporters, "Beijing says they are raising this with the Iranians, ... but we're certainly going to wait before we comment further on how effectively we think they're actually raising it." As the US has conducted more military strikes in the region, China

has grown more agitated about a potential escalation.

China may be feeling pressure from the disruptions to global shipping, but a wider conflict between the US and Iran has the potential to threaten its entire economic strategy in the region. Beijing has been clear that it believes the best way to calm the situation down is a ceasefire in Gaza, which the Houthis have clearly said would result in an end to their strikes. Certainly, it is quite odd that the US is insisting China use influence it does not necessarily have over Iran and the Houthis but it does not consider using its own diplomatic weight to restrain Israel and bring the war in Gaza to an

end. Washington has a tremendous amount of economic, military and political leverage over the Israeli government, but it refuses to use it.

Instead, it is sending arms to Israel in the midst of its brutal campaign of collective punishment against the people of Gaza, which legal experts and the International Court of Justice have said may amount to genocide. Indeed, claims by US officials that China has an "obligation" to pressure Iran and restrain the Houthis ring hollow when the US refuses to use its substantially larger influence over Israel - the one state that is showing the least restraint of all.

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# Israel the biggest loser from its maximalist policy

Dr. Dania Koleilat Khatib

**K**HALIL Al-Hayya was the Hamas politburo member who presented a counteroffer to Israel through the negotiators in Cairo. The offer rejected the handing over of hostages before there is a permanent ceasefire in place. The Israeli offer, which is not much of an offer, was for Hamas to surrender the hostages in return for a six-week break, after which the carnage would resume. Though the US is saying there must be a ceasefire, it is claiming that the "ball is in Hamas' court." It is not, the US is trying to dictate a surrender.

The holy month of Ramazan is a time when emotions run high. Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir has put in place strict restrictions on worshippers at Al-Aqsa Mosque. This is also the time for the extremists and settlers to provoke Palestinians. A third intifada may erupt in the West Bank if the slaughter continues in Gaza. This will mean all hell breaking loose for Israel. Hence, the proposal of a six-week truce is aimed at appeasing Palestinians during Ramazan, while allowing Israel to continue its genocide afterward.

What the American side is claiming is that, during the six weeks of ceasefire, mediation will take place to make sure that it becomes permanent. However, recent experience has shown that the Americans are unwilling to exert any pressure on Israel beyond the narrative. Did they not advise Israel against a ground campaign? Israel still went ahead with it. Did they not ask Israel to diminish the civilian casualties? Yet Israel is still on a killing spree in Gaza. The US has not put any conditions on military aid to Israel despite the empty threats that are circulating in the

media. This is why there is no confidence that Washington will put any pressure on Israel to stop the war. To add to that, no one really believes the US. People remember Saddam Hussein in 1990. After he surrendered the hostages of British Airways Flight 149, the US went ahead and bombed him. The language of Hamas and the nonnegotiable offer brought by Al-Hayya shows very well that the group does not believe the US. Nor are they willing to offer a free win for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

A six-week ceasefire would be nothing more than a break for Netanyahu to claim a win by returning the hostages and a way to appease angry Palestinians in the West Bank. Netanyahu also wants to prevent a famine for which he might be held accountable internationally. On the other hand, Hamas is cornered. It has nothing to lose anymore. The policy Israel is undertaking is very foolish. When you push your enemy into a corner, you are pushing them to fight to the death. For Hamas, this is do or die. Israel is adamant on going into Rafah. In Rafah, a small area of 64 sq. km, 1.5 million people are concentrated. The fighting will be brutal and will result in thousands of casualties. It might also result in the killing of the hostages. Facing the demand of the US and Israel to provide a list of the surviving hostages, Hamas said that it is difficult to do so because of the bombardment and the loss of communication. Its offer stated that the prisoner exchange would commence one week after the start of the ceasefire.

Israel is adamant about eliminating key Hamas leaders like Yahya Sinwar, Mohammed Deif and

Marwan Issa. However, what will be the scenario that results from such a maximalist policy, which is focused on destroying Hamas? Israel is not thinking about what might happen to the hostages. What if, facing Israel's uncompromising attitude, Hamas kills them? If Hamas' leaders are killed, the hostages are killed and Israel takes over Gaza, what situation would Israel face? It would have to deal with a mess it could not handle. Besides administering Gaza, it would have to deal with an Israeli society angry and divided over the killing of the hostages. So, Israel's aim, which is to kill all Hamas leaders, will ensure there is no happy ending for anyone. What the US and Israel are hoping is for Qatar and Egypt to pressure Hamas. However, these two states cannot pressure Hamas and come across as accomplices with Israel in mass murder. They will not accept being seen as agents for Israel. If they pressure Hamas to call it quits, they need to offer the Palestinian people something substantial that goes beyond a ceasefire. It should be some kind of fulfillment of their aspirations, such as the recognition of a Palestinian state or an irreversible pathway to one. This way, Qatar and Egypt can come across as the facilitators of a fair solution.

The US, Israel's main enabler, has been a major hurdle in finding a solution. Instead of pressuring Israel, it is trying to contain Arab states' discontent. This will not work. The situation will spiral out of control. Already, children and the elderly are dying of hunger in Gaza. They are planning to build a port to deliver aid, but it could be two months before it is operational. Seriously? In two months, the

entire population of Gaza could be dead from hunger. Instead of claiming that "the ball is in Hamas' court" and putting the blame on Hamas, which is the weaker party, the US would be better off pressuring Israel, the stronger party, which has the ability to end the war. President Joe Biden should also take the "uncommitted" vote seriously. As much as pro-Israel donor money is important to him, the uncommitted vote could make him lose the upcoming election. The premise that the prospect of another Donald Trump presidency will jolt the Arab American and Muslim American communities into voting for Biden does not hold. They will make Biden lose. This is why this administration should start taking serious actions against the Netanyahu government.

An invasion of Rafah would be catastrophic for everyone. Instead of acquiescing to Israeli rejectionism, the US should pressure Israel into accepting a permanent ceasefire. In return for accepting Hamas' conditions, which the group says are non-negotiable, the negotiators can ask the group to call it quits. Coupled with this demand should be an international promise to recognize a Palestinian state - a recognition that is not subject to an Israeli veto. This would give Hamas a graceful exit. It would come across like it scarified itself as a political entity for the well-being of the Palestinian people. Of course, such a deal should include a safe exit for the leadership. However, bloodthirsty Israel is unlikely to accept such a reasonable scheme and the ideological Biden is showing no willingness to pressure Israel. In the end, mark my words, Israel will be the biggest loser.

Arab News

# What the world continues to get wrong about Libya

Hafed Al-Ghwel

**I**n the collective pursuit of stability in Libya, the global community continues to witness the unraveling of well-intentioned summits and initiatives, the latest being next month's troubled Sirte National Reconciliation Summit. This ambitious gathering is intended to forge a path toward peace and unity in Libya, a nation torn apart by more than a decade of internecine conflict and worsening fragmentation.

Much like its predecessor endeavors over the years, the UN-led and African Union-sponsored Sirte summit seeks to - yet again - bring together diverse Libyan factions to agree on mechanisms for national reconciliation in the hope of ending the cycle of violence and to pave the way for democratic governance and stability. Despite these noble objectives, however, its success is far from guaranteed; if the summit is even held at all. Deep-rooted divisions within Libya, compounded by the interests of foreign actors, pose significant challenges, hamstringing consensus-building on key issues, such as the distribution of oil revenues, the integration of militias into a unified national army and the establishment of a single, legitimate government.

Moreover, the summit's outcomes are likely to be marred by not just the persistent mistrust between factions, but also a pervasive fatigue among average Libyans, who have simply checked out, having lost faith in a quarrelsome political elite. There are additional concerns about a potential boycott by key stakeholders that already feel sidelined by and skeptical of the UN-led initiative, which has largely left warring factions to negotiate the mechanisms for unifying Libya's fractured political system behind closed doors. Doomed to fail before it even began, we are seeing a recurrent pattern of failure that betrays a stubborn reality: conventional diplomacy is ill-suited for the complexities of Libyan politics. Influential actors still refuse to confront the uncomfortable truth that repeated interventions have yet to materially shift Libya's political elites and institutional stakeholders toward the reconciliation that the country so desperately needs. The fact that the Sirte summit is in jeopardy is symptomatic of a broader pathology affecting international efforts in Libya. We keep seeing the same diplomatic mechanisms and backroom dealings being deployed, each promising to

be the panacea for Libya's political ills. Yet, these methods have served only to entrench vested interests and deepen the chasms between local actors, who are diametrically opposed to Libya's transition to a stable, democratic state. The persistent reliance on these dated tactics is not just ineffective, it is counterproductive. Rather than fostering genuine dialogue and compromise, they provide a facade of progress while allowing the status quo of division and conflict to fester.

Why, then, do international actors continue to insist on these flawed approaches? The answer lies in a misjudgment of Libya's internal dynamics and an overestimation of external influence. There is a misplaced belief that external pressure and incentives can reshape entrenched political landscapes. It is a fallacy that has led to the current impasse. The reality is that Libya's political elites are adept at navigating the choppy waters of international diplomacy, often playing one actor off against another to preserve their power. The intricate web of militias, tribal alliances and economic interests that define the country's internal politics cannot be untangled by the same hands that have repeatedly failed (and refuse) to grasp the subtleties of its social fabric. External actors consistently fail Libya in at least four major ways. First, there has not been any meaningful attempt to resolve Libya's interminable security dilemma. In the absence of a strong central authority, competing factions fall into a situation in which they obsess over securing themselves, prompting others to do the same, resulting in an arms race and periodic conflict. Over time and unchecked, Libya's militias have since enmeshed themselves within the state, upgrading a mere arms race into a far-reaching competition to amass political influence to shift priorities away from peacebuilding or reconciliation toward factionalization and the preservation of a debilitating status quo.

Second, insisting on some kind of "consociationalism" to manage post-conflict dynamics in an ethnically or tribally diverse society such as Libya may be theoretically sound. Unfortunately, proposing a power-sharing arrangement among co-equal groups never works when self-interested foreign meddlers back different local actors, upsetting the delicate balance required for

consociationalism to work. As a result, the Libyan scenario consistently exhibits a mix between post-invasion Iraq's sectarian volatility and the endless warlords' conflicts that rocked Afghanistan before the ill-advised US withdrawal. Third, given Libya's oil wealth, proposing a transition to a market democracy as a path to sustainable peace also sounds good on paper. However, implementing such an approach without stable institutions does little to quell the competition for resources and rent-seeking behavior, exacerbating conflicts, as witnessed in Mali. Surprisingly, the troubling assumption that a Western-style democracy can simply be parachuted into Libya survives to this day, with such thinking often governing how some countries structure their policy and alignments vis-a-vis Libya. Lastly, a near-decade-long misalignment between foreign and local actors with what most Libyans yearn for still persists. Competing foreign interests often prioritize strategic gains over the long-term welfare and democratic aspirations of the Libyan people. Furthermore, the stubborn zeal for top-down interventions that disregard local governance culture have only resulted in deepening distrust for the state, complicating a future unified government's efforts to restore legitimacy in state institutions. We are thus long overdue for a paradigm shift in how we approach Libya. We must move away from a strategy that places disproportionate emphasis on the agency of international actors and overpromises the efficacy of external interventions. Instead, we must empower Libyan civil society, support grassroots movements and strengthen the capacity of local institutions to lead the charge toward reconciliation.

This bottom-up approach is the only viable path to building a sustainable and inclusive political order in Libya. It is a path that respects the agency of the Libyan people and acknowledges their right to self-determination without the misaligned, self-serving and heavy-handed dictates of foreign actors. The Sirte summit's troubled state is a stark reminder that Libyans must forge Libya's future themselves. The global community's role should be one of support, not orchestration. Until we internalize this lesson and adjust our approach accordingly, we will continue to witness the cycle of failed initiatives that have come to define the search for an acceptable Libyan peace.

# Chad's humanitarian challenge amid mounting refugee crisis

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

**A**gainst the bleak backdrop of the ongoing civil war in Sudan, Chad stands at a critical juncture, grappling with the looming specter of an escalating refugee crisis. The UN Refugee Agency has sounded the alarm, highlighting the imminent risk of a surge in refugee flow from Darfur into Chad. This dire forecast is underpinned by a distressing lack of basic necessities, exacerbating the plight of vulnerable populations already dealing with the ravages of the conflict in Sudan.

As the conflict in Sudan approaches its one-year anniversary, its repercussions reverberate far beyond the country's borders, casting a particularly profound shadow over neighboring Chad. Chad, already burdened with its own socioeconomic challenges, now confronts the formidable task of accommodating an influx of refugees fleeing the horrors of war. Against this backdrop of adversity, enhanced humanitarian aid and substantial development investment in Chad emerges as an urgent imperative, crucial for stabilizing the country's fragile socioeconomic fabric and sustaining its commendable tradition of offering sanctuary to those in need.

Despite the formidable challenges it faces, Chad steadfastly upholds its commitment to providing refuge to those fleeing persecution and conflict, embodying the noble principles enshrined in international humanitarian law. In navigating the complex terrain of refugee management and humanitarian response, Chad exemplifies resilience and solidarity, embodying the spirit of compassion and empathy.

This influx of refugees, predomi-

nantly comprising women and children, underscores the urgent need for comprehensive support mechanisms to address their vulnerabilities. Women make up a staggering percentage - more than two-thirds - of arrivals in Chad and many of them have endured harrowing experiences of gender-based violence, including rape. The necessity for comprehensive support, encompassing medical and psychological assistance, cannot be overstated.

While the UN Refugee Agency endeavors to provide essential services, the magnitude of the challenge far surpasses the available resources, leaving a glaring gap in the provision of adequate support for the forcibly displaced. In addition, Chad faces the staggering burden of accommodating nearly half a million internally displaced persons and returnees, further underscoring the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis unfolding within its borders. By mid-February, the tally of new refugees seeking sanctuary from the harrowing conflict in Sudan soared past the half-million mark, solidifying Chad's position as the primary destination for those fleeing the turmoil that erupted a year ago next month. This influx catapults Chad to the forefront as Africa's foremost host of refugees on a per capita basis, with 1.1 million refugees in a population of almost 19 million. Among this multitude are not only those who have sought refuge amid the recent escalation of violence in Sudan, but also individuals displaced by preceding conflicts, hailing from diverse nations including the Central African Republic, Nigeria and Cameroon. Kelly T. Clements, the UN Refugee Agency's deputy high

commissioner, underscored the gravity of the situation during a visit to Chad this month. She engaged with local officials to evaluate the prevailing conditions and strategize on the necessary response. Expressing the concerns of the Chadian authorities, Clements articulated the apprehension regarding the anticipated influx of famished Sudanese families in the coming weeks.

Clements added that Chad's unwavering commitment to maintaining open borders, despite the inherent fragility of the region, underscores its humanitarian ethos. However, such magnanimity exacts a toll on Chad, with the country bearing the weight of hosting refugees not only from the protracted Sudanese conflict but also from preceding humanitarian crises. An expected new surge in refugee arrivals, particularly from Darfur, poses a formidable challenge and is likely to further strain Chad's already stretched resources and infrastructure. The burden of accommodating and providing for an increasing number of displaced individuals against the backdrop of socioeconomic fragility again underscores the urgency of concerted international action. This means that the international community must rally behind Chad by offering tangible support and solidarity to alleviate the burgeoning humanitarian crisis and to foster sustainable solutions.

Beyond immediate humanitarian assistance, Chad urgently requires substantial development investment to fortify its capacity to absorb and integrate refugee populations seamlessly. Investing in critical sectors such as infrastructure, healthcare,

education and livelihood opportunities holds the key to unlocking the potential for sustainable development and resilience-building within refugee-hosting communities. By bolstering its socioeconomic foundations, Chad can mitigate the adverse impacts of the refugee influx and pave the way for long-term stability and prosperity. The challenges confronting Chad extend beyond the realm of humanitarian aid, encompassing broader geopolitical dynamics and regional security considerations. Influxes of refugees from conflict-ridden regions inevitably pose security risks, highlighting the imperative for robust international cooperation in negotiating a ceasefire in Sudan and bringing an end to the devastating war. As the international community wrestles with an array of crises and challenges, the plight of refugees in Chad serves as a poignant reminder of our collective responsibility to protect the most vulnerable among us. The principles of solidarity, compassion and shared humanity must guide our actions as we endeavor to build a more inclusive and equitable world.

In conclusion, the escalating refugee crisis in Chad demands urgent attention and action from the international community. Enhancing humanitarian aid, bolstering development investment and fostering regional cooperation are vital to alleviate the suffering of displaced populations and pave the way for sustainable solutions. As we stand at a pivotal juncture in history, let us reaffirm our commitment to upholding the rights and dignity of refugees and displaced persons, ensuring that no one is left behind in our collective pursuit of a better future.

# A new referendum has exposed the woke cause. Labour should tremble

Tim Stanley

**A**ngela Eagle MP has given a depressing glimpse into life under a Labour government, tweeting a wish list of pro-trans laws designed to complete a sexual revolution that, confusingly, appears to be permanent. Conversion therapy ban, modernised gender recognition, a LGBT envoy to spread the gospel of queer theory to the backwards bits of the empire.

Well, if Keir Starmer is signed-up to Angela's agenda, he might want to think again. Elites in Ireland have just discovered there is a limit to how woke a nation is willing to go... Last week, Eire held a referendum to "modernise" its constitution on two points: to include families not based on marriage and to rewrite references to a "mother's duties in the home". In short, to expunge what Taoiseach Leo Varadkar called "sexist" language. Every party campaigned for a Yes-Yes vote - bar a curious Left-wing pro-life group called Aontu - and some of my conservative friends sat it out. They've been burnt by losing referendums on gay marriage in 2015 and abortion in 2018 - both times badly - and this looked like another easy win for "modern Ireland".

On the day, everyone was surprised. The country voted "no" to the families language by 68 per cent; "no" to redefining the role of women by a staggering 74 per cent. The media reacted as if Ireland had given douze points to Gilead; the problem, suggested supporters, was not the reform itself but the government's failure to sell it. Nevertheless with a majority this big, we can infer that thousands of single mothers, carers and feminists voted against amend-

ments that the elite told them were in their sectional interests. Why? One problem was the heavy-handed appeal to an extra-democratic consensus. A citizens assembly was involved - the deliberative bodies of voters informed by experts that Starmer is said to be flirting with here - and the National Women's Council, a powerful non-governmental organisation, was on board. According to a report published in 2021, Ireland, a land of just five million, has about 34,000 NGOs, receiving 67billion of public money (for comparison: the health budget is ordinarily north of 207billion). The vast majority are small and do excellent charitable work. Some, like the Council, receive funds from the taxpayer to lobby their own government to make Ireland more right-on - shifting the locus of authority away from the ballot box, encouraging a continuity of direction regardless of who is in office. This is what social democratic administrations always do. They write laws and pack quangos with activists, so that even when they lose power, they retain institutional control.

Smelling a stitch-up, different groups of voters began to spot problems with the constitutional edits. The Left said they didn't go far enough, failing to guarantee support for carers and leaving the disabled dependent on their household (matriarchy replaced by free market anarchy). Farmers worried that the introduction of a new notion of "durable relationship", as opposed to marriage, would lead to vexatious claims over inheritance. Voters feared that the wording might make migration

easier, even give tacit endorsement to polygamy. The elite replied that all this was scaremongering, that the very human goal was to recognise kids born outside marriage - yet one judge defined "durable relationships" as "intimate, romantic or sexual", ie, nothing to do with children at all. In a compelling TV debate, the Tanaiste Micheál Martin articulated the unspoken message of the "Yes-Yes" campaign when he accused "No" proponent Maria Steen of representing a reactionary Ireland. Young Mrs Steen retorted that it was actually Martin who embodies a failed, ageing consensus.

It is the political elite that has destroyed single-earner households through bad economic policies and crippled social care via underfunding, and its answer to the problems it has created is to reaffirm some glibish about equality and diversity. Here in Britain, above every police station that has ceased solving crimes, hospital with a waiting list and school with mentally ill students, flies a pride flag - proof that our betters might have wrecked the country, but they do care. I'd love to write that the 2-1 defeat was a win for ancient, Catholic Ireland, heralding the return of St Patrick to chase out the snakes. But it wasn't. Rather it was a loss for the new, bourgeois elite that lazily and arrogantly over-reached, misreading popular attitudes that are rarely strictly conservative or liberal but always "contemporary".

Progressives assume Ireland is on a long march towards a new society, but many citizens probably saw liberalising gay marriage and abortion as a short jog to catch up with the rest

of the world. In an age when few believe in God, let alone that marriage is a sacrament revolving around children, why not allow gay men and lesbians to have a wedding, too? Voters felt they had nothing to lose in earlier referendums, only freedoms to gain. By contrast, millions see the trans debate as threatening to take something away, specifically their own identity and protections as a woman. Consider this: the Irish government held a referendum on gender neutrality, taking the word "mother" and its particular role out of the constitution, in the same week as Mother's Day. It was a step too far.

So too was the referendum in Australia last year on expanding indigenous rights - rejected 60-40, the no campaign led by a woman of indigenous descent. It's instructive that the Australian plebiscite was triggered by a Labor government that, in opposition, had proclaimed itself as moderate, insisting that they were a vote to kick out the conservatives rather than to elect a radical programme. Starmer is now doing exactly the same. Angela Eagle's little list of LGBTQ+ laws suggests a more courageous agenda. The calculation, one suspects, is that with the economy so bad, redistribution is unaffordable - so it will be cheaper for the future Labour government to leave its mark by using regulations and redefinitions to affirm officially, in perpetuity that men are toxic, everyone is a racist and being a woman is a figment of the imagination. If so, one trusts Starmer will quickly find that just as there's no money left for socialism, there's zero patience for performative woke nonsense.

The Telegraph

# Ramazan and power of faith and unity

**G**OVERNMENT authorities and institutions try to influence society through whatever means available to them, be it through coercion or the media, education or popular culture. This is often met with an anti-establishment reaction from the general population.

In recent times, there has been a trend on college campuses and among activist groups in the United States which may be described as anti-authoritarian. College students now often look askance at educators and university administrations and challenge what they see as an unjust exercise of power and authority. They are becoming increasingly sceptical about any kind of didactic teaching.

In society at large, influencing others from a position of authority and expertise has also become much more difficult than it has ever been. The anti-vaccination movement is an example of this resistance to expertise; it is largely based on distrust of traditional institutions and structures of knowledge. Many people in the US are also turning away from organised religion and are now more agnostic and even atheistic than ever before. Many do not like the idea of a referee in their life - not even through established institutions and "norms".

Against the backdrop of agnosticism, it is difficult to believe that religion can have any influence on a large group of people. Religion or faith in the Unseen is considered by many an impotent and archaic artifact; it is jettisoned in favour of material success and progress. Moral anarchy and liberal-

ism are what many people celebrate. But what if religion can encourage a billion people to give up their most basic human needs, such as food and water, throughout the day for a whole month?

What if belief in the Unseen can motivate a billion people to worship Him religiously for a whole month as if that is the only thing on their minds - especially at night? What if faith can influence a billion people and inspire them to feed the hungry after fasting the whole day?

What if religious conviction can cause a community to become more altruistic and give to welfare and charity for a month? What if the practice of faith can inspire a billion people to become forgiving of each other's mistakes? What if a noble civilisation of over a billion people can dispel the myth that human beings cannot live without violence, looting, robbing and killing?

What if organised religion can advocate unity among a billion people to the degree that they all perform deeds in unison and find no reason to fight over differences? Yes. What if indeed! Muslims reading this would know they are the beneficiaries and witnesses of this great phenomenon during the month of Ramazan. They unite in the worship of their Creator. They all seek Allah's forgiveness and blessings.

The month of Ramazan is a time in which the Holy Quran is revealed as guidance for all. If others could observe this spectacle in the Muslim community, they would certainly see guidance toward communal unity in worship. Muslims

engaged in political and social activism must appreciate this wonder and use it as a platform to build more trust among each other, more cooperation, more respect, more optimism and a better outlook for each other. Ramazan provides a framework for the Muslim that is predicated on the idea of voluntary change, absent the force of the state and institutions. If a Muslim can give up the most basic of human necessities and maintain that abstinence entirely without coercion, then engaging in activism in the service of justice is a minor effort in comparison.

Islam does not preach anti-authoritarian anarchism; rather it encourages the believer to recognise his own potential within a larger cosmological framework of self-discipline and understanding of ultimate Divine sovereignty. Ramazan shows that true power extends not from the long arm of temporal governmental authority, but from the voluntary acquiescence of the individual to Allah's ultimate dominion over Creation. Muslims who observe Ramazan must thus extend their unity and trust in the Divine to all other months of the year. Ramazan is a living month. It is alive and it gives life to an otherwise "sleepy" community. The Quran is a living book. It is alive and Muslims should see it as life-giving. Governmental power and institutional authority over others now have competition. But it is not any form of human competition. It is a competitor who proves every year that religion and faith in the Real Power is still very much alive - despite the claims and disdain of its adversaries.

Aljazeera





## SEPA convened emergency meeting

### F.P. Report

KARACHI The Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) convened an emergency meeting on Monday reviewed and enhanced the safe disposal practices for hazardous waste in the city.

The meeting was presided over by the Director General of SEPA, Naem Ahmed Mughal, and attended by representatives from six leading incineration companies operating in Karachi.

In his opening remarks, DG SEPA emphasized the need for an efficient disposal mechanism for hazardous waste material at incinerator plants, ensuring environmental safety and public health.

He further said that those involved in unsafe practices for hazardous waste disposal shall be dealt with iron hands. Also, fake incineration

service providers will not be spared from strict legal action.

Moreover, he added, if any staff of SEPA found involved in supporting unsafe practices of hazardous waste disposal shall be placed under suspension.

The current performance and functioning status of the incineration plants were also reviewed in the meeting, with a focus on maintaining operational excellence.

The meeting discussed the energy and electricity consumption of the incineration plants, highlighting the importance of energy efficiency in the disposal process.

The cost-effectiveness of incineration as a waste disposal method was also analyzed, considering both economic and environmental impacts.

The prevailing handling

mechanisms, including transportation, storage, and disposal of both hazardous and non-hazardous waste materials, were also scrutinized in the meeting for improvements.

The representatives were instructed to maintain accurate quantification records of waste handling, including ash disposal, to ensure transparency and accountability.

It was stressed in the meeting that a comprehensive list of waste materials and their sources is to be provided, aiding in the tracking and management of hazardous waste.

The status of pollution control equipment and monitoring reports were reviewed to ensure compliance with environmental standards.

The companies were reminded to adhere to the conditions of Environmental Impact Assessment

(EIA) approval, with a compliance report to be submitted for review.

Senior Director SEPA Waqar Hussain Phulpoto was assigned the task to monitor the incinerator of KMC installed at Mewah Shah to decide further course of action in this regard.

In his concluding remarks Naem Mughal said that SEPA is committed to safeguarding the environment and public health by enforcing stringent waste disposal practices, apart from other pollution control measures.

"This meeting marks a significant step towards a cleaner and safer Karachi", he concluded.

Besides DG SEPA and Senior Director; Director Waris Gabol and Deputy Directors Mujtaba Baig, Muneer Abbasi and Kamran Khan were also present in the meeting.



HYDERABAD: People selecting and purchasing dates at Tower Market.

### PWFFP celebrates International Woman's Day

#### F.P. Report

KARACHI: PWFFP celebrates the International Woman's Day that was initiated by Clara Zetkin in 1908 as a women's factory workers protest against unfair wages. However it is amazing that in 2024, the calls for Woman's Rights are still resounding in the advanced West, where women have attained entry and excellence in every field that were once regarded as exclusive male domains. And earn excellent wages. Makes one think that Patriarchy and chauvinism are still a global phenomenon.

For PWFFP international woman's Day is Stocktaking of where the Pakistani woman stands, where she has to reach and what are the bottlenecks that need to be removed so she arrives there.

Despite the high visibility of women in schools and colleges, offices... in untraditional professions as pilots, space cosmonaut, gas station attendant, public vehicles drivers or athlete's mountaineers, sportswoman, stem scientists, Pm, now a CM, CEOs, Oscar winners or Nobel.

## Tribunal upholds CCP's order against P&G

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Appellate Tribunal has upheld an order passed by the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) against Procter and Gamble Pakistan (P&G) for engaging in deceptive marketing practices. The Tribunal dismissed P&G appeal to set aside CCP's ruling.

In its ruling, the Tribunal also stated that the CCP has the authority to determine the legitimacy of a complaint and to decide whether to accept or dismiss it based on the complaint's merits.

The CCP had imposed a

penalty of 10 million rupees on P&G for falsely advertising its product Safeguard as Pakistan's No. 1 anti-bacterial soap. However, the Tribunal reduced the penalty to five million rupees, considering P&G's compliance-oriented approach and the fact that P&G had dropped the No-1 claim shortly after the initiation of enquiry by the CCP in 2014.

The enquiry was initiated based on a complaint filed by Reckitt Benckiser Pakistan Limited, alleging that P&G's advertisement campaign for Safeguard was misleading. The CCP concluded that P&G's

advertisement campaign violated Section 10 of the Competition Act by creating the overall impression that Safeguard was Pakistan's top-rated antibacterial soap. It lacked reasonable basis to substantiate the claim.

During the appeal, the Tribunal noted that the studies cited by P&G to support its claim were based on public opinions and lacked scientific research. While the exact monetary loss due to such claims could not be assessed, the Tribunal acknowledged the potential harm such claims could have on competitors' business.

## State Bank issue office timing for Ramazan

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: During the ensuing month of Ramadan-ul-Mubarak 1445 A.H., the following office hours will be observed in the State Bank of Pakistan, which will also be followed by all banks, development finance institutions and microfinance banks: -

Monday to Thursday from 09:00 am to 03:30 pm with prayer break from 2:00 pm to 2:30 pm whereas on Fridays office hours will be from 08.30 am to 1:00 pm without break.

However, it is further advised to observe the following business (banking) hours for public dealing: Monday to Thursday

from 09:00 am to 02:00 pm without break whereas on Fridays business (banking) hours for public dealing will be from 08:30 am to 1:00 pm without break.

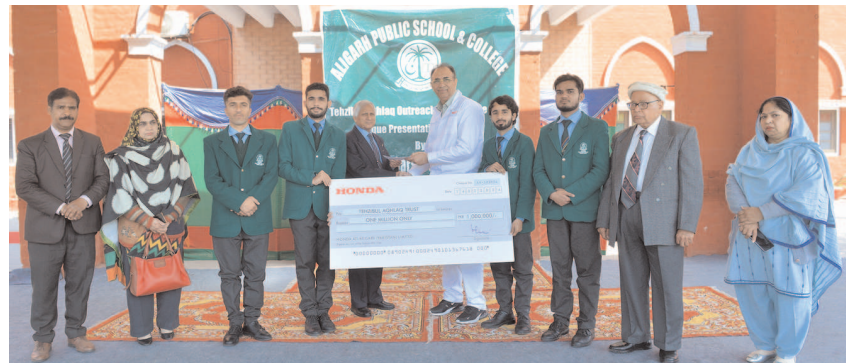
After the month of Ramadan-ul-Mubarak, the above timings will automatically revert to pre Ramadan timings.

## Honda Atlas committed to fulfilling educational dreams of youth

### F.P. Report

LAHORE: Honda Atlas Cars (Pakistan) Limited reaffirmed its commitment to education by conducting a ceremony at Aligarh School, which operates under Tahzeeb-Ul-Akhlaq Trust. The event was graced by the presence of Mr. Maqsood-Ur-Rehman Rehmani, Vice President and Company Secretary of Honda Atlas Cars (Pakistan) Limited.

During the ceremony, Mr. Rehmani presented rupees one million to support the educational activities of Aligarh School. This contribution will provide quality education to stu-



dents coming from underprivileged background.

The program reflects Honda Atlas Cars' ongoing devotion to community development and social responsibility.

The company aims to

provide the resources and chances to young people which they need to create better future for themselves and their communities.

Honda remains dedicated to supporting education-

al initiatives that empower individuals across Pakistan through sustained efforts with institutions, the company endeavors to foster positive change and contribute to the nation's progress.

## EFU Life wins CSR Award 2024



### F.P. Report

KARACHI: EFU Life

Assurance Ltd., the leading private life insurance provider in the country,

has been conferred with 'CSR Award 2024' in the category of 'Social Impact' at the 13th Annual Corporate Social Responsibility Summit & Awards, organized by The Professionals Network and Ethical Business Update (EBU).

The award is the first and only registered CSR Award of Pakistan registered with IPO Government of Pakistan.

Jalal H. Curmally, Deputy General Manager Human Resources, EFU Life Assurance Ltd., received the award on behalf of the Company. The

award recognizes Company's efforts towards social development and sustainability initiatives in the country.

EFU Life has been in the forefront of promoting and contributing to the causes of healthcare, education and environment and believes in playing a pivotal role in building a positive relationship with the society in which it operates.

EFU Life has joined hands with numerous renowned non-governmental organizations for a better and prosperous Pakistan.

## Muhammad Aurangzeb steps down as HBL's president, CEO

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: HBL (Habib Bank Limited), the leading financial institution of Pakistan, announces the resignation of its President & Chief Executive Officer, Muhammad Aurangzeb effective Monday, 11 March 2024. Aurangzeb is stepping down from HBL to assume the role of Federal Minister for Finance for Pakistan.

Muhammad Nassir Salim, currently the Chief Operating Officer of HBL will assume the responsibilities of President & Chief Executive Officer of HBL, subject to the approval of the State Bank of Pakistan. Nassir is a seasoned banker with 36 years of international and domestic banking experience; he has worked in the USA, Abu Dhabi, and Pakistan with organizations like American Express Bank, Citigroup and Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank. He has been associated with HBL since 2017. Nassir joined HBL as Head Global Operations and based on his contribution and capability was elevated to the position of Head Branch and Islamic Banking and then recently as Chief Operating Officer. This leadership transition is a testament to the Bank's succession and depth of talent. It also demonstrates continuity in the Bank's strategy.

Sultan Ali Allana, Chairman - HBL, on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Bank said "Aurangzeb



now embarks on a new chapter of service to the nation, underscoring a commitment to national responsibility. This is a value that he shares with HBL. I extend our deepest appreciation for Aurangzeb's service to HBL and strongly encouraged his assuming the new role, in national service, as Federal Minister for Finance. I am confident that he will contribute to the economic and financial development of Pakistan. We have full confidence in Nassir Salim to accelerate the momentum in the Bank's business trajectory."

Commenting on the move, Aurangzeb said, "I am profoundly grateful for the trust and confidence that Chairman - HBL, Sultan Ali Allana has placed in me, throughout my tenure as President & Chief Executive Officer of HBL. Indeed, it has been an incredible journey, and I am proud of the achievements and milestones that we have reached during this time. None of this would have been possible without the dedicated and hard work of the entire team of HBL, including the Executive Committee and I am truly grateful for their unwavering support. As I embark on this new chap-

ter, I carry with me the valuable lessons and experiences gained at HBL. I am excited about the opportunity to serve our country in this new capacity and contribute to the economic growth and development of Pakistan."

On his appointment as President & Chief Executive Officer of HBL, Nassir Salim said, "It is a privilege to lead an institution as esteemed as HBL. Looking ahead, I am fully committed to operationalizing HBL's multi-year strategy. This rests on providing exceptional products and services to our extensive client base, both in Pakistan and our international markets. We will achieve this by leveraging cutting-edge technology and fostering a culture of

innovation. The dedicated HBL staff, along with the Executive Leadership Team, are fundamental to what makes HBL a trusted partner to its clients. They will be my partners in the Bank's pursuit of excellence. I would also like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Chairman - HBL, Sultan Ali Allana for entrusting me with the responsibility to lead HBL."

Aurangzeb's 6-year tenure is marked by the Bank's exceptional business growth, innovation, and a steadfast commitment to serving its clients and communities. Under Aurangzeb's leadership the Bank has remained focused on delivering on three strategic pillars, which underpin its medium-term strategy namely i) Growing Pakistan's Economy, ii) Shaping the Financial Industry and iii) Achieving Regional Relevance. These in turn are being implemented through unrelenting pursuit of Financial Inclusion, Capacity Building, and Sustainability objectives.

## Pakistani film 'Wakhri' shines at SXSW with North American Premiere on International Women's Day

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistani cinema makes a remarkable mark on the global stage as 'Wakhri' officially premiered in North America at the prestigious SXSW festival on March 8, 2024. This significant debut aligned perfectly with International Women's Day, adding a poignant layer to the film's narrative. Starring Faryal Mehmood in the titular role of 'Wakhri', the film is written and directed by the visionary Iram Parveen Bilal and produced by Abid Aziz Merchant (Sanat Initiative), Apoorva Bakshi (Awedacious Originals), Bilal's Parveen Shah Productions, and executive produced by Aalia Mahboob Elahi. Earlier, the film premiered at the Red Sea International Film Festival in December 2023 and was released nationwide across Pakistan on January 5, 2024. 'Wakhri' is Bilal and Merchant's second project at SXSW, the first being 'I'll Meet You There' which was a Grand Jury Award Nominee at SXSW 2020.

The North American premiere of the Pakistani film

'Wakhri' at SXSW is a monumental moment for Pakistani cinema. As one of the most prestigious festivals globally, SXSW provides a platform for under-the-radar movies to shine, making it the perfect launchpad for 'Wakhri'.

With its compelling storyline, stellar performances, and exploration of universal themes, 'Wakhri' represents a significant cultural export from Pakistan, showcasing the country's rich cinematic talent and contributing to the global conversation on women's empowerment and social change. According to Bilal, "Wakhri's DNA is empowering not just for women but anyone who feels marginalized and judged by society. It is a story that celebrates misfits."

The film unravels the story of a widowed school teacher whose life takes an unexpected turn when her unfiltered opinions on social media catapult her into the limelight overnight. As an unlikely influencer, she grapples with the complexities of managing archaic norms, concealed identities, and the upbringing of her 10-year-old son. 'Wakhri'

becomes a poignant exploration of women's struggles to express themselves and claim their space, both in the physical and digital realms.

According to Bakshi, "We applaud the stance that Wakhri takes in a highly patriarchal world and the hope it echoes through the actions of our formidable protagonist Faryal Mehmood."

According to Merchant, "Wakhri is dark, yet hopeful - a unique combination, a Wakhri indeed".

The endeavor to bring 'Wakhri' to the silver screen has been punctuated by significant milestones. These include its participation at esteemed film labs and markets such as the Locarno Film Festival's Open Doors Hub in 2018, the Cannes Cinefondation L'Atelier in 2019, and its presence at the Busan Asian Project Market in 2022. Notably, the project secured a production grant from CAPE (The Coalition of Asian Pacifics in Entertainment) and the CAA Foundation, solidifying its prominence in the domain of cinematic storytelling.

Furthermore, 'Wakhri' recently garnered attention at the prestigious Red Sea International Film Festival, where it shared the stage with works from several internationally acclaimed luminaries as well.

Directed by the award-winning Iram Parveen Bilal, 'Wakhri' promises to captivate the international audience with its compelling storyline and stellar performances. The film explores themes of empowerment, identity, and resilience, resonating deeply with viewers across cultures. Hence, SXSW provides the ideal platform for 'Wakhri' to shine once again in front of an international audience while putting Pakistan on the map for creating stellar films.

SXSW, or South by Southwest, stands as a premier destination for artists, filmmakers, musicians, and tech enthusiasts alike, converging annually in Austin, Texas. This renowned cultural event celebrates the intersection of film, music, and interactive media, offering a dynamic platform for creatives to showcase their work, engage in thought-provoking discussions, and network with industry pro-



fessionals. From captivating film premieres to electrifying musical performances and innovative technological advancements, SXSW fosters a vibrant atmosphere of creativity and innovation, shaping the cultural landscape and inspiring audiences worldwide.

Highlighted among the unforgettable feature films from around the globe, 'Wakhri' has already garnered attention and anticipation. Its multiple screenings during the festival on March 8th, 10th, and 14th, offer ample opportunities for attendees to experience its cinematic brilliance. With

'Wakhri,' Pakistani cinema continues to assert its presence on the international stage, offering fresh perspectives and narratives that resonate universally.

"Wakhri" is also soon to premiere in Ohio at the Cleveland International Film Festival on April 9, 2024. The Cleveland International Film Festival is among the longest-running and largest film festivals in the USA, drawing more than 100,000 film enthusiasts annually. It is a leader in helping the world discover the power of film arts to educate, entertain, and celebrate an inclusive human experience.

### Court Notice

In the Court of Sidra Jalal Civil Judge-III/Judicial Magistrate Matta Swat, Case # 388/1. Institution 07/12/2020. Next hearing date 27/03/2024. Nisar Ali Vs. Lal Shahzada. Notice to defendant. (2) Saadat Khan/Saad Khan s/o Zarawar Khan (8A) Aftab Ali Khan s/o Waie Room Khan (11/1) Sami Ullah (11/2) Shafi Ullah (11/3) Waris (11/5) Farooq (11/6) Jameela (11/7) Sarjina d/o, sons Shah Rawan r/o Shakardara Tehsil Matta (14) Aftab Ali r/o Koza Bاندai Tehsil Matta Swat. Whereas the above named cannot be served in ordinary manner it is therefore proclaimed or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court on 27/03/2024 at 8:30 am. Ex-parte proceeding will be initiated against you.

### Court Notice

In the Court of Jauhar Ali Safi Civil Judge I /Alaqa Qazi Buner at Dagger, Suit No. 224/1, Institution 15/3/2023. Date of hearing 28/3/2024. Naseem Khan Vs. Faiz Mohamad. Notice to No. 11. Hazrat Mohamad s/o Fager Mohamad resident of Matwany Tehsil Gagra District Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendant cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendant will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8 am dated 28/3/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.





In brief

‘Wasim can play Russell-like role’

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Quetta Gladiators’ head coach Shane Watson heaped high praise on all-rounder Mohammad Wasim Jr, who led the Gladiators to a thrilling victory over Lahore Qalandars during the ongoing Pakistan Super League (PSL) season 9. Wasim Jr smashed a last-ball six against Shaheen Afridi to muscle Quetta Gladiators into the PSL 9 playoffs. The enthralling victory led Quetta Gladiators into their first PSL playoffs since winning the title in 2019. Watson, while talking to the media after the match, appreciated Wasim for his all-round prowess and power-hitting abilities. “We’ve been talking to Mohammad Wasim Jr since the first game about being as still as possible,” said the Gladiators head coach. “He’s got amazing hand-eye coordination and power, so he just needs to stand still and trust that he can smash it,” he added. Shane Watson expressed hope that Wasim can play the role of a power-hitting all-rounder for Pakistan, like West Indies’ Andre Russell. “We’ve been talking to him about turning himself into the Pakistani Andre Russell with the skill and power he’s got with the bat,” said the former Australian all-rounder. “We already know what he’s got with the ball, and he’s got amazing athleticism which we’ve seen in the field,” Watson concluded. Quetta Gladiators joined Multan Sultans, Peshawar Zalmi and Islamabad United in the final four while the Qualifier and Eliminator ties will be decided after the group stage matches.

Injuries no excuse against Napoli

BARCELONA (AFP): Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez said his team’s injury woes are no excuse ahead of the clash with Napoli on Tuesday night in the Champions League. The Catalans are aiming to reach the quarter-finals of the competition they last won in 2015, with the tie level at 1-1 after the first leg in Italy. Xavi is missing three key midfielders in Pedri, Gavi and Frenkie de Jong, as well as Ferran Torres and Alejandro Balde. However the coach said his team could not use that as mitigation for failure and demanded a “magic night” at the club’s temporary Olympic Stadium home on the city’s Montjuic hill. “It’s the moment to be able to reach the quarter-finals, for four years we haven’t got to the last eight of the Champions League, I see it as an opportunity,” said the coach. “It’s true that we have players out, but it’s not an excuse. It’s an opportunity.” The coach announced in January that he would leave Barcelona at the end of the season, and the Champions League is a final chance to go out on a high. Despite leading Barcelona to the Spanish title last season, Barca are off the pace in third in La Liga, out of the Copa del Rey and were thrashed by Real Madrid in the Spanish Super Cup. “I am not the important thing here, the club is the important thing -- I have an expiry date,” continued Xavi. “With Barcelona united, with the stadium full, we have to live a magic night.” Xavi said there were no favourites in the tie and that he thought it was “50-50”, although home advantage could tilt the match Barcelona’s way.

## Alex Carey steers Australia to whitewash New Zealand in Tests



CHRISTCHURCH (Agencies): An unbeaten 98 from Alex Carey dragged Australia to victory over New Zealand by three wickets in a thrilling second Test on Monday to give the tourists a 2-0 sweep of the two-match series. Carey and Mitchell Marsh have struggled for form but their formidable 140-run partnership rescued Australia at the Hagley Oval. New Zealand’s wait for a first home Test victory over their neighbours in more than three decades goes on. Carey and Marsh produced a vital partnership when the tourists had their backs to the wall at 80-5 in their chase of 279. At 220-5, a nail-biting Test took another turn on Monday afternoon when Black Caps seamer Ben Sears claimed Marsh and Mitchell Starc in successive deliveries. It left Australia needing a further 59 runs with three wickets remaining. Skipper Cummins joined Carey to

bring the tourists home.

“I kept to a really solid game plan and read the conditions and read the bowlers,” Carey said. “I guess losing one wicket this morning was okay. We got through to lunch and then that’s when the game opened up a little bit and the partnership started to flow.”

The series sweep earned Australia valuable points in the World Test Championship standings.

New Zealand were left deflated after starting the fourth day with high hopes of a first home Test victory over Australia in 31 years.

When Australia resumed the day at 77-4, after a one-hour delay because of rain, Marsh was dropped on 28 by Rachin Ravindra in the second over. Travis Head was out on the next ball from Southee. New Zealand were buoyant, aware that Marsh and Carey were struggling for form, with Marsh coming off back-to-back ducks.

## History-chasing Man City relishing Premier League battle

MANCHESTER (AFP): Rodri says Manchester City will embrace the challenge of having to be almost perfect in their remaining 10 matches to win a record-breaking fourth straight Premier League title. Sunday’s thrilling 1-1 draw at Anfield left Pep Guardiola’s side in third place but only a point behind Arsenal, who top the table on goal difference from Liverpool. City’s next league game is against Arsenal at the end of the month, with challenging fixtures against Aston Villa and Tottenham looming. Sunday’s draw was only the second time Pep Guardiola’s team have dropped points in the league since mid-December and Spain midfielder Rodri is confident they can put together another winning run.

“We need a break. We have the FA Cup game (against Newcastle) and then go to the international teams so it will be good for us to refresh and give the last push at the end of the season,” he said.

“We know how good we are in the last part of the season, we just need to charge the batteries again and focus on the last 10 games.”

“It seems you have to win nine or 10 games to win this Premier League. This is the challenge and we are going to go for it.”

Rodri said last season’s treble winners were not at their best against Liverpool despite taking the lead through John Stones and having the better of the first half.

Liverpool hit back strongly after the break and

following Alex Mac Allister’s equalising penalty, it was the hosts who looked more likely to win.

“An incredible game. We started really well in terms of chances and dominance and I think it was quite good. The second half was their half,” said the City midfielder. He added: “They are fighting for the Premier League like us and we got a point. It means a lot.”

“We are there in the fight and this club is about the mentality of the team. Sometimes when we don’t play well, (it’s important) we don’t lose, “Sometimes it is the opposite and we are the team who has to defend a little bit more. We didn’t create many chances and it is what it is, we have to adapt sometimes. “We wanted three points, but in the final analysis it is fair.”

## Five cross-country skiers found dead in Switzerland

AROLLA (Agencies): Five of six cross-country skiers who went missing in the Swiss Alps over the weekend have been found dead, police in the canton of Valais said Monday, with the search still on for the last person.

The group of skiers, who ranged in age from 21 to 58, had left Zermatt Saturday morning with the goal of reaching the town of Arolla later that day.

They went missing, however, in the vicinity of the Tete Blanche mountain.

A storm over the weekend prevented helicopters and rescuers from reaching the area, but on Sunday evening, a team was finally able to be dropped off by helicopter nearby, police said in a statement.

“At around 9:20 pm (2020 GMT) it reached the Tete Blanche sector, where it discovered the bodies of five of the six people who were missing,” it added.

Five of the six skiers are members of the same family, but police have not yet revealed the identities of the bodies found.

A press conference is expected later in the day in the canton capital Sion.

The group was reported missing by a family member who had been due to pick them up in Arolla on Saturday.

## Naseem Shah charged for code of conduct violation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad United’s Naseem Shah has been fined 10 per cent of match fee for a level 1 breach of the HBL PSL’s Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel during his side’s HBL PSL 9 fixture against Multan Sultans at the Pindi Cricket Stadium in Rawalpindi on Sunday.

Naseem was charged for violating Article 2.2 which deals with abuse of cricket equipment or clothing, ground equipment or fixtures and fittings. Naseem had kicked the stumps after the final ball of Multan Sultans’ innings. Since

Naseem pleaded guilty to the charge and accepted the sanctions proposed by match referee Roshan Mahanama, there was no need of a formal hearing.

The charge was imposed by on-field umpires Ruchira Palliyaguruge and Muhammad Asif.

Meanwhile, in a separate incident in the same match, Multan Sultans were fined for maintaining a slow over-rate. Sultans were ruled to be one over short of their target by match referee Roshan Mahanama, who took into consideration time allowances before arriving at the decision. As such, and in accor-

dance with Article 2.22 of the HBL PSL Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, each player was fined 10 per cent of his match fee.

### Sikandar Raza fined for violation of code of conduct

KARACHI (APP): Lahore Qalandars’ Sikandar Raza has been fined 10 per cent of his match fee for a Level 1 breach of HBL PSL’s code of conduct for showing dissent at an umpire’s decision. The incident occurred during the Lahore

Qalandars vs Quetta Gladiators game at National Bank Stadium, Karachi on Sunday night.

Sikandar, on three different occasions during the game, raised his arms, shook his head and gestured that the delivery should have been called a wide ball, leading to a violation of article 2.8, which deals with a player showing dissent at an umpire’s decision during an HBL PSL game.

On-field umpires Chris Gaffaney and Rashid Riaz leveled the charge against Sikandar Raza while match referee Ali Naqvi imposed the fine.

## Hassan honored with ‘Hamaray Heroes Award" by Pakistan Super League

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Hassan Nisar, a native of Haripur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, continues to make remarkable strides in community development and social empowerment, earning him the prestigious “Hamaray Heroes Award” from the Pakistan Super League (PSL). As the founder of Metrix Pakistan, Nisar’s unwavering commitment to improving the lives of rural communities has garnered widespread recognition and admiration.

In addition to his groundbreaking work in technology and tourism promotion, Nisar’s organization, Metrix Pakistan, has been actively involved in providing essential healthcare services to underserved areas.

Through free medical camps organized in rural regions, Nisar and his team have been instrumental in addressing healthcare disparities and improving access to quality



medical care for marginalized populations.

Moreover, Nisar’s dedication to women’s empowerment in backward areas has been commendable. Metrix Pakistan has implemented various initiatives aimed at empowering women through education, skill development, and economic opportunities.

By fostering gender equality and providing avenues for women to thrive, Nisar has contributed significantly to uplifting communities and breaking barriers to progress in rural Pakistan.

The “Hamaray Heroes Award” serves as a testament to Hassan Nisar’s multifaceted efforts in

driving positive change and fostering inclusive development across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

His visionary leadership, coupled with his unwavering commitment to social welfare, exemplifies the true spirit of community service and exemplifies a beacon of hope for a brighter future in Pakistan.

## Indian Wells: World number one Iga Swiatek reaches fourth round



INDIAN WELLS (Agencies): World

number one Iga Swiatek overcame a slow start to defeat Czech teenager Linda Noskova in straight sets and reach the fourth round at Indian Wells.

The Polish 22-year-old, a four-time major winner, trailed 4-2 in the first set and faced three break points in a pivotal seventh game. But she won 10 successive games from that point to earn a 6-4 6-0 victory. Swiatek, who lost to Noskova at the Australian Open, will play Kazakhstan’s Yulia

Putintseva in the last 16.

The 19-year-old Noskova, who came back from a set down to stun Swiatek in the Australian Open third round in January, looked in firm control as she led 15-40 on her opponent’s serve when already 4-2 ahead in the opening set. But Swiatek responded in devastating fashion and, after battling back to take the first set, took just 28 minutes to settle the second.

In WTA history, Swiatek is

responsible for 11% of all sets won 6-0 in WTA 1,000 tournaments - with this the 22nd occasion she has achieved that. Upcoming opponent Putintseva, ranked 79th, knocked out American 18th seed Madison Keys in straight sets, winning 6-4 6-1.

Angelique Kerber and Caroline Wozniacki will meet in the fourth round as both look to continue building momentum after recently returning to action. German former world number one Kerber earned a fourth win since giving birth to her first child just over a year ago, beating Veronika Kudermetova 6-4 7-5.

“I think it was a really intense match,” Kerber said. “We played almost two hours for two sets. It’s another important match win for me, for sure, and gives me confidence for the next rounds.”

Denmark’s Wozniacki, who lifted the Indian Wells title in 2011, resumed her tennis career midway through last season after three years in retirement. She was taken the distance before seeing off American Katie Volynets 6-2 4-6 6-0.

Italian 13th seed Jasmine Paolini beat Russian 25th seed Anna Kalinskaya 6-3 3-6 6-4.

## Davis makes NBA history as Lakers beat Timberwolves

LOS ANGELES (Agencies): Anthony Davis scored 27 points with a season-high 25 rebounds on a historic night as the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Minnesota Timberwolves 120-109.

Davis added five assists, seven steals and three blocks to become the first player in NBA history with at least 25 points, 25 rebounds, five assists, five steals and three blocks in a game.

Team-mate LeBron James chipped in with 29 points. “I think we’re hitting our stride,” Davis said. “We’re just trying to keep going, keep pushing, knowing that just like last year, all we got to do is get in.

We feel like it’s tough for anybody to beat us in a seven-game series. We like our chances against anybody at that point.”

The win at Crypto.com Arena leaves the Lakers ninth in the Western Conference after back-to-back victories, while third-placed Minnesota have lost two in a row. Elsewhere, the Milwaukee Bucks, who are second in the Eastern Conference, responded to



successive losses to earn a 124-117 win on the road at the Los Angeles Clippers.

Damian Lillard led the way for the Bucks with 35 points and Giannis Antetokounmpo added 34 to ensure the Clippers, placed fourth in the Western Conference, were unable to extend their winning run to three. At Kaseya Center in Florida, the Washington Wizards upset hosts the Miami Heat to claim a 110-108 victory with Kyle Kuzma scoring a

game-high 32 points along with nine rebounds, four assists and two blocks.

It was a second successive win following a franchise-equalling 16-game losing streak for the Wizards and means the Heat have now lost three in a row, their worst run since seven successive defeats in January. The Philadelphia 76ers halted a three-game losing sequence as Kelly Oubre Jr collected 18 points, 10 rebounds and three steals in a 79-73 win against the New York Knicks

at Madison Square Garden.

Cam Thomas, featuring in just his second game following a six-match absence due to an ankle injury, scored 29 points in 31 minutes to help the Brooklyn Nets to a 120-101 win against the Cleveland Cavaliers.

The Nets move within three and a half games of 10th-placed the Atlanta Hawks, who lost 116-103 against the New Orleans Pelicans, in the race for the final play-off berth in the Eastern Conference.





## In brief

### Death anniversary of Tahira Wasti

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 12th death anniversary of legendary television actress Tahira Wasti was being observed on Monday (today). Born in 1944 at Sargodha, Tahira Wasti started her career with writing articles in a magazine at the age of 16. She started her TV career as an actress from a PTV drama "Jaib Katra" in 1968. Tahira Wasti played leading roles in dramas like 'Afshan', Shaheen, Aakhri Chatan, Kashkol, Jaangloos and Daldal. She died on this day in 2012 in Karachi.

### Students escape unhurt

ISLAMABAD (APP): Around 20 students rescued safe after their school van caught fire on Monday in Jhelum district of Punjab. According to rescue officials, a school van was heading towards Pind Dadan Khan from Khewra, when a sudden fire erupted in the vehicle due to short circuit. The fire tender was called to the spot and put the blaze under control, according to a private news channel.

### CDA allots 157 govt residences

ISLAMABAD (APP): The management of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) has allotted 157 Government residences of different categories to officers and other employees of authority. The residences were allotted on the basis of seniority on General Waiting List. However, the allocation of residences was made through balloting. In all 57 houses were allotted 8n A category, 38 houses 8n B category 25 in C category, 17 in D category while 20 houses were allotted in D category in sectors G-6, G-7, G-8, G-9, G-10, G-11 and F-6. The CDA Chairman on the occasion said that welfare of employees would remain management's top priority.

### AIOU aims to enroll out-of-school children

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has set a goal to provide education to underprivileged children who work in workshops, hotels, factories, and other similar places. Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof Dr Nasir Mahmood, stated that AIOU is providing free metric education to people of Gilgit-Baltistan, Merged Districts (Erstwhile known as FATA), and Baluchistan. He said that AIOU is making all out efforts to enroll out of school children across the country. The Vice-Chancellor said that AIOU has decided to increase the annual budget for financial assistance to support the free matriculation education policy for residents of Gilgit-Baltistan, Merged Districts, and Balochistan. The main objective of this initiative is to bring out-of-school children from these areas back to school by enrolling them in the matriculation program.

### RWMC set up camp at Rawal park

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC), in its ongoing "Suthra Punjab" campaign set up a camp outside the Rawal Park to create awareness among the people about cleanliness. According to RWMC spokesman, the communication teams distributed pamphlets among the citizens who came to visit the park with messages and information about the preventive measures against various diseases. The teams also delivered a message about hygiene measures and appealed to them to keep their homes and workplaces dry and clean to avoid breeding and growing dengue larvae.



ISLAMABAD: H.E. Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malkiy, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

## Admin establishes model Ramadan Bazaar

RAWALPINDI (APP): District Administration on the directives of Chief Minister (CM) Punjab Maryam Nawaz, has established a model Ramadan Bazaar in Rawalpindi to facilitate the citizens. According to Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Engineer Aamir Khattak, the model Ramadan Bazaar had been set up at Chor Chowk in Rawalpindi. The Commissioner during a visit today identified the place near Nawaz Sharif Park to set up vegetable and fruit market and instructed Assistant Commissioner city to make the wholesale market functional by tomorrow. In this market, space had

also been allocated for the wholesale stalls as well as retailers and handicrafts. Engr. Aamir Khattak said adding, model Ramadan Bazaar is a good initiative of the Punjab government to provide relief to the citizens. The administration would ensure the sale of vegetables and fruits at a low price in the model Ramadan bazaar, he informed. Apart from Rawalpindi, 35 stalls had also been set up in Attock, 30 in Jhelum, 22 in Chakwal/Talagang and 10 stalls in Murree to ensure provision of daily use items at affordable rates.

Model Ramadan Bazaars had been set up at Chor Chowk in Rawalpindi, GPO

Chowk in Murree, Sabzi Mandi Road in Attock, Machine Mahalla in Jhelum and Peerwal Road in Chakwal, the Commissioner said. He further informed that the food items were available at subsidized rates in the markets. The Model Ramadan Bazaar would remain open for the public during the entire Ramazan ul Mubarak month, Engr. Aamir Khattak said and informed that the fruits, vegetables and other commodities would be available to the public at affordable prices in the markets. Zero tolerance policy would be followed regarding the attendance of the officers and personnel posted in Model Ramadan Bazaar, he said.

### PTA's QoS survey evaluates services

ISLAMABAD (APP): To measure the performance and quality of Cellular Mobile Operators' (CMOs) services being provided to customers, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) carried out an Independent Quality of Service (QoS) Survey in 17 cities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Sindh Balochistan and three cities of AJK.

Survey routes were selected to cover main roads, service roads, and key sectors/colonies, totalling 14,000 kilometres in 79 days to cover the maximum area said a news release. Mobile handsets, set to technology auto-detect and 3G locked modes, were employed for Voice Calls, SMS, and Mobile Broadband/Data sessions, especially in AJ&K cities.

## Senate unveils annual parliamentary Year Report 2023-24

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Senate has released the Comprehensive Annual Report for the Parliamentary Year 2023-24, highlighting a year marked by remarkable accomplishments and steadfast dedication to the nation.

The comprehensive report underscores the relentless efforts and exemplary work of the Senate, emphasizing the outstanding performance of its Standing Committees. The commitment of committee members has played a crucial role in advancing the legislative agenda and addressing critical national issues.

During the year, the house met for a total of 152 hours and 58 minutes, with an average of 2 hours and 35 minutes per session. The house successfully passed 14 Government bills and 29 private members' bills, out of a total of 99 presented.

Moreover, the Senate addressed 65 points of public importance, demonstrating its responsiveness to the concerns and needs of the public.

Additionally, the report highlights the Senate's active engagement with public petitions, with 45 petitions successfully resolved and 145 petitions referred to Senate Committees for further consideration. The report also delves into the performance reports of various departments within the Senate Secretariat, identifying areas of improvement and ongoing initiatives aimed at enhancing efficiency.

Furthermore, during the Parliamentary year 2023-24, the Senate received a total of 710 public petitions, with 145 petitions referred to Senate Committees for review and resolution. Embracing modern technology, the Senate has introduced virtual meetings, enhancing efficiency and transparency. Initiatives such as the first-time live ticker during Senate sessions, the upgrading of broadcasting and post-production facilities, and 4k web-casting of the Senate YouTube Channel reflect the Senate's commitment to embracing digital transformation.

## ANF recovers 991 kg drugs in 12 operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 12 operations across the country managed to recover 991 kg drugs and arrested 10 accused, said an ANF official here on Monday.

He informed that 1914 intoxicated tablets and capsules were recovered from the possession of two suspects arrested at Karachi Airport. 4.8 kg heroin was recovered from a parcel booked for UK at Lahore Airport and two accused were arrested.

4 kg Ice was recovered from a passenger going to

Doha at Peshawar Airport. 600 grams weed was recovered from a parcel sent from UK at a courier office in Multan.

600 grams heroin was recovered from a passenger going to Doha at Lahore Airport. In another operation at Lahore Airport, 92 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from a Jeddah-bound passenger.

270 kg heroin and 238 kg morphine were recovered from Chaman area and 350 kg hashish was recovered from an area near Chaman Road Quetta.

100 kg opium was recovered from Nokundi Chagai and 21 kg hashish was recovered from South Asia Pakistan Terminal Karachi. In 11th operation, 2.4 kg hashish was recovered from two suspects netted near Expresses Highway, Islamabad.

In 12th operation, 250 grams hashish was recovered from an accused rounded up in Haripur.

Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.

## Markets, grocery stores bustling ahead of holy Ramazan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ahead of holy month of Ramazan, markets, malls and grocery stores all around the country were witnessing significant buying activity where enthusiastic shoppers specially women eagerly looking for the best discount deals on eatables whether it is dates, spices, or other Ramazan staples.

Utility Stores Corporation has also reduced the prices of various items ahead of the month of the Ramazan where families in large were seen rushing towards grocery marts, said a report aired by a private news channel.

Everyone is happy and enjoying the Ramazan activities while purchasing essential kitchen items at grocery stores, said a customer.

Routine essentials kitchen items such as rice, pulses, eggs, milk and basic spices have been selling like a hot cake

and the quantities which people have been purchasing have been higher than usual, the storekeepers added.

Food, poultry products and beverage consumption rise considerably during the fasting month due to a change in eating patterns, said another customer while visiting utility store.

"Ramazan is marked by high demand on basic products such as vegetables, eggs and meat," said a shopkeeper.

Many people are taking advantage of ongoing offers by prominent retailers especially in the food sector as they are shopping for much-needed grocery items to prepare the iftar fast-breaking meal, said a citizen.

As a large number of people have flocked to the markets, law enforcement agencies have devised a special security plan to manage big crowds and avoid untoward incidents, said a traffic warden.

Hustle and bustle in the markets is going to gain momentum in the coming days as Ramazan started, expressing hope to make the celebrations more pleasurable for shoppers, said another visitor.

## Shah Alla Ditta caves preservation work underway

ISLAMABAD (APP): Shah Alla Ditta Caves development, conservation, preservation and restoration work is underway, situated on the southern side of the Margalla hills, 14 kilometers northwest of the capital city.

The Department of Archaeology & Museums (DOAM), National Heritage and Culture Division has declared the site a "Protected Antiquity" under the Antiquities Act 1975 on 13-08-2016.

DOAM, National Heritage & Culture Division, has started conservation, preservation, restoration & development of the caves during the current financial year, an official of DOAM told APP.

The official said that the work includes Archaeological excavation, complete documentation of the site, geotechnical study of binding materials, construction of drainage works as well as Soft and hard landscaping. Caves consist of two natural rock shelters of Kanjur stone situated on either side of a natural spring of hot water.

The front side of the eastern cave is covered with a wall of undressed kanjur stone laid in mud mortar. The facade of the cave is covered with mud plaster having many coatings of red color. On the smooth surface of the wall, some paintings are executed in black color but in the later period, the paintings are covered with a layer of white-wash. The paintings are of Hindu origin, probably of god Vishnu (the savior).

Interior of the cave is divided into upper and lower halves. Walls are treated with mud plaster having many coatings of white wash but now the color of the walls become blackish due to the smoke of the fire used by the dwellers. In front of the cave are the remains of a paved channel and a square water tank constructed in limestone blocks laid in lime mortar. Many Hindu families were living in Shah Allah Ditta village before partition and the caves were used by them for their daily worship and remained in occupation till 1947.

## All housing projects of industrial workers to be completed in stipulated time periods: WWF

ISLAMABAD (APP): All housing projects for registered workers in the industrial sector would be completed in stipulated time periods across the country with all required facilities. An official source told APP, that a mega project of 2056 residential flats in Peshawar for industrial workers had been completed and handed over to the workers since last year.

The sources said that the price of each flat was Rs 2.6 million, out of which a Rs

300,000 subsidy would be provided by the government and the remaining amount would be paid by the beneficiaries through easy installments. A three percent quota has been allocated for widows and two percent for persons with disabilities.

Those working in industries for three years are eligible for flats to be awarded on an ownership basis through a lucky draw in a transparent manner. It is the mega housing project of the KP

Government, completed in line with the vision of the federal government to provide affordable and low-cost housing facilities for people.

The Labor Complex, having these residential flats, is equipped with all facilities, including drinking water, roads, mosques, schools, parks, grounds, electricity, and gas. Four large tube wells and overhead tanks have been constructed for uninterrupted water supply to its inhabitants.

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Ombudsman office (Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat) has disposed of 193,030 complaints, which is 22 percent higher than the previous year.

Briefing the delegation of Associated Press of Pakistan's (APP) Youth Media Training Program (YMTP), Senior Advisor, Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat, Moiz Bokhari said that during the outgoing year 2023, this office received and processed a record number of complaints which stood at 194,106 that is 18% higher than the preceding years.

He said that a system of strict monitoring, follow up and verification of the implementation of each and every decision was in place and an impressive implementation rate of 85.4% was recorded in 2023, adding that 88% complaints were disposed of within the prescribed limit of 60 days.

The senior advisor informed the delegation that the officers of the Wafaqi Mohtasib Office were dispensing justice to the people at their doorsteps. Our Investigation Officers visited the remote and far off areas of the country and decided 3149 cases, which spared the complainants from taking the trouble of visiting the Wafaqi Mohtasib office at the headquarters or the major cities of the country, he added.

Dilating on the international linkages of this office, the senior advisor observed that the office of the Wafaqi Mohtasib was an active member of the International Ombudsman's Institute (IOI) the OIC Ombudsman Association (AOA) (OICOA) and the Asian Ombudsman Association.

He said that the Wafaqi Mohtasib was re-elected unopposed as President of the AOA by the General Assembly of the Asian Ombudsman Association, which was a 47-member strong professional body of Ombudsmen of the Asian Region representing more than two third of the

world population, which was indeed a great honour for the country.

He said that the Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat was often referred to as the poor man's court since it strives to bring administrative justice to the people especially to those belonging to the marginalized and deprived segments of the population.

He said that owing to the hard work and dedication of our officers and by employing instruments like the Khuli Katcharies and the Informal Resolution of Disputes (IRD) programmes, this office had been able to redress large number of public complaints, thereby providing relief to a sizeable segment of the people in a hassle-free manner.

It was started in April 2022 in some offices but latter extended to other as well in view of its massive success in speedy resolution of public problems. He said that there was a great deal of improvement in redressing the public complaints which are lately exhibiting an upward trend due to increase in population and other factors. He elaborated that during the year 2022 this office received 164,174 complaints, which swelled to 194,099 in 2023 which is, a reflection of the public trust and confidence in this office. He particularly referred to the steps taken for resolution of the problems and welfare of the Overseas Pakistanis, pensioners and prisoners specially the women and juvenile prisoners in jails, which resulted in considerably improving their lot.

He informed that now there were 18 Regional Offices and four Complaints Collection Centers, covering nearly the entire length of the country. Advisor (Appraisal) Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat Shahid Hamayyun, Advisor Media Inam Ul Haq Javed, Registrar Muhammad Saqib Khan and Director General Admin Muhammad Safdar also briefed the delegation.



ISLAMABAD: Gypsy family carrying Dry Branches for domestic Use on donkey cart in the Federal Capital.



IEA soon make banknotes

KABUL (Ariana News): Acting Minister of Borders and Tribal Affairs Noorullah Noori has said that Afghanistan will soon make its own banknotes, passports and weapons inside the country. He said at a gathering in Paktia: "Afghanistan will be self-reliant in wheat, oil, electricity, fruits, farms, and market; Afghanistan will make its banknotes, passports and weapons inside the country." He added that the Islamic Emirate acts freely in governance just as it was independent during the war.

The Frontier Post

Ramazan ul Mubarak 01, 1445 — Tuesday, March 12, 2024

Decision-making processes

KABUL (Ariana News): Excluding Afghan women from decision-making processes deprives Afghanistan of any chance of emerging out of crises, the UN said. "Excluding Afghan women from decision-making not only deprives Afghanistan of any chance of emerging out of crises, it also signals that attacking women's rights, silencing their voices & erasing them from society doesn't just get unpunished, it becomes normalized," UN Women Afghanistan said on X.

PM calls on rich to help poor



KABUL (Ariana News): In a message on the occasion of the start of the holy month of Ramadan, Prime Minister Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund asked traders to reduce the price of food items and the rich to help the poor. The PM asked religious leaders and imams at mosques to arrange religious education, da'wah

sors, and the world is watching it with open eyes."

The Prime Minister has asked international organizations and Islamic countries to fulfill their responsibility in order to end this cruelty and terror and to urgently support the oppressed people of Gaza.

"What is going on in Gaza is a dark spot in the history of mankind, and the countries that paved the way for this cruelty or do not make real efforts to prevent it, are the accomplices of the Zionist occupiers."

Israeli attacks on Gaza in the last five months have left more than 30,000 dead. More than 72,000 others have been injured.

Ramadan in Afghanistan and some other countries started Monday.

SC declares Monday as start of Ramadan

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Taliban Supreme Court declared Monday, the 21st of Ramadan, as the first day of the month. This declaration signifies the beginning of a significant religious period for Muslims.

Several individuals in the Maiwand district of Kandahar province claimed to have sighted the moon, prompting the acceptance of their testimonies by the "Qazi Mahal." This decision has formalized the start of Ramadan.

Prior to this announcement, the Taliban Supreme Court had indicated that Monday was not the first day of Ramadan, creating some confusion among the populace.

Zabihullah Mujahid, the Taliban spokesperson, also affirmed on his social media page that, according to the verdict of the Sharia court, Monday is indeed the first day of Ramadan.

Alongside Afghanistan, other Islamic nations such as Saudia and Turkey have also declared Monday as the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan, aligning with the Taliban's decision.

Kabul blames circles for spreading propaganda

KABUL (TOLONews): Hamdullah Fetrat, the deputy spokesperson of the Islamic Emirate, said that some circles are trying to create concerns for the people of Afghanistan and the countries of the region.

The deputy spokesperson of the Islamic Emirate pledged once again that Afghan soil will not be used against any country.

"Unfortunately, some circles are trying to create unrest through negative propaganda and the spread of baseless claims. We assure other countries with complete confidence that Afghan soil will not be used against anyone," he said.

Amid concerns about the presence and activities of terrorist groups in Afghanistan, the Daily Beast recently published a report about Daesh and its presence in Afghanistan.

However, the Islamic Emirate, in response to the report, said that Daesh has been defeated in Afghanistan and that some circles are trying to create unrest among citizens and countries of the region. The report claimed that



Daesh, after being defeated in Iraq and Syria, has now found a new haven in Afghanistan and is planning terrorist attacks there.

"The Daesh group remains not only a potential threat to the stability and security of Afghanistan but also possesses a potential threat to the stability and security of regional and beyond regional countries," said Sadiq Shinwari, a mil-

itary analyst.

Some military experts said that superpower countries resort to such propaganda when their demands are not met."The issue of terrorist groups, including Daesh, is raised by Americans when the implementation of their interests, including political interests in governments, fails," said Zalmay Afghanyar, a military analyst. "They want to reignite

war in the region and once again involve Afghanistan in America's battlefield," said Akhtar Rasikh, another military analyst.

Earlier, regional countries, including Russia, had expressed concerns about the presence of terrorist groups, especially Daesh in Afghanistan, but the Islamic Emirate has always dismissed these concerns as baseless.

5,000 foreigners visited Afghanistan: Officials

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Information and Culture said that since the Islamic Emirate came to power, nearly 5,000 tourists from various countries have come to Afghanistan to visit ancient sites.

Emphasizing the security of tourists, Muhajir Farahi, the deputy of the Ministry of Information and Culture, said that the Islamic Emirate has facilitated tourism in the country for foreign citizens.

"Most of the tourists come to Afghanistan from foreign countries to visit ancient and historical areas," he said.

"Foreign tourists are

very eager to visit Afghanistan, including possibly citizens from Britain. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has the responsibility to protect all those who are given visas and allowed to stay in Afghanistan," said Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate.

Some experts consider the arrival of tourists important for strengthening the country's economy.

"Today, the tourism industry is seen as a profitable business and a branch of the global economy. Alongside other economic values, tourists serve to increase liquidity in the

country," said Abdul Zahoor Madar, an economic expert.

"The tourism industry is among the factors that help to better advance and create a kind of wealth generation for the economic system," said Iraj Faqiri, another economic expert.

This comes as previously some countries, including Britain, had advised their citizens not to travel to Afghanistan.

However, recently, some British media, quoting from travel companies in the country, have said that there is currently an increase in demand for tourist trips to Afghanistan.

Headline inflation in Afghanistan down to -10.2% in January: World Bank

KABUL (Ariana News): In January 2024, headline inflation experienced a significant downturn, reaching -10.2 percent on a year-on-year basis, the World Bank said in a report.

This substantial drop was largely due to a sharp decline in prices across both food and non-food categories, the report said.

Moreover, core inflation, which strips out the typically volatile food and energy sectors, also fell into negative territory, posting a rate

of -6.5 percent on year-on-year basis.

"This ongoing core deflation reflects a troubling inability of both private and public sectors to stimulate sufficient demand. While this period of falling prices may offer temporary financial relief to the most vulnerable households by reducing the cost of living, it can also harm the broader macro-economy," the World Bank said.

According to the bank,

Afghanistan's exports contracted by 5 percent on year-on-year basis to \$140.5 million in January 2024, down from \$148.1 million the previous January.

Food exports to India jumped by 22 percent, compared to an 18 percent decline in Pakistan. Pakistan and India continued to be the top export destinations, claiming 45 percent and 34 percent of the total exports in January 2024, respectively.

The 2023 growth trend in imports extended into January 2024, hitting \$830 million, up 37 percent from \$600 million in January 2023.

According to the report, in 2023, the afghani (AFN) saw a significant 27 percent appreciation against the US dollar, buoyed by the influx of around \$1.8 billion in UN cash shipments and an estimated \$2 billion in remittances.

Revenues have been below the Islamic Emirate

of Afghanistan's (IEA) target during the first eleven months of FY2024, with border taxes underperforming despite a surge in imports.

Over the eleven-month span of FY2024, from March 22, 2023, to February 21, 2024, Afghanistan's revenue collection reached AFN 189 billion, narrowly missing the target by 2 percent but marking a 5.6 percent increase from the previous fiscal year, the report said.

Lack of knowledge of laws creating challenges



KABUL (TOLONews): The acting Minister of Energy and Water, Abdul Latif Mansour, spoke out about the necessity of clear laws in the country.

Speaking at a gathering in Paktia, Abdul Latif Mansour said that with the absence of clearly understood laws people face challenges.

"Use the articles of the Islamic law, articles of jurisprudence and translate them to Pashto, so everyone-- not just scholars-- know this. Translate all

these articles into Dari and Pashto, don't consider it a constitution, but say it is the policy of our country to understand the public and students," he said.

The acting minister also said there have been complaints over high taxes and obtaining permits for work on private land from the commission to prevent land grabbing, and these issues should be addressed, he said.

"Another complaint that we receive is the complaints about finance. A

rule should be made for this section as well, do not send these people arbitrarily after anyone. These are honorable people. Some people go to the shop and write that this amount is your tax and you have to pay," said Abdul Latif Mansour.

Previously, the spokesman of the Islamic Emirate told TOLONews that the laws of several ministries have been reviewed and sent to the leader of the Islamic Emirate for approval.

Land for school donated

KABUL (BNA): Mohammad Ali, a resident of Wars Aliae village in the Patu district of Daikundi, donated his land to the education department of the province for the construction of a new school.

The event, which garnered significant attention and appreciation, was marked by an official ceremony organized to acknowledge Ali's selfless contribution.

Officials from the education department of Daikundi gathered at the ceremony to express their gratitude and admiration for Mohammad Ali's philanthropic act.

During the event, education department officials emphasized the significance of such charitable contributions.

They urged fellow citizens to follow Ali's lead and provide both financial and moral support for education.

The education department of Daikundi pledged to utilize the donated land effectively, ensuring the construction of a school that will cater to the educational needs of the local children.

Afghanistan population estimated near 35 million, says Afghan govt

KABUL (Khaama Press): The recent statement by Afghanistan's interim government estimating the population at 34.9 million starkly contrasts with international assessments, which suggest the population exceeds 40 million.

This significant discrepancy underscores the challenges in accurately gauging the demographic landscape amid the country's tumultuous circumstances.

Mohammad Haleem Rafie, the spokesperson for the Afghan Statistical Office, disclosed that 51 percent of the estimated population comprises men, with women making up the remaining 49 percent. However, the methods employed for this estimation remain opaque, raising concerns about the reliability of the data provided.

Despite assertions by government officials regarding ongoing efforts to refine census methodologies, specifics regarding the new plan remain elusive. The lack of transparency further complicates efforts to obtain an accurate demographic picture of Afghanistan.

The discrepancy between the Afghan government's



estimations and those of international organizations, such as the United Nations Population Division, highlights the pressing need for a comprehensive and transparent census process.

Without reliable data, effective policymaking and humanitarian interventions become significantly hindered.

Afghanistan's population crisis is further compounded by the absence of rigorous and credible census initiatives. Estimates fluctuate between 6 to 7 million, with occasional variations beyond this range, underscoring the

urgency of implementing systematic data collection methodologies.

The humanitarian implications of an inaccurate population assessment are dire, particularly in a country grappling with protracted conflict and socioeconomic challenges. Access to essential services, humanitarian aid, and resource allocation hinge upon reliable demographic data.

As Afghanistan navigates its post-conflict landscape, the imperative to establish a robust census mechanism becomes increasingly pronounced.

Accurate population figures are fundamental for rebuilding efforts, equitable development, and ensuring the welfare of all citizens, particularly the most vulnerable segments of society.

Addressing the population crisis demands concerted international collaboration, technical expertise, and sustained commitment from Afghan authorities. Only through transparent and inclusive census initiatives can the true extent of humanitarian needs be ascertained, paving the way for targeted interventions and sustainable progress.

IEA urged to allow girls go to schools, universities

KABUL (Pajhwok): On the eve of the new educational year, some girls have asked the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) government to allow them to go to their schools and universities in compliance with the Islamic Hijab.

After the takeover of the IEA on August 15, 2021, girls' education above class sixth and later on at the university level was banned.

This comes that just a few days are left before the beginning of the new educational year, but girls who had been stopped from going to schools and universities still did not know whether by the start of the new education year

they would be allowed to go to schools or not?

One of the girls said: "Every night it comes in my dream that the IEA allowed girls to go to schools."

Fatima, who was a seventh-class student at one of Kabul's schools before the collapse of the previous regime, said: "We miss our books, classrooms, classmates, teachers and the school's campus. I dream every night that the government of the IEA announces that all of the girls can go to schools."

Fatima has more interest in study and education, she said: "Every year, my mother purchased a new school uniform, bag, sta-

tionery and everything for us and I also covered all of my new books willingly."

As she looked at the books of her younger sister, tears flowed from her eyes and she said: "I wish the IEA to announce that all of the girls are allowed to go to schools this year (1403 solar year) and introduce its new school uniform as well."

Madina, another eighth-class student from Khair Khana area of the capital also waits for the doors of the schools above grade six to be opened for education.

Madina said: "We are Muslims, we observed Hijab because it is an obligation, while observing Hijab we want to follow

our education."

She also asked the IEA government not to bar girls from getting the education anymore and to allow them to attend their schools during the upcoming academic year.

Another tenth-class student Meena, said: "Since the doors of the schools are shut for girls, they (IEA officials) said they are working on a strategy for schools, three years elapsed and why is the strategy not completed, we don't know why it could not be finalized."

She continued: "Alhamdulillah we are Muslims, we do not wear clothes which are against the Shariah law, we want to observe our Hijab and

study."

She remained topper in her class during 10 years of her education and hoped to study medicine in the future and serve the community as a doctor.

She said: "We want the Ministry of Education not to bother the girls anymore and facilitate them to get education."

Esra, a student of the third semester at Ghalib University's medical faculty, said: "Believe me when the IEA announced that the educational institutions are closed until the next order, we lost hope and we are upset about the resumption of education, I hope for the quick resumption of our studies."

Esra said: "Observing

the Hijab is a religious obligation. Alhamdulillah we are Muslims, we observed hijab and we will do so, whatever Hijab the IEA call for we will observe."

Esra is originally from eastern Nuristan province which is why she chose the faculty of maternity medicine because there are no female health personnel in that province and she wants to serve her community.

She asked the IEA to open the doors of schools and universities for girls.

Tahmina Ahmadi, fifth semester of economics at a private university said: "As I go to sleep every night, I hope to hear some good news about the uni-

versity education."

According to Ahmadi, girls and women play vital roles in education, to develop a country, there is a need for education.

She added: "Thank Allah (SWTA) we are Muslims, we observe hijab and we want the government of IEA to give us good news about the opening of schools and universities in New Year, we want to study like our brothers and become a source of service to our community."

A political analyst Qazi Najibullah Jame, said there is no justification or obstacle for anyone to prevent girls from going to schools and universities in the next academic year.

Jami said: "We want the Afghan girls to go to universities and schools and the women must be provided employment opportunities as well."

Jami believes that the curriculum and uniform of the schools were according to the values of Islamic sharia and our customs in the past, if anyone does not like a part of the curriculum, he could reform it according to his vision.

Pajhwok Afghan News tried to have the opinion of officials of the IEA but it did not succeed.

IEA officials have always said that the ban on girls' education is temporary, and when the conditions are met, girls will be allowed to study.





ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari administering oath of office to members of Federal Cabinet at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## PTI to continue protests till restoration of ‘mandate’: Khosa

F.P. Report

LAHORE: After dozens of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) workers were arrested in Lahore allegedly for violent protests, party leader Latif Khosa on Monday vowed that they would continue to hold demonstrations until their “mandate” is not given to them.

Talking to media here, PTI leader Khosa said they had only one demand of conducting an audit of election results. The government could move on, if the mandate was restored, he maintained. He also demanded the release of PTI founder, leaders, especially female leaders, and workers.

Claiming that police had assaulted PTI’s workers, Khosa stressed that the party would continue its protests to uphold the people’s right to self-govern and elect their representatives. “I will register an FIR against them for kidnapping. We’ll see how this government can run,” he said referring to police’s arrest of PTI workers as abduction. He asked the police to tell on whose order they were carrying out action against the political activists.

The veteran politician apprised that he also went to the police station where he was made to sit for six hours in station house officer’s room. However, he admitted, no police official misbehaved with him. He said he told police that he was a sitting MNA, therefore, he could not be arrested without the National Assembly speaker’s permission. He said a case was lodged against PTI’s Salman Akram Raja for blocking the road, which he denied was the case saying they only held a peaceful protest. He asked the authorities to show surveillance camera footage if arteries were blocked.

Earlier, about 40 PTI leaders and workers had been booked under serious charges including terrorism, abduction, interference in public affairs and harassment. Sources said the PTI leaders and supporters had staged a protest on Mall Road in Lahore against alleged rigging in the general elections 2024.

As per the first investigation report (FIR), at least 38 PTI workers including women are nominated in the case. It claimed that PTI leader Hafiz

Farhat Abbas incited the party activists to damage public properties. Henceforth, they damaged a government vehicle too, it added. Abbas along with four to five other unidentified persons opened fire and manhandled a police constable tearing his uniform, the FIR said adding police detained the PTI leader and recovered a pistol from him. The FIR mentioned that batons and clubs were recovered from 42 suspects arrested by police.

A day ago, a number of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leaders, including Latif Khosa and Salman Akram Raja, were taken into custody during the police action in different cities as the former ruling party staged country-wide protests against alleged rigging in the February 8 general elections. PTI supporters and activists Sunday took to streets almost across the country with rallies being held in Rawalpindi along with protests in Karachi, Kandhkot, Tank and other cities, following the Imran Khan-founded party’s call for demonstrations against “manipulation of election results and stealing” of the PTI’s mandate in the recent elections.

## Polling for 48 Senate seats to be held on April 2

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Polling for 48 Senate seats will be held on April 2. According to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), fifty-two senators, after completing their six-year term will get retired tomorrow (Tuesday).

However, election will not be held against four seats reserved for the erstwhile tribal areas. These seats have been abolished after the merger of tribal areas into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under the 25th Amendment of the Constitution. Election will be held on seven general seats, two women and two technocrats/ Ulema from each province of Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Two seats reserved for non-Muslims will be filled one each from Sindh and Punjab.

Two Senators will be elected from the Islamabad Capital Territory, one each under the general as well as technocrat/Ulema category. The ECP will issue the election schedule on Thursday. Nomination papers with regard to the Senate elections can be obtained from the Election Commission Secretariat Islamabad as well as the provincial elections commissioners of Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Candidates can submit their nomination papers to their respective Returning Officers on Friday and Saturday.

## PTI leaders get bail

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: District and Sessions Court in Islamabad on Monday granted interim bail to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders in section 144 violation case.

PTI leaders Sher Afzal Marwat, Ali Bukhari, Aamir Mughal, Shoaib Shaheen and Chaudhry Ilyas Mehran were booked at Kohsar police station for violating section 144 during the party’s rally against alleged election rigging on Sunday. Judge Tahir Abbas Supra took up the interim bail plea of the suspects named in the case by the police. The lawyers of the PTI leaders said their clients were named in the case for taking out a peaceful rally.

They accused the government of ‘political victimization’ and pleaded for bail. The court while granting bail to the PTI leaders against a surety bond of Rs5,000, each, ordered them to appear before the court and sought a response from the police by March 19. Meanwhile, in Lahore, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leaders and workers faced further legal troubles after their arrest on Sunday from GPO Chowk on The Mall road, as six cases were registered against them in the Old Anarkali, Shahdara, South Cantt and Ichhra police stations on Monday. The charges levied against them include serious offenses such as terrorism, kidnapping, interference in official work, and harassment.

## LHC serve notices

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) has served notices to the federal and provincial governments on the plea seeking to halt upcoming Senate elections.

Justice Iqbal Chaudhry of LHC on Monday took up the plea against upcoming Senate elections. After the initial hearing on the plea, the LHC served notices to the federal and provincial governments and others for a response on the issue. The court has also summoned the attorney general of Pakistan and the advocate general of Punjab for assistance on the matter.

More than 50 senators of the upper house of the Parliament are set to retire. The ECP has appointed ROs in Islamabad and four provinces for the conduct of senate elections. According to a notification, ECP Director General Training Saeed Gul will be the Returning Officer in the federal capital. In contrast, provincial election commissioners Aijaz Anwar Chohan, Sharifullah, Shamshad Khan, and Muhammad Farid Afridi will be returning officers in Punjab, Sindh, KP, and Balochistan respectively.

# CM KP decides to include seminaries in solarization

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur has decided to include seminaries (Deeni Madaris) in the project regarding solarization of mosques and worship places in the province.

He directed the authorities concerned to take necessary steps for this purpose and to ensure that all the registered seminaries of settled and merged districts are included in the solarization project. It is inevitable to convert these seminaries to solar energy for facilitating thousands of students studying and residing there.

Under this initiative, solarization of 1000 to 1500 seminaries would be carried out across the province. He was presiding over a meeting of Energy & Power Department held here at Chief Minister’s House on Monday. Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Amjad Ali Khan, Secretary Energy & Power Nisar Ahmad and other concerned officials attend-

ed the meeting. The meeting was briefed in details about the development projects, administrative and financial affairs and other related matters of the department.

The Chief Minister has directed the quarters concerned to ensure appointment of Chief Executive Officer and Executive Committee Members of Pakhtunkhwa Energy Development Organization (PEDO) as soon as possible. He termed the timely completion of ongoing Hydel Power Development Projects as of vital importance and directed the authorities concerned to ensure that the projects are completed within the stipulated timelines. He further directed them to fix the priorities in this regard and added that revenue generating projects be funded on priority basis.

Meanwhile, chairing a meeting of the Local Government Department, the Chief Minister directed the concerned authorities to release special funds for the payment of salaries and

pensions to the employees of financially weak Tehsil Municipal Administrations. He directed them to immediately release Rs. 1.5 billion for the purpose, adding that all those employees should be provided with two month salary and pension, so they do not face any kind of financial problem during the month of holy Ramadan and on upcoming Eid-ul-Fitter as well.

He said that the TMAs have been suffering from the issue of salaries and pensions for the last several months, due to which employees are faced with severe financial problems. The Chief Minister on this occasion, was also briefed and details about the administrative and financial matters of the department and development projects with special focus on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cities Improvement Project. Provincial Minister for Local Government Arshad Ayub, Secretary Local Government Dawood Khan and other relevant officials attended the meeting.

## Heavy rains lash various parts of Balochistan

F.P. Report

GWADAR: Heavy rains continued in Quetta, Gwadar, Chaman, and other parts of Balochistan during the last 24 hours, creating urban flooding like situation with reports of house collapsed in various incidents in the province.

According to details, heavy rains in Quetta, Gwadar, Turbat, Naushki, Pashin, Chaman and others areas in Balochistan have aggravated the woe of the residents and suspended normal life in the province. The rain left roads and streets flooded with water and submerged low-lying areas. Light rain was also reported in several areas of Karachi during the past 24 hours.

According to Met office, 21 millimetres of rainfall was recorded in Gwadar over the last 24 hours, 10mm in Turbat and 2mm in Ormara, Turbat and Jiواني. The Met Office

said rain and thunderstorms with isolated showers were forecast in Turbat, Kech, Gwadar, Jiواني, Pasni, Ormara, Panjgur, Kharan, Kalat, Khuzdar, Lasbela, and Awaran districts today.

Meanwhile, the Met office has predicted heavy rains during March 11 to 14 in various areas of Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, AJK, Punjab and Sindh province. During the next 24 hours, heavy rain was expected in Turbat, Kech, Gwadar, Jiواني, Pasni, Ormara, Panjgur, Kharan, Kalat, Khuzdar, Lasbela and Awaran.

Meanwhile during next 24 hours rain and thunderstorm was also expected in Waziristan, Kohat, Lakki Marwat, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, Chitral, Dir, Swat, Abbottabad, Mansehra, Haripur, Kohistan, Shangla, Buner, Bajaur, Karak, Khyber, Peshawar, Charsadda,

Nowshera, Swabi, Mardan and Kurram during next 48 hours. Rain and snowfall over the hills was expected in Gilgit-Baltistan’s Diamir, Astore, Ghizer, Skardu, Hunza, Gilgit, Ghanche, Shigar, Kashmir’s Neelum valley, Muzaffarabad, Rawalakot, Poonch, Hattian, Bagh, Haveli, Sudhanoti, Kotli, Bhimber, Mirpur) during next 24 hours.

Rain was also expected in Murree, Galliat, Islamabad/Rawalpindi, Attock, Chakwal, Jhelum, Mandi Bahauddin, Gujrat, Gujranwala, Hafizabad, Sialkot, Narowal, Lahore, Kasur, Okara, Faisalabad, Toba Tek Singh, Jhang, Khushab, Sargodha, Mianwali and Bhakkar during next 48 hours. Landslides in Upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Murree, Galiyat, Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan may affect the vulnerable points in the area during the wet spell.

## IHC permits Firdous to meet PTI founder

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has granted permission to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) core committee member Firdous Shamim Naqvi to meet party founder at Adiala Jail.

Justice Samman Riffat Imitiaz on Monday heard plea of Firdous Shamim seeking permission to meet the PTI founder. Defense Counsel Babar Awan argued before the court that Firdous Shamim, being a member of the core committee of PTI, was deliberately not allowed to meet the PTI founder by the jail administration.

Assistant Attorney General Imran Farooq responded that the PTI founder had urged the jail administration to deal with his focal person regarding arranging his jail meetings. The IHC court sought the legal status of the focal person and granted permission to Firdous Shamim to meet the PTI founder.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan on Monday moved the court to meet former prime minister Imran Khan in Adiala Jail.

As per details, the plea was filed by PTI chairman Gohar Ali Khan in Islamabad High Court (IHC) seeking permission to meet party founder. The plea stated that Barrister Gohar, Omar Ayub and Shibli Faraz want to meet the PTI founder, urging the court to direct the Adiala Jail administration to allow the meeting. Earlier, Islamabad High Court allowed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan to hold one-on-one meeting with his lawyers in the absence of jail security personnel.

Prior to this, an anti-terrorism court allowed PTI leader Omar Ayub Khan to meet the incarcerated party founder Imran Khan in Adiala Jail. However, Omar Ayub later claimed that he was barred by the jail authorities from meeting Imran Khan in Adiala Jail. It is pertinent to mention here that former prime minister is currently in Adiala Jail, where he is incarcerated in Toshakhana, Cipher and illegal nikah case. Imran Khan has been facing a number of legal challenges since his ouster in April 2022 through a no-confidence motion.

## Al-Batarfi dead in unclear circumstances: Al-Qaeda

SANAA (AP): The leader of Yemen’s branch of Al-Qaeda is dead, the militant group announced late Sunday, without giving details. Khalid Al-Batarfi had a \$5 million bounty on his head from the US government over leading the group Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, long considered the most-dangerous branch of the extremist group still operating after the killing of founder Osama bin Laden.

Al-Qaeda released a video showing Al-Batarfi wrapped in a funeral shroud of the Al-Qaeda black-and-white flag. It offered no details on the cause of his death and there was no clear sign of trauma visible on his face. Al-Batarfi is believed to be in his early 40s. “Allah took his soul while he patiently sought his reward and stood firm, immigrated, garrisoned, and waged jihad for His sake,” the militants said in the video, according to the SITE Intelligence Group.

The group made the announcement on the eve of Ramadan, the Muslim holy fasting month that

Yemen will begin Monday. In the announcement, the group said Saad bin Atef Al-Awlaki would take over as its leader. The US has a \$6 million bounty on him, saying Al-Awlaki “has publicly called for attacks against the United States and its allies.” The Yemen branch of Al-Qaeda has been seen by Washington as the terror network’s most dangerous branch ever since its attempt in 2009 to bomb a commercial airliner over the United States. It claimed responsibility for the 2015 deadly attack in Paris on the French satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo.

Al-Batarfi took over as the head of the branch, known by the acronym AQAP, in February 2020. He succeeded leader Qassim Al-Rimi, who was killed by a US drone strike ordered by then-President Donald Trump. Al-Rimi had claimed responsibility for the 2019 attack at the US Naval Air Station Pensacola in which a Saudi aviation trainee killed three American sailors. Al-Batarfi, born in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, traveled to

Afghanistan in 1999 and fought alongside the Taliban during the US-led invasion. He joined AQAP in 2010 and led forces in taking over Yemen’s Abyan province, according to the US.

In 2015, he was freed after an AQAP raid that saw the militants capture Mukalla, the capital of Yemen’s largest province, Hadramawt, amid the chaos that followed Yemen’s Houthi rebels seizing the capital, Sanaa, and as a Saudi-led coalition started a war against the Houthis. A photo at the time showed Al-Awlaki with a Kalashnikov rifle, posing inside a government palace there. AQAP was later pushed out of Mukalla, but has continued attacks and been the target of a US drone strike campaign since the administration of then-President George W. Bush.

In 2020, there had been claims that Al-Bartafi had been detained, which later were denied. In 2021, he referred to the Jan. 6 riot at the US Capitol as “only the tip of the iceberg of what will come to them, God willing.”

## Israel-Hamas war rages in besieged Gaza

GAZA (AFP): The Muslim holy month of Ramadan begins Monday in Gaza with no truce in sight, as fighting rages between Israeli forces and Hamas militants and a dire humanitarian crisis grips the besieged Palestinian territory. A Spanish charity ship with food aid prepared to sail from Cyprus to the coastal Gaza Strip, where the UN has repeatedly warned of famine.

Aid groups say only a fraction of the supplies required to meet basic humanitarian needs have been allowed into Gaza since October, when Israel placed it under near-total siege. About 370 kilometers (230 miles) from Cyprus across the Mediterranean Sea, Mohammed Harara stood on the shores of Gaza, hoping for the aid to arrive. “I’ve been waiting since this morning, because tomorrow is the start of the holy month of Ramadan and the situation is very tragic,” he said.

The non-governmental group Open Arms said its

boat would tow a barge with 200 tons of food, which its partner the US charity World Central Kitchen would then unload on Gaza’s shores. It was expected to depart “within the coming hours,” Cypriot government spokesman Konstantinos Letymiotis told Cyprus News Agency. Jordanian, US, French, Belgian and Egyptian planes parachuted aid into northern Gaza on Sunday, but the United Nations’ aid coordinator for the area has said boosting supply by land is the best way to get assistance to the territory’s 2.4 million people.

Some of the airdropped food packages smashed open on impact, leaving residents picking through the dirt to salvage what they could, AFP TV images showed. The war started by the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel has killed 31,045 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to the health ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza, where vast swathes have been reduced to a

bombed-out wasteland. Weeks of talks involving US, Qatari and Egyptian mediators have aimed for a six-week truce and the release of many of the hostages taken on October 7 that militants are still holding. In return, Israel would free Palestinian prisoners being held in Israeli jails.

The aim had been to halt the fighting by the start of Ramadan. Both sides have blamed each other for failing to reach a truce deal, after Israel demanded a full list of surviving hostages and Hamas called for Israel to pull out all its troops from Gaza. A source with knowledge of the truce talks told AFP that “there will be a diplomatic push especially in the next 10 days” with a view to securing a deal within the first half of Ramadan. The holy month this year is “all pain,” said Ahmed Kamis, 40, in Rafah, where around 1.5 million people have tried to find refuge but are still at risk from Israeli bombing.

## Ministry of Planning all set to submit NPF before NEC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives is all set to submit the National Planning Framework (NPF) before the National Economic Council NEC after lengthy deliberations.

The Planning Ministry on Monday organized a workshop on NPF which was attended by the Deputy Chairman Planning Commission of Pakistan Mohammad Jehanzeb Khan, Secretary Planning Ministry, Awais Manzoor Sumra and other federal and provincial officials of the various ministries, says an official statement issued here on Monday.

The statement said that NPF aims to guide planning process, development and improve project effectiveness. It will help to define contours for federal and provincial public investment financing. The framework will layout the national

objectives and ensure that the polices, plans and projects contribute for the provision of public goods and improve service delivery.

Furthermore, it will draw broad jurisdictional lines between federal and provincial domains for funding of development schemes and alignment with the Federal plans. It will also aim to harmonize development spending, done through federal and provincial development programs, to achieve optimum development outcomes at all levels; federal, provincial and local.

Speaking at the occasion, Deputy Chairman Planning Commission, Muhammad Jahanzeb Khan said NPF is a milestone for determining and coordinating the national and development priorities between the Federation and the provinces. This framework will set the guidelines for determining the scope of federal and provincial governments in the effective use

of resources and national priorities,” said Mr Khan.

He emphasized that public welfare is the responsibility of the government, while there is a need to clearly define which areas of development are under the jurisdiction of the provincial governments and federal government. He further said that we have to change the thinking that the provincial government lacks human capacity and provinces do not have financial powers, rather he said that our provinces are rich in human, natural and financial resources.

Khan further added that in order to ensure the efficient use of resources, there is a need to work on a solid basis for effective use of existing resources, utilization of capacity and improvement of efficiency. While highlighting the framework, he said that it will determine the effective use of the country’s resources and the correct direction of development.



ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Qazi Faez Isa administering oath of office to Justice Naem Akhtar Afghan, Chief Justice High Court of Balochistan as Judge of Supreme Court.