

Sanam to contest Senate polls  
F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court's (LHC) appellate tribunal was granted permission on Friday to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Sanam Javed to contest the Senate election 2024. Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan, of the appellate tribunal, announced the reserved verdict by accepting the appeal filed by Sanam Javed against the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) decision.



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ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Saudi Fund for Development, led by Sultan Bin Abdul Rehman Al Marashad, Chief Executive Officer, SFD, met with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

## SC declares Justice Shaukat's removal illegal

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Friday declared the removal of former Islamabad High Court (IHC) Justice Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui illegal, directing that he may now be considered as a retired judge.

The decision was announced by a five-member bench of the apex court headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Fazi Isa in a 23-page judgment. Apart from the CJP, the bench comprised Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi and Justice Irfan Saadat Khan.

The verdict noted that the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) proceeded against Justice Siddiqui on the "assumption that the truth or falseness of the allegations levelled" by the former judge was "irrelevant". It also noted that the SJC opined that Justice Siddiqui had failed to substantiate,

independently corroborate, substantiate or prove the allegations levelled by him.

The judgment did note that the allegations made by the former IHC judge against Maj Gen Faiz Hameed and a few of his subordinates were "very serious". "However, Justice Siddiqui was not given an opportunity to establish his allegations nor brought face to face with those he had accused. When we noted this lapse we issued notices to all those against whom he made allegations and provided them with an opportunity to admit/deny them. All of them have denied their stated involvement," the order said.

The court order further highlighted that in view of the rejoinders submitted to the judicial panel, it was all the more necessary for the SJC to have inquired into the matter and to have determined who was telling the truth. "The SJC did not give any credence to Justice

Siddiqui's own words and to the contents of his replies; the SJC assumed that they were false; and having made this assumption concluded that Justice Siddiqui was guilty of misconduct. It would be difficult to categorise such a determination as fair or one which accorded with the requirements of due process. Justice Siddiqui was not given an opportunity to establish the veracity of his allegations, which was incumbent on the SJC when the same formed the basis of Justice Siddiqui's removal from office," stated the judgment.

The bench also noted that Article 10A guarantees a right to a fair trial and due process including judges which the Supreme Court stated that Justice Siddiqui was "deprived of". It noted that the judge was not "provided with an opportunity to establish the truth of the allegations" and instead was "punished for levelling them".

## Pakistan Day today

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The nation celebrates Pakistan Day today (Saturday) with renewed pledge to work hard for the progress and stability of the country.

The day marks adoption of historic Lahore Resolution this day in 1940 that provided a framework for realization of the goal of a separate homeland for Muslims of South Asia. The Day will dawn with 31-gun salute in the federal capital and 21-gun salute in provincial capitals.

Special prayers will be offered in mosques after Fajr prayers for the progress, prosperity and solidarity of the country. National flag will be hoisted on major government buildings. The main feature of the day will be the grand military parade in Islamabad where contingents of the three armed forces and other security forces will conduct march past while fighter planes will present aerobatic maneuvers.

## PM, Saudi Fund delegation discuss development plans

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Saudi Fund for Development (SFD), led by Sultan Bin Abdul Rehman Al Marashad, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), SFD, during its visit to Pakistan called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif here on Friday and discussed its ongoing projects in Pakistan.

The Prime Minister welcomed the delegation and appreciated the long-standing friendship between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan and the efforts of SFD for providing financing to Pakistan in the fields of Health, Energy, Infrastructure and Education as well the recent floods.

The CEO, SFD thanked the Prime Minister and Government of Pakistan for the warm welcome and hospitality as well as the conferment of the National Civil Award, Hilal-e-Quaid-e-Azam.

The Prime Minister also appreciated the signing of Financial Agreements, early today, between SFD and the Government of Pakistan worth US\$ 107 million for construction of Hydropower stations in AJK, which would not only provide clean energy but would also help eradicate the menace of deforestation, besides providing job opportunities to the local population. The CEO, SFD shared updates with the prime minister about the ongoing projects including Mohmand Multi-purpose Hydropower Project, Golan Gol Hydropower Project, Malakand Regional Development Project, and other projects funded through Saudi grants.

The prime minister, while appreciating the support of the SFD, highlighted the need to expedite the processing of the new projects, shared with SFD, in the field of green energy and infrastructure, which once implemented, would go a long way in the economic revival of the country, besides serving the needs of the local communities.

The CEO, SFD assured early processing of the shared projects and also reiterated that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, under the leadership of the Royal Family, would extend all possible assistance and continued

support to Pakistan. The prime minister thanked the CEO and members of the delegation and conveyed his best wishes to all the members of the Royal Family, especially the Khadim-e-Harmin Sharifain.

**Barrick Gold delegation calls on PM:** A delegation of Barrick Gold Company led by Chief Executive Officer Mark Bristow was called Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday and informed the delegation that the feasibility of the Reko Diq project in Balochistan would be completed by end of current year.

The prime minister said that Reko Diq project would prove to be a game changer for the development of Balochistan and the region. "This project will usher in a new era of development of the province and prosperity of the people," he added.

He said planning would be made regarding communication infrastructure, especially railway lines, to take full advantage of minerals in Balochistan. The prime minister asked Barrick Gold to also invest in other mineral projects in the province.

He also proposed that the government and the Barrick Gold could collaborate to establish a technical university in Chagai district of the province. The government is taking all possible measures to facilitate investors especially in the fields of road and communication systems, he remarked.

Briefing on the progress of Reko Diq project, the Barrick Gold delegation informed the meeting that the Reko Diq project feasibility would be completed by end of current year. The prime minister was informed that preference was being given to local and Balochistan domiciled persons to work on Reko Diq project.

Barrick Gold said that it had set up three schools near Reko Diq under Corporate Social Responsibility while so far the company had also imparted technical training to 100 people including women. Federal Minister for Petroleum Minister Musadik Malik, Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazir Tarar, Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Muhammad Jehanzeb and relevant senior government officials participated in the meeting.


## KP CM granted pre-arrest bail till April 17

F.P. Report


ISLAMABAD: An Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) on Friday granted pre-arrest bail to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Chief Minister (CM) Ali Amin Gandapur.

As per details, the court heard the case registered in CTD police station and approved Gandapur's interim bail plea. The bail plea stated that Gandapur was not at the spot of the incident but his name was included in the FIR. On March 19, an Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) issued arrest warrants for KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur in a case pertaining to May 9 events, wherein military installations came under attack. ATC Judge Malik Ejaz Asif issued the non-bailable arrest warrants for the newly-elected chief minister and ordered the police to present him before court on April 2.

The arrest warrants against Ali Amin Gandapur were issued in a case registered at City Police Station. On the other side, the Peshawar High Court ruled that the ECP not authorized to proceed against KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur. "The Supreme Court has interpreted clause 62-1(f) in Nawaz Sharif case", court order read. "After the election tribunal established, the election commission has not been empowered to proceed," the order read. The election commission has no authority to act against the petitioner, according to the court order. The sides being issued preliminary notice. The election commission's disqualification notice's proceeding being declared suspended, the order read.




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This Pakistan Day, let's come together to honor the strength, diversity, and resilience of our great nation. It's a time to reflect on our journey, from the struggles of the past to the triumphs of the present, and to envision a future filled with promise and progress.





## Shahera Shahid highlights govt's commitment to strengthen Radio Pakistan



KARACHI (APP): Federal Secretary for Information and Broadcasting, Shahera Shahid on Friday, underscored the crucial role played by the Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (Radio Pakistan), emphasizing its extensive reach across the nation with news delivery in multiple languages.

During her visit to the PBC office, she addressed various issues including Radio Pakistan's financial matters

such as liabilities, salaries, and pensions, which are currently being discussed at higher levels for prompt resolution.

Furthermore, she mentioned the government's deliberation on enhancing financial self-sustainability for institutions with high expenses. The burden of power utility bills on Radio Pakistan is also being addressed through collaboration with the Power Division. Notably,

efforts have been made to ensure timely pension payments, which were previously delayed, benefiting pensioners.

Secretary Shahera Shahid underscored the government's efforts to uplift Radio Pakistan and its workforce, including the adoption of government scales. Improvements in transmitters are underway to guarantee seamless transmission, alongside the establishment of a centralized broadcast setup in Rawat, Islamabad.

Moreover, organizational measures are being implemented to provide medical facilities for employees, while Radio Pakistan's properties are being leveraged for organizational enhancement and employee welfare.

Shahera Shahid, on the occasion also undertook a visit to the Associated Press of Pakistan Corporation (APPC) Karachi Bureau.

She meticulously inspected various sections of the bureau office, gaining a comprehensive understanding of its operations.

Earlier, upon her arrival at the PBC building, she received a warm welcome from the Station Director of Radio Pakistan and other senior officers from APP and the Audit Bureau of Circulation.

## Improving hospitals first priority of govt: minister

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique has stated that improving the conditions of government hospitals in Punjab is the first priority. He was discussing issues with people in his office to address public problems on Friday.

The minister mentioned that Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif had tasked them with ensuring the provision of better health facilities to people. He emphasized that the people have reposed their trust in them, and Insha'Allah, they would never betray them.

He noted that the PML-N government does not believe in empty slogans but in public service. During this event, the provincial health minister mentioned that many issues in government hospitals need to be rectified, adding that reforms are being introduced to improve the healthcare system. The minister stated that the plan for the next five years to enhance the health system has been presented to the Chief Minister for approval. In a meeting, renowned medical expert Dr. Eis Muhammad congratulated the health minister on assuming the portfolio.

## CM Sindh to further strengthen coordination with fed govt to implement projects

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah while presiding over a meeting here decided to further strengthen coordination with the federal government for implementation of all important projects besides enhancing efforts to cooperate with tax collecting bodies.

The meeting was held here at CM House and attended by provincial ministers Sharjeel Inam Memon, Nasir Hussain Shah, Ziaul Hassan Lanjar, Jam Khan Shoro, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, PSCM Agha Wasif, and other concerned secretaries, a communiqué said.

During the meeting, provincial minister for energy Nasir Hussain Shah pointed out that 26-Wind projects with a cumulative capacity of 1875 mega watt (MW) and 19-Solar projects of 1150 MW were waiting for competitive bidding.

After discussion, the Sindh government proposed to the federal government that 1st round of competitive bidding amongst

LOI holders be carried out by provincial energy departments instead of the private power & infrastructure board (PPIB). The CM disclosed that a consensus has been developed with all the stakeholders to conduct competitive bidding on wind LOI holders for procuring 300 MW for Karachi electric (KE).

Financing agreement for Thar Rail Connectivity, the minister Nasir Shah told the CM that the previous PPP Sindh government had earlier agreed to fund the project through equity contribution. The caretaker Sindh government approved financing 50 per cent of the project cost through a loan to Pakistan railways by the Sindh government subject to ratification by the elected cabinet of Sindh.

The finance facility agreement (FFA) was executed between the energy department and Pakistan railways for financing 50 per cent of the project cost on January 31, 2024. The CM directed the energy

department to file a proposal for ratification of the agreement. The CM also said that provincial and federal data collection and integration was most important for which he directed chief secretary Asif Hyder Shah to coordinate with the federal government.

The chief secretary told the CM that necessary coordination between federal board of revenue (FBR), NADRA and relevant Sindh government departments was in place.

The Board of Revenue (BoR), Sindh Revenue Board (SRB) and Excise & Taxation have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the federal board of revenue for data sharing and integration.

The CM directed the chief secretary to strengthen the data sharing and collection system. Irrigation Minister Jam Khan Shoro told the chief minister that the caretaker Sindh government has approved revised abyana rates on February 20, 2024.

## CISSS to hold capacity building workshop for SID officers

### F.P. Report

KARACHI : Director General Public Relations Muhammad Saleem Khan has said that Information department is assigned the task of publicizing activities of Provincial Government departments and other official entities through print, electronic and social media.

This he said while talking with a 5 members delegation of Centre for International Strategic Studies Sindh (CISSS) at his office here today.

The delegation of Centre for International Strategic Studies Sindh (CISSS) team today paid an introductory outreach visit to Information Department, Government of Sindh, Karachi. Team CISSS was received by Director General Public Relations (DGPR) Mr Muhammad



Saleem Khan, Director Information (Admin and Accounts) Mr Muhammad Yousif Kabooro, Director Information (Press Information) Mr Akhtar Surhio and Mr Aleem Uddin Khan (Deputy Director Information).

He further said that Sindh Information department (SID) also acts as a bridge between various govern-

ment departments and media and updates masses about public welfare initiatives through media.

He also said that Public Relations Officers attached with Provincial Ministers and Advisors endeavours to highlight government endeavours. The purpose of the visit was to introduce CISSS to Information Department and discuss the areas of mutual

interest and scope of future collaboration between the two organisations.

Director Research Mr Aftab Hussain briefed the Director General about the aims, objectives, vision and Research Team of CISSS, and apprised him about the activities that CISSS has performed so far. DGPR also gave an overview of the Information Department and informed the delegation about the organogram, aims, objectives, and its outreach.

It was mutually agreed that both the organisations would collaborate in future in various areas. It was agreed that CISSS would hold a capacity-building workshop in future on strategic affairs and the challenges posed by hybrid warfare for the officers of Information Department.

## Ahsan Iqbal visited NDMA

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD : Federal Minister for Planning Development and Special Initiatives Prof Ahsan Iqbal visited National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) today and was briefed by NDMA officials on the functioning of their state of the art National Emergencies Operation Centre (NEOC).

The NEOC is manned by young professionals from technical fields having expertise in using latest technology to prepare Pakistan's collective response towards natural disasters. With the help of data and satellite based mapping, weather changes, extreme heat waves, climate disasters, and glacial meltdowns can be predicted effectively.



KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA  
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

### NEWS/ADVERTISEMENT

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Service Commission conducted Ability Test for the post of Budget Officer (BPS-17) in Relief, Rehabilitation and Settlement Department on 21.03.2024. During the test, a candidate namely Ijaz ur Rahman S/O Mahboob ur Rahman bearing Roll No. 1963 and CNIC No. 14203-7654489-9 was caught red handed with a VIP Master Card alongwith ear bug. He was handed over to Police and case registered against him for legal action.

INF(P):  
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Controller Examinations  
(Conduct)



On the happy occasion of Pakistan Day, I extend my heartiest felicitations to all citizens of Pakistan. Indeed, 23rd March is of great significance in our history, as it paved the way for an independent Pakistan. On this very day, Muslims of the subcontinent for the first time formally articulated their demand for a homeland of their own. In just over seven years from this momentous day, the dream of independence was realised under the dynamic leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and our beloved country – Pakistan – came into being. Certainly, Pakistan Day reminds us of the determination, sacrifice and epic struggle of our forefathers for independence.

**My Dear Countrymen!** On this historic occasion, I assure you that Pakistan Air Force is fully capable and ready to respond to future challenges befittingly. To this end, we are consistently endeavouring to augment our combat potential with added focus on Indigenization as per Quaid's vision of Self-reliance and Modernization through Smart Inductions of Cutting-Edge Niche Technologies and their Operationalization. More so, a number of strategic initiatives have recently been undertaken; notable among these include establishment of National Aerospace Science & Technology Park (NASTP), PAF Cyber Command and Aerospace Design & Innovation Center (ADIC). In addition, Jinnah Center of Character and Leadership (JCCL) has been established for Effect Based Training and better Human Resource Development. Alongside, high premium is placed on the welfare of personnel. As such, Welfare Mechanism has been revamped by institutionalizing new measures for facilitation of Shuhada families, Persons with Special Needs (PSNs), and retired as well as serving personnel. Certainly, these initiatives are paying great dividends.

Let us resolve that we will not rest on our laurels but will redouble our efforts for the progress and prosperity of Pakistan, as indeed the development of Pakistan Air Force. On this special day, we also reiterate support to Kashmiri brethren in their just struggle for self-determination. We also call upon International Community to put an end to hostilities in Palestine. May Allah Almighty grant us strength and courage to ensure invincible aerial defence of Pakistan, Aameen.

**Pakistan Air Force Zindabad!**  
**Pakistan Paidnabad!**

**Air Chief Marshal**  
**Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, NI (M)**  
Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force



**PAKISTAN AIR FORCE**  
A SYMBOL OF PRIDE FOR THE NATION



### TEHSIL MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION TAKHT BHAI DISTRICT MARDAN



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### NOTICE FOR INVITING E-BIDDING

Tehsil Municipal Administration Takht Bhai invites scaled bids based on "MRS-2022 Bi-Annual from the eligible contractors/firms in accordance with KPPRA works rules 2014 on single stage single envelope procedures for the following works. The bidder should be registered with Pakistan Engineering Council in relevant category & field of specialization and having valid enlistment/renwcal with Local Council Board Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for financial year 2023-24. Tender should reach to the office of the Tehsil Municipal Administration Takht Bhai and will be opened on same day in the presence of Tender Opening Committee members & bidders/representative according to the following schedule.

s.#	Name of work	Estimated Cost	2% Earnest Money	Date of Submission Documents	Dated of Opening Tender	Completion Period
	<b>OUT OF SAVING SAP AVAILABLE (SDGs SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS) ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAMME 2022-23</b>					
1	CONSTRUCTION/REMAINING WORK OF MASJID ZIA-UD-DIN KALY HATYAN	3.000	0.0600	16/04/2024 01:00AM	16/04/2024 02:00PM	As per Work Order
2	CONSTRUCTION/REMAINING WORK OF MASJID AZEEM KALY SHERDIL	2.000	0.0400	do	do	do

### TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Tender Form/ BOQ can be downloaded after publication in the newspapers from Local Council Board website (www.lgkp.gov.pk).
- Option of printing of tender will be visible only to the enlisted Contractors / Firms on provide online the bid in percentage of above / below along with amount, bank and date of earnest money.
- All the Contractors / Firms have an option to withdraw their bids online up to closing time of tender if they intend not to participate in bidding, in case they have applied rates online then they shall be compelled to submit printed tender's documents along with requisite documents to Tehsil Municipal Administration Takht Bhai, otherwise will be liable to be declared as black listed as per notification AOI/LC8/19-6-2017, dated 19-06-2017.
- Any tender or offer of works made by any Contractor / Firms without filling bids online shall be null and void henceforth.
- Contractors must follow the new provincial government rules/instruction under the Notification NO.SO-IV/CMS/KPK/1-13/2016/4264-70 dated 08-04-2016 keeping in view the mentioned notification the contractors shall quote their rate "ONLINE" as ABOVE/BELOW. All Contractor /firms are bound to follow the KPPRA rules to.
- Complete bids both Original & Duplicate Tender Form along with other documentation i.e. Original CDR, Copay of CNIC, Local Council Board enlistment/registration, Pakistan Engineering council registration, KPPRA registration. Power of Attorney (if applicable), FormFI, should be reached to the office of Tehsil Municipal Administration Takht Bhai through Courier/registered mail services on fixed date & time.
- Reference to Notification No. S.R.O (14)/Vol: 1-24/2021-22, dated 10-05-2022**
  - Contractor quote their bids up to a limit of 10% below shall submit bid security to the extent of @2% of engineering estimate only. ii- The contractors quoting their bids more than 10% below up to 20% below on Engineers Estimate shall submit along with their bids 8% Additional Security of Engineers Estimated cost in addition to @2% bid security. If the bid is not accompanied with the required amount of additional security then it will be considered as NON-RESPONSIVE and the 2% bid security shall be forfeited in favour of government and the second lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly. ii- Similarly, a contractor quoting bid more than 20% below shall submit with his bid an additional security on engineers estimated cost equal to the differential amount of submitted bid and engineers estimate along with detailed rate analysis. In case of more than 20% below bids, if the bid is not accompanied by the detailed rate analysis and / or required amount of additional security, then the said bid shall be considered as NON-RESPONSIVE, all the securities submitted along with such NON-RESPONSIVE bid shall be forfeited in favour of government and the 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly.
  - Any bidder who provided incorrect information shall be disqualified.
  - In case of bids became tie the award of contract shall be decided through new E-toss system.
- The Tehsil Municipal Administration, Takht Bhai shall award and print work order through New E-tendering System. Any work awarded and work order issued by the Tehsil Municipal Administration without E-tendering System shall be null and void henceforth.
- The procuring entity/undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject all bids at any or all tender with cogent reason Reference to KPPRA Rules-2014 Chapter # V Page # 27, all clause of Sub Rules-46, 47 & 48.
- All bidders are required to be registered with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority, established under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Finance Act, 2013. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Act No.XXI of 2013 for work, consulting and non-consulting services as listed in the schedule-II of the Act/ibid.

**NOTE: WORK ORDER WILL BE ISSUED AFTER THE RELEASE OF FUND FROM DOCUMENTATION.**

**Tehsil Officer (I&S)**  
**Tehsil Municipal Administration,**  
**Takht Bhai.**

**Tehsil Municipal Officer**  
**Tehsil Municipal Administration,**  
**Takht Bhai.**

INF/P/572/24





PESHAWAR: KP Minister for Higher Education, Meena Khan Afridi distributing scholarships among the students of Khyber Medical University.

## Enforced disappearance crime against humanity

Zia u Rahman Tajik

**ENFORCE** disappearance is an act of making someone detain, abduct, confine, arrest or disappear against his will and followed by a refusal to acknowledge the fate of that person. Enforce disappearance deprives a person of his life and liberty and it is a continuous wrong unless his whereabouts are determined. The relative of the missing person has the right to know the truth regarding the fate and whereabouts of their loved one under 19 A of the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973. Enforced disappearance or missing persons is violative of basic human rights under international law in the time of peace as well as in the time of war.

Enforce disappearance is a heinous and intolerable crime. It is a crime against humanity and it violates multiple human rights e.g. right to a life free from torture, arbitrary detention and the right to a fair trial. It affects the economic and social life of the detainee and his family members' dependents on the missing person. In enforced disappearance, the detainee is in continuous fear of his life but on the other hand his family is in continuous wait for his arrival to home for years and years.

Enforced disappearance is used by the state as a strategy to spread terror within the society and feelings of insecurity to the relative of a missing person. Enforced disappearance is an international issue and has affected people throughout the globe. To curtail and control the issue of enforced disappearance the UNO has also adopted the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from enforced disappearance in 2006. The convention had created an obligation on the state to make the offence of

enforced disappearance punishable with appropriate penalties which take into account its extreme seriousness.

America, Iran, Araq, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are charged with enforced disappearance but Sri Lanka is at the top in which more than 10 thousand are suffering from enforced disappearance. In Pakistan, the issue of enforced disappearance started in 1970 and reached the top in the regime of General Pervaiz Musharraf nowadays as per the report of the Missing Person Commission more than 8 thousand people have forcefully disappeared from different regions of Pakistan but most are from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. The govt of Pakistan in 2011 for settlement of the issue of enforced disappearance also established a commission known as the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearance but no effective role had been played by the commission and remained under criticism and failed to effectively settle the issue.

The Parliament 2021 also passed a criminal law amendment bill from the National Assembly in which section 52-B has been proposed to be inserted into the Pakistan penal code and through the said proposed section enforced disappearance has been made an offence with 10 years of imprisonment but unfortunately, thereafter the said bill had gone missing.

Article 9 of the Constitution provides a fundamental right of right to life and under the said article no one can be deprived of his right to life and liberty except by law. Article 10 further provides every person arrested and detained shall be produced before the magistrate within 24 hours of his arrest and should be informed of the grounds of his arrest with further liberty of consulting a lawyer of his choice. Section 61 of the criminal procedure code also provides the

same relief to an accused person who has been arrested by the police in a criminal case.

Article 10A of the constitution also guarantees the right to a fair trial and Article 37(D) further guarantees inexpensive and expeditious justice. But missing persons are deprived by the concerned authorities of the said constitutional rights and guarantees. Under Article 4 of the constitution, every person has the right to be treated by law and no action detrimental to his life, liberty, reputation, property or person should be taken except by law. Non-treatment of a person as per the mandate of aforesaid articles amounts to power harassment and exploitation and Article 3 of the constitution also emphasises on elimination of all kinds of exploitation. Every action of the authorities must be backed by law because loyalty to the state and obedience to the Constitution and law is the command of Article 5 of the Constitution.

For enforced disappearance, all the 3 organs of the state are equally responsible i.e. the Executive, the Legislature and the judiciary. The missing persons who are involved in offences of waging war against the state or belong to terroristic groups and use the name of religion or sect could be competently trial-ed by the military courts and their trial by the military court is protected by the proviso of Article 175 (3) of the constitution. But their enforced disappearance is not supported by any provision of the law and is violative of articles 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 10 A, 19 A and article 37(D) of the constitution. The role of the judiciary in the cases of missing persons is not worth consideration and appreciation because courts are the guardians and protectors of public liberties and lives.

*The writer is Peshawar based lawyer and can be reached as: Ziaurrahmantajik123@gmail.com*

## Hospitals directed to treat patients of clubfoot

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has directed hospitals to take necessary steps for providing treatment to children suffering from club foot and other congenital abnormalities.

According to details, private and public sector hospitals have been directed to ensure treatment of clubfoot abnormality and congenital ailments while examination would be conducted by child specialists and orthopedic surgeons.

The patients would be referred to Paraplegic Centre Hayatabad, Khyber Teaching Hospital, Saidu Group of Teaching Hospital or other clubfoot clinics for proper treatment.

## Waves of inflation continue

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The waves of inflation continued in Peshawar, the district administration failed to control the prices of vegetables, fruits and live chicken.

The price of Onion jumped to Rs 280 like other items including Tomato Rs 150, Garlic Rs 700 and Ginger Rs 650 per kg. There was almost an increase in the rates of all vegetables and the vendors and shopkeepers did not follow the official rates given by the district administration.

The price of Potato hit 11p, kachalu 260, green pepper 240, capsicum 400, brinjal 130, cauliflower 120, okra 390 rupees being sold per kg. As far as the price of fruits including Apple 350, Pomegranate 490, Malta 370, Stobery 440, Amardo 320 are being sold per kg while banana 220 rupees per dozen being sold. The price of live chicken increased to Rs 465 per kg, however, the official rate of the live chicken is 435 per kg. The price of a dozen eggs in the market increased to Rs 360 while the official rate was Rs. 280.

## Rain likely in parts of KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: There is a possibility of intermittent rain in most of the districts of the province including districts of Hazara and Malakand divisions in the next 20 hours, an official of the Meteorological Department said here Friday.

In the city of Peshawar, sometimes there will be clouds and sometimes there will be glimpses of the sun, according to the Department of Meteorology official. The minimum temperature of Peshawar is 16 while the maximum is likely to go up to 25 degrees Celsius, the official said.

## Power to remain shutdown

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Due to maintenance work, the Power Supply would remain suspended from Peshawar Fort Grid Station on March 25th, 27th and 30th from 7.00 AM to 11.00 AM, resultantly consumer Karim Pura, Lady Reading Hospital and Chowk Yadgar feeders will face inconvenience.

# Minister stresses need for in-form water management sector

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Minister for Agriculture Muhammad Sajjad here Friday highlighted the importance of in-farm water management sector in the development of agriculture. He said that the role of water management in the orderly arrangement of water for agricultural purposes in the province is unquestionable.

The Minister expressed these views on the occasion of visiting the Directorate General of Farm Water Management in Peshawar to take a briefing on in-farm Water Management. The sector should adopt better planning now in view of the

concerns and need for future water scarcity due to global climate change. In view of the concerns and need of water shortage in the future, adopt better planning than now.

He further said that it is very gratifying that the agricultural sector is making efforts in various ways to supply water for the greater development of agriculture. they should adopt modern methods to prevent the wastage of water for irrigation and to protect it.

Director General Javed Iqbal gave a briefing to the Provincial Minister on the activities, achievements and future strategy of the department, while Additional Director General Naseer Rehman

and other directors and officers were also present on the occasion.

Provincial Minister was briefed on the ongoing development projects. Information was given regarding the quality and progress of the work while he directed the concerned authorities to complete their development schemes on time and there will be no delay in the completion of development projects and no compromise on the quality of work. He said that a better strategy should be prepared to prevent wastage of water and increase agricultural production in an effective manner. The provincial minister was also informed about the future planning in detail.

## Advisor resents avalanche-caused losses

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the KP Chief Minister on Tourism and Culture, Zahid Chanzab has expressed resentment over losses incurred to hotels, shops and other structures due to two big avalanches in tourist resorts of Balakot.

In a statement on Friday, Zahid Chanzab directed the officials concerned to start rescue and relief operations on an urgent basis so that

the situation could be brought back towards normalcy. He said soon after the incident, he contacted the Chief Minister and informed him about the scale of losses. The Chief Minister, he said, directed the Kaghan Development Authority and district administration to immediately start the rescue and relief operation. He said the CM also directed for applying heavy machinery in the rescue operation, if needed.

The Advisor to CM was informed by the DG Kaghan Development Authority, Shabbir Khan that damages and losses were incurred after avalanches hit Jheel Road in Naran and Amla and Jhibran areas. The Advisor directed the Kaghan Development Authority and district administration to devise a strategy on scientific lines to prevent recurrence of such incidents in future.

## Increase in deprivation of women's right to inheritance

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: It has been reported that there is an increase in deprivation of women's right to inheritance in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to the report of the Federal Ombudsperson Secretariat for Protection against Harassment (FOSPAH), around 699 women haven't received their due share in the property, depriving them of their

rightful inheritance since last year.

Approximately 613 were unable to obtain their property share in 2023, and this year 86 such cases have been reported. FOSPAH was only successful in securing property for 2 women. The highest rate of such cases was in Peshawar, where 343 women couldn't obtain their property share, while in Mardan, 55

women were deprived of their right to property share.

According to FOSPAH sources, property cases require extensive time to resolve, as legal proceedings are quite time-consuming. The opposite parties are provided with 2 or 3 chances to appear in the case. Non-bailable arrest warrants are issued in case of non-appearance in the case.

## Minister for boosting of Primary Health Care system

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Minister Health Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Syed Qasim Ali Shah has stated that in order to manage the burden of patients in major hospitals in Peshawar, it is essential to strengthen the Primary Health Care system on district level.

Under the Primary Health Care Reform Project, during a one-day training workshop for Lady Health Workers coordinators that all their challenges and issues would be addressed promptly, emphasizing the importance of not neglecting the health of the people. Syed Qasim Ali Shah stressed the importance of

health centers and DHQ hospitals in the province.

He emphasized that although there are challenges in the health system, working as a team would help in overcoming these challenges. Minister health further stated that it is his responsibility to provide the best healthcare facilities, especially in underserved areas.

He assured Lady Health Workers coordinators that all their challenges and issues would be addressed promptly, emphasizing the importance of not neglecting the health of the people. Syed Qasim Ali Shah stressed the importance of

treating patients with responsibility and sympathy and ensure better facilities in hospitals.

He reiterated that all doctors are part of his team and without them, he cannot achieve anything, emphasizing the need to work as a team to serve the people. Director General Health Services Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Dr. Shaukat Ali, highlighted the importance of enhancing the skills of Lady Health Workers to strengthen the Primary Health Care system and assured continuous support for providing better health facilities to the public.



PESHAWAR: KP Minister for Health, Syed Qasim Ali Shah chairing EPI review meeting.

## Mass Iftar parties strengthen bond of brotherhoods, mutual coexistence

PESHAWAR (APP): Arranging food cuisines, beverages and sweets at Iftar Dastarkhwan, Riazul Haq (60), a former school teacher of Nowshera district is all smile while following the rich legacy of his father, who organized such parties for fellow villagers in every Ramazan which brought them closer besides strengthened bonds of brotherhood and mutual coexistence.

Exudes with bonds of sharing and empathy, Riaz arranges Iftar Dastarkhwan for underprivileged at his home village Mohib Banda from Ist Ramazan to Chand Raat in memory of his late father Mazharul Haq, who passed away of pancreas cancer few years ago.

"In line with my father's will, I arrange Iftar Dastarkhwan for poor, orphans and marginalized ones since 2012 at Taray mosque where Rozdars are being served with various food cuisines including dates, rice, pakora, dahi bhalla, jaleebi and beverages, thus seeking mercy and forgiveness for departed soul of my Baba Jan," he told APP.

The soothing moments of sharing

iftaar's items including dates, pakora, jaleebi, kachalo and others dishes is still alive as fresh as today when I keenly observed my late father handing over packets of food to people while coming to the mosque for Magrib prayer." "There is no better joy for a Muslim but to include poor and orphans in Iftar's celebrations. I feel inner peace, and satisfaction while doing this noble practice in all 30 days of this holy month," he said, adding "breaking fast together bring people of all faiths closer and strengthens bonds for life."

Strongly believing in interfaith-harmony, compassion and brotherhood, Riaz said distribution of food in Ramazan was a mark of respect and admiration for our fellow fasting Muslims' brothers that doubled our happiness. "Iftar Dastarkhwan is open to everyone irrespective of their work profile, social status, caste, creed and religion," he said, adding in today's busy life, "we hardly get time to be with our neighbours, villagers and childhood friends. It's the holy month of Ramzan that brings us together not just as a family and

friends but as neighbourhood on Aftar Dastarkhwan," he said.

Abdul Ghafoor, former Director, Sheikh Zayd Islamic Centre Peshawar said that Iftar parties strengthen bonds of friendship, love and promote interfaith harmony immensely. "Ramazan is a blessed holy month in which Allah Almighty showers His infinite mercy and immense blessings on the Muslims whom tries hard to bring closer to Him seeking forgiveness besides maximizing their rewards."

"We can't come closer to each other and develop a tolerant society unless we all enjoy equal rights and respect each other's beliefs irrespective of caste, colour and languages," said noted religious scholar Maulana Tila Muhammad Siddique. He said all prophets and founders of all religions had promoted peace, forgiveness, patience, love and tolerance through their teachings, actions and deeds. "Ramazan is the month of Sabr (patience) and Allah Almighty will give its rewards to fasting people who will move to heaven through a separate door."

## World Water Day: Call for preservation of freshwater aquifers, glaciers

PESHAWAR (APP): Unaware of the International Water Day celebrated with a theme 'Water for Prosperity and Peace' today, Shahjehan Khan, (58), a poor taxi-driver continued to bring three gallons of clean drinking water on Sehri and Iftar for his family after the freshwater aquifers of his village became contaminated following the 2022 devastated floods, which inundated his entire village in Nowshera district.

Known as Shah Gee by the local residents and relatives, the motivated driver frequented to Pabbi tehsil by covering five kilometer distance in Ramazan to fill three gallons of clean drinking water from Tehsil Municipal Administration Office to meet his family Aftar and Sehri's needs. "The ground water of my village had become unfit for drinking after the 2022 flash floods in River Kabul, leaving him with no other option but to bring clean drinking water from TMA Office by spending my hard

earned money on fuel," he told APP while loading water gallons in his car.

"The water of my village is so unhealthy that a person could hardly drinking one glass during Sehri," he said, adding the issue was raised with local politicians and elected lawmakrs on several occasions but unresolved so far. "Provision of clean drinking water is a basic right of people and responsibility of the Governments. I have only one demand of PTI led Govt to provide us clean drinking water," he said.

Like Shah Gee, most of the residents of nearby villages including Bara Banda, Aman Kot, Mohib Banda, Chowki Darab and Dheri Mian Ishaq are seen bringing potable water from tehsil Pabbi, Nowshera and Peshawar. The water situation would worsen in future especially in Nowshera, Peshawar and Charsadda districts due to persistent threats of floods in Rivers Kabul and Swat owing to climate change and global

warming induced weather challenges.

Gulzar Rehman, former Conservator Forests KP said that climate change induced weather patterns including droughts, rains and desertification have started adverse impact on the groundwater aquifers in the region including Pakistan. He said that about 97% of the planet's liquid fresh water is stored in aquifers worldwide, adding the major aquifers that are tapped on every continent including Asia are providing drinking water to more than 1.5 billion people.

Despite of having Indus River being the lifeline of Pakistan and over 5,000 largest glaciers, water shortage is posing serious challenges to agriculture, livestock and fish farming. "Nearly 97% of water is used for agriculture, and the remaining 3% is utilized for domestic, industrial and other purposes and this insecurity keeps on lingering due to mismanagement of water. The National Water Policy 2018 has revealed that the per

capita surface water availability declined from 5,260 cubic meters per year in 1951 to around 1000 cubic meters in 2016 and this quantity is likely to further drop to about 860 cubic meters by 2025, marking our transition from a water stressed to a water scarce country.

As per the policy, the minimum water requirement to avoid food and health implication of water scarcity is 1000 cubic meters per capita per year. This situation calls for rapid development and management of the country water resources on war footing basis. He claimed that every year about seven million acre feet of water was lost to the sea due to lack of water reservoirs, adding the water table is under threat due to excessive use of clean drinking water by car washing centres and demanded of regulating such unchecked business inevitable to protect water aquifers for generation to come.

He claimed that China and India

had built 22,000 and 4500 small, medium and big dams respectively but Pakistan has comparatively constructed very least number of dams despite having huge hydro water's potential stretched from Himalaya mountains to Karakorum and Hindukash regions. Wapda authorities told APP here that 108MW Golen Gol Dam in Chitral completed and work on Mohmand Dam of 800MW with 1.293MAF water storage capacity expedited. On completion of Mohmand dam on River Swat, about 160,000 acres land and about 18,237 acres of new land with annual benefits of Rs2.23 billion would be achieved.

Likewise, 300 million gallons water per day will also be provided to Peshawar for drinking purpose with benefits of Rs957 million from Mohmand Dam. To address problems of clean drinking and rehabilitate water supply schemes in major cities of KP, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cities

Improvement Project (KPCIP) was launched at Peshawar, Mardan, Kohat, Abbottabad, and Mingora Swat.

KPCIP was funded by the Asian Development Bank and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. The project was designed to counter climate change, depleting groundwater levels, and increasing waterborne health concerns. Under the Swat greater water supply scheme, water from river Swat would be treated and supplied to the residents of Mingora city. Additionally, streams and springs' water to be channelled to a treatment plant near Choonia in Abbottabad and the treated water would be distributed through an extensive network of pipelines. The experts underlined the need for establishment of groundwater authorities at provincial level and regulating of the care washing stations to save the precious commodity for future generation.





## In brief

### 80 arrested in Kohat F.P. Report

KOHAT: Launching a crackdown, Kohat Police has arrested 80 persons for extracting gold from Indus River. According to police, 80 people who were extracting gold illegally were arrested during operations. Machinery and other equipment used in mining were also seized. The action was taken by SHO Gumbat Riaz Hussain and his police team in collaboration with the Minerals Department.

### Girl gang raped in Mian Channu

MIAN CHANNU (INP): A girl was gang raped by a group of wicked youth who fled leaving her by roadside after her condition deteriorated. According to details, a girl was found unconscious by roadside at Pul Gharat area of Mian Channu. The girl was shifted to hospital where medical report proved that the girl was gang raped after being intoxicated. The police registered a case into the incident and arrested two accused while raids were being conducted to arrest others.

### DIG Prisons visits District Jail

SARGODHA (INP): Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Prisons Sargodha Region Saeedullah Gondal said on Friday that the provincial government was striving to ensure the maximum facilities to prisoners through jail reforms. During a visit to the District Jail Shahpur, he said the provincial government had initiated different projects to bring about a positive change in lives of prisoners after completion of their imprisonment period. Later on, the DIG also visited barracks, kitchen and hospital of the jail, and directed officers concerned to ensure good quality food for prisoners.

### Police bust major drug ring

BAHAWALNAGAR (INP): Police apprehended 23 suspects and seized a large cache of illegal narcotics and liquor across various locations within the district. According to police official on Friday, The raid, led by DPO Bahawalnagar, netted a substantial haul, including 13 kilograms of various narcotics like hashish, opium, and ice. Additionally, a staggering 560 liters of liquor and four operational drug furnaces, valued at hundreds of thousands of rupees, were confiscated. The success of the operation resulted in the registration of 23 separate cases at different police stations across Bahawalnagar, including Police Station City A Division, Police Station City B Division, and Police Station Sadar. Praising his team's efforts, DPO Khan emphasized the importance of tightening the grip on drug trafficking in the district. He vowed to continue such operations to dismantle the drug trade and ensure the safety of the Bahawalnagar community.

### Girl's academy inaugurated F.P. Report

WANA: Wana Welfare Association (WWA) laid the foundation stone of Sophia Noor Girls Academy for the first time in the history of Waziristan. The foundation stone of girl's academy was laid by Additional Deputy Commissioner Kashmir Khan and WWA President Rehmatullah Wazir, on Friday. Another name for WWA welfare organization is service of deprived masses. ADC lower Waziristan said this while addressing as the chief guest at the opening ceremony of the academy.



KOHAT: Students holding banners and placards during a rally in connection with International Water Day.

## Plantation drive kicks off on forests int'l day

### F.P. Report

BANNU: The Implementation Support Unit Directorate of Elementary and Secondary Education government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa formally kicked off plantation drive in the government schools (Boys and Girls) of District BANNU with the technical and financial support from UNICEF.

In this regard an inauguration function was held at the Government Girls Primary School Shah Jehan Shah and Government Primary School Ajmal Barlashti Daud Shah. The event was graced by the District Education Officer Female Miss Sabira Parveen Bannu and ADEO Male Mohammad Riaz Khan along with school teachers, school's children, PTC members and elders of the locality.

The District Forest department representative oriented the school children on importance of plantation and their role in climate change adaptation. The



children were guided how to dig holes, their size and depths for plantation. The children planted different types of plants in the school premises and adjacent to the school.

The event was followed by awareness walk regarding Enrollment Drive 2024-25. Miss Sabira Perveen District Education Officer Female participated as Chief Guest of the event

while, Mr. Moham Riaz Assistant District education officer male Bannu, Assistant District Forest Officer participated as Guest of honor, District Focal Person, SDEOs, ADEOs, ISU-DoE&SE KP field staff, PTC members, notables of the area, officials from administration and school children participated holding play cards, banners, and Flash Cards.

## Students hold walk in connection with March 23

### F.P. Report

LARKANA: Government Pilot Higher Secondary School, an ancient educational institution of Larkana city, took out a rally yesterday, March 23, in connection with Pakistan Day by hoisting national flags inside the school, which reached the Statue of Democracy (Shahr Benazir) intersection through different roads of the city.

On this occasion, school principal Prof. Zahid Hussain Halio, Vice Principal Mumtaz Ali Shahani along with the leaders of Gusta, Siddhir Ahmed Sheikh, Dildar Ali Chandio, Muhammad Umar Dayo, Nazir Ali Jagirani and teachers shed light on the resolution of Pakistan Day and the services of Pakistan Army. On this occasion, school students also participated in the rally in large numbers with banners in their hands.

Police held three culprits: Police arrested three alleged culprits from different areas of Larkana while recovered two pistols, hashish, 05 stolen valuable mobile phones and a stolen motorcycle from their possession. The alleged culprits identi-

fied as Mubeen Jatoti and Mohammad Waris Jatoti while arrested along with two unlicensed pistols and bullets from the limits of Dari police station, while accused Babar Brohi has been arrested along with charas and cases have been registered.

On the other hand, 01 stolen motorcycle and 05 valuable mobile phones have been recovered during the ongoing operations against the criminals in Ratodero police station.

The recovered motorcycle has been handed over to the original owner Tanauallah Sunani and mobile phones to citizens Sajjad Solangi, Anayatullah Ghangharu and Abdul Karim Jalbani and others. On the successful operations of Larkana Police, SSP Larkana Mir Rohal Khan Khoso Sahib issued congratulatory messages to the concerned police teams.

Meanwhile, on the special instructions of the Vice Chancellor of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Medical University, Larkana, Prof. Dr. Nusrat Shah, with the joint support of Chandka Medical College, Green Youth Club and Forest Department,

Chandka Medical College, Larkana, organized a planting week in relation to spring. Inauguration was organized, vigilance walk was arranged, vigilance walk about the importance of tree planting started from the administration block of Chandka Medical and ended at Muk Gate of Chandka, later the opening ceremony was held. Zamir Ahmed Soomro said, in Islam kindness is rewarded and trees are a great favor to our life because trees are the reason for our existence.

Life can also be in danger, he said that for the first time we have established a nursery in Chandka Medical College, Vice Principal Chandka Professor Dr. Shahid Hussain Soomro said that trees are the only support to protect against the rapidly increasing environmental pollution. They are friendly to the environment, so we also need to establish friendship with trees, the focal person of Higher Education Commission Green Youth Moment Club, Dr. Fahad Gibran Syal said, trees are not only a cause of beauty, but this is also an act of charity.

## Defeated PML-N leaders hesitant to contest by-polls

FAISALABAD (INP): Four political heavyweights of the PML-N, who had lost their seats in the general elections held on February 8, are now also out of the race for five National Assembly and Punjab Assembly seats from Lahore for which by-elections are due to be held due to their lack of interest.

According to media reports, the party leaders, who are now out of electoral politics, are Rana Sanaullah, Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, Khawaja Saad Rafique, Mian Javed Latif. All these leaders did not file their nomination papers for the by-polls. On the other hand, former PML-N MNA Ali Pervaiz Malik is a strong party candidate from NA-119.

Similarly, a by-election would also be held for PP-147, the seat won by former Punjab chief minister Hamza Shehbaz in the recently held elections. The name of Chaudhry Shehbaz is under consideration by the PML-N to contest the election for the seat. Likewise, a by-election will be held for PP-149, a seat won by IPP President Abdul Aleem Khan.

Another party leader Shoaib Siddiqui will contest the election from that constituency. Similarly, the PML-N has fielded Rao Shahabuddin from PP-158, Chaudhry Nawaz Chadhar from PP-164. The name of Chaudhry Shehbaz is under consideration by the PML-N to contest the election for the seat. Likewise, a by-election will be held for PP-149, a seat won by IPP President Abdul Aleem Khan. Another party leader Shoaib Siddiqui will contest the election from that constituency. Similarly, the PML-N has fielded Rao Shahabuddin from PP-158, Chaudhry Nawaz Chadhar from PP-164.

## Two robbers killed

ROJHAN (INP): Two robbers of notorious Dolani gang were killed while a policeman was injured in exchange of fire here on Friday.

The police launched crackdown against robbers in Kachha area of Khairpur Bambl to arrest wanted criminals. An intense exchange of fire took place between police and robbers in which one two notorious robbers were killed and a cop was injured.

## World Water Day observed High time for water conservation

### F.P. Report

MARDAN: World Water Day is observed in Mardan to raise awareness in order to motivate and mobilize the citizens to conserve water. Water and sanitation services company Mardan (WSSCM), along with Human Development Foundation (HDF) and Alkhidmat Foundation jointly organized walk on World Water Day in which people from different walks of life participated.

The main objective of the walk was to raise public awareness about water conservation, safe drinking water and sanitation systems. WSSCM Assistant Manager Water Supply Ikramullah, Payroll Officer Asad Hussain, Media Officer Junaid Khan Yousafzai, Social Mobilizer Sajjad Ahmad, HDF Officer Muhammad Iqbal, Abid Khan and Alkhidmat Foundations clean water incharge Bilal Asghar, Sohail Babar Rahi and Shehbaz Amir Baramkhel led the walk.

The speakers said in Pakistan 22.1 million people have no access to water while 15.5 million people are living without sanitation services and 4.5 million have no access to hygiene service. The day reminds people of taking action to conserve water and change their habits while using water.

The speakers said by using safe water we can reduce the budget of health. They said that every member of the society should play their role in cleaning the environment and water safety. Speakers said due to poor sanitation practices, human waste contaminates water resources by getting into rivers, lakes, and soil. 79 million people in Pakistan lack of decent sanitation and about 92pc of the wastewater is untreated and goes directly to water bodies.

Water reservoirs are rapidly depleting but we are still not taking serious steps to prevent water wastage which is a matter of concern. The Speakers stated that three lac and fifteen thousand children died every year due to poor sanitation. Thirty-eight workers die every hour from a disease

caused by lack of sanitation. In 1951, Pakistan had five thousand cubic meters water available for every citizen, while in 2016, one thousand cubic meters of water is available for every citizen.

Assistant Manager Water Supply Ikramullah said that wsscm is providing safe drinking water to five thousands households in ten union councils of Mardan city while in fourteen uc's wsscm provide sanitation services.

**Admn confiscates adulterated milk:** On the special instructions of Deputy Commissioner Mardan Fayaz Khan Sherpao, a campaign is going on in Mardan against peddlers and adulterers. In this regard, Additional Assistant Commissioner Headquarters Junaid Khalid along with Halal Food Authority took actions against the milk sellers in Mardan and other different areas.

On this occasion, Additional Assistant Commissioner collected samples of milk from many shops and conducted tests on the spot as a result of the test, the shopkeepers whose milk was found to have excessive water content were fined heavily and the milk was wasted on the spot.

Additional Assistant Commissioner Khula Haqdar, along with the Halal Food Authority, cracked down on the high street vendors and price violators in Mir Afzal Khan Bazar, Pakistan Chowk, Khawaja Gunj Bazar and Sabzi Mandi.

A number of shopkeepers were arrested for openly selling poor and substandard spices in the markets by mixing red chillies, turmeric, hot spices, turmeric, dry coriander, black pepper and other spices with dangerous chemical color and rice straw. Meanwhile, on the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Mardan Fayaz Khan Sherpao, Additional Assistant Commissioner Kamran Khan supervised the bidding process in the vegetable market. The Additional Assistant Commissioner issued the official price list under his supervision after the bidding. The purpose of monitoring the bidding process is to control artificial bidding.

## Nowruz Festival celebrated across Sindh

### F.P. Report

THATTA: The people in different areas of Sindh celebrated the festival of Nowruz with traditional fervor. Different events were held in Thatta, Sujawal, Hyderabad and Badin after Iftar to mark the centuries old festival. The historic festival traces its roots some 3000 year back that marks first day of Persian new year and celebrated as the national festival of Persia. President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif extended felicitations and best wishes on the eve of Iranian new year.

Noted historian Dr Muhammad Ali Manjhi while talking to this correspondent shared historical significance of Nowruz in Sindh. He said that Persian language as well as culture left its impact on Sindh

language and culture during the 17th and 18th century and during that period Nowruz was also celebrated in some areas of Sindh. "Some historians believe that Nowruz had also been celebrated during the regime of Alexander the great in Persia"; he noted adding that Nowruz had been celebrated in Karachi, Fateh Shah a locality near Thatta and Ameer Peer during the 18th and 19th century.

The historian mentioned that there is a strong evidence in the history that during the Sommo and Turkhan rule the festival attained special status in Sindh. An Iranian King Jalaluddin Malikshah started Celebrating this festival on 21st March since then it has been celebrated on this date. This festival is celebrated in different parts of the world mainly Central Asian countries.

The forte of Nowruz is that it is celebrated in a traditional fervor in different parts of the world that doubles the importance of this festival. The festivities of Nowruz reflect the renewal of the Earth that occurs with the coming of spring. Activities that celebrate the arrival of Nowruz share many similarities with other spring festivals such as Easter, celebrated by Christians, and the Egyptian holiday called Sham Al-Naseem, which dates back to the time of the Pharaohs.

Like other countries of the world, the festival is celebrated in Pakistan as well particularly in the northern part of the country. Jashn-e-Nowruz is celebrated every year across Gilgit Baltistan. The ancient festival gives the message of peace, unity, progress and change.

## Admn plants 0.4m saplings

### F.P. Report

ATTOK: Deputy Commissioner Rao Atif Raza while planting a sampling on the International Forest Day here in Attock has said that people should play their active role to make tree plantation drive a successful event in order to maintain natural environment for their next generation.

He was expressing these views while addressing various events on the occasion of the International Forest Day. DC was accompanied by Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue Waqas Aslam Marth, Assistant Commissioner Humira Shah, Divisional Forest Officer Ashfaq Bashir Batha, CEO Education Sajida Mukhtar, Principal

Graduate College Javed Siddiqui, Deputy Director Colleges Arshad Khan, Admin Officer Sardar Zaheer Ahmad Khan, Population Officer Zafar Iqbal Rahmani, Shehzad Niazi, Deputy Director Public Relations at Directorate General of Public Relations and other officers were also present.

## 23rd March: A historic day reminds Muslims' heroic struggle

PESHAWAR (APP): Faced with endless disparity, inequality and discrimination in that era of darkness and oppression, the Muslims who ruled Indo-Pakistan subcontinent for nearly 800 years, were pushed to the wall by the colonial masters as they considered them arch rival after the failure of the War of Independence 1857.

Deprived Muslims of all kinds of political, economic, human rights and liberties, the colonial masters who grabbed power under the guise of East India Company after overthrowing last Mughal Ruler Bahadar Shah Zafar started tilted towards socioeconomic, political and educational empowerment of the Hindus.

This great injustice has further increased the intellectual, political and educational decay of the Muslims after they were almost out of government jobs, education, civil and military services. During that era of darkness and oppression, the Muslims were given a new hope and direction by the renowned educationist and political thinker, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, who instilled a new hope, direction and dynamism among

oppressed Muslims following an inspirational teaching of the great religious leaders, Mojaddad Alf Sani and Shah Waliullah.

Brought about an intellectual revolution among the Muslims through educational, political and social reforms, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan on one side nullified the malicious propaganda of the colonial rulers, Hindus viz a viz pessimist forces and brought Muslims of British India out of the ominous and oppression on the other side besides enabling them to regain their past glory.

The All India Muhammadan Educational Conference (AIMEC) Aligarh founded by Sir Syed in 1886 had empowered the Muslims with modern education, socio-economic development and political unity, helping them to gain ground in that era of hatred and pessimism. The network of educational institutions, political and social unity under AIMEC had significantly enabled millions of Muslims soon to compete with other communities including Hindus and provided a launching pad for Muslims to initiate a peaceful political and democratic struggle for a separate homeland in the subcontinent.

Muhammad Youas Khan, Chairman, Political Science Department, Islamia College Peshawar told APP that Sir Syed had broken the British-Hindu nexus after its goal-oriented multi-sectoral reforms that excelled followers of Islam in education, social, economic and political sciences, resultantly their voices were strongly heard.

He said the foundation of All India Muslim League (AIML) on December 30, 1906 in Dhaka had united Muslims by giving new impetus to the independence movement for Pakistan. "The freedom movement had witnessed further momentum after Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah spearheaded it after formally joining AIML in 1913 and outlining of an independent state for Muslims majority provinces in North Western India by the great poet-philosopher Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal during historic Allahabad's address in 1930.

Thus, Dr Allama Muhammad Iqbal became the first politician to articulate the two-nation theory that Muslims were a distinct nation and deserved political independence from other regions and communities of the

united India.

"Pakistan movement had passed through different phases and finally achieved its practical shape in 1933 during a high-level gathering in London where Chaudhary Rehmat Ali presented the name of Pakistan," he said. Recalling Rehmat Ali's famous saying 'now or never or perish forever,' he said the two former students, Aslam Khattak and Inayatullah Khan of Charsadda along with other Muslims leaders endorsed the name of Pakistan.

"Pakistan's name and Allahabad's historic address had set a clear direction to the Muslims to achieve Pakistan." Under the dynamic leadership of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, millions of Muslims assembled at Iqbal Park in Lahore on March 23, 1940 where they passed the historic Pakistan's Resolution.

Following the adoption of the Pakistan Resolution, Quaid-i-Azam reorganized AIML on modern lines and made repeated visits to all Muslims majority provinces including KP (earlier called NWFP) to mobilize masses for Pakistan. Committed to the noble cause, the legendary Quaid received a historic wel-

come when he visited Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamia College Peshawar (ICP) in 1945 where a sea of people arrived to see a few glimpses of their beloved leader.

Yousaf said that it was the love of the people of KP with the great Quaid that AIML secured over 50 seats in the province during 1946 elections, rejected Congress and after that historic victory, nobody could stop the independence movement from this province. Finally, Pakistan came into being on August 14, 1947 on the world map within seven years after the adoption of the Pakistan Resolution on March 23, 1940.

"The Pakistan Movement's history could not be completed without mentioning the historic role of Islamia College Peshawar's (ICP) students," he said, adding the legendary Quaid visited ICP in 1936, 1945 and 1948 to acknowledge the outstanding role of its students during the Pakistan Movement. On April 12, 1948, Quaid-i-Azam visited ICP as the first Governor General of Pakistan where he presented glowing tributes to the services of its students towards making Pakistan in these words, "I am indeed very happy to be

present here today and to have the privilege of addressing students of this great Darul Uloom, who are the future builders of Pakistan. Remember your government is like your own garden. Your garden flourishes by the way you look after it and the efforts that you put towards its improvement. Similarly, your government can only flourish by your patriotic, honest and constructive efforts to improve it."

He wished to construct a university near ICP that was fulfilled by the government within a gap of one year by establishing University of Peshawar in 1949. The Quaid had an immense love for tribesmen of merged tribal districts (Erstwhile FATA) for their strong commitment, loyalty, sacrifices and consistent support during the Pakistan movement acknowledged by him during his address at Grand Tribal Jira at Governor House, Peshawar on April 17, 1948.

He laid great emphasis on education and socio-economic development of tribesmen and considered technical education, science and technology as prerequisites for attaining goals of sustained development and economic prosperity.





## Russia's space agency aborts launch of three astronauts



MOSCOW (AP): Russia aborted the launch of three astronauts to the International Space Station moments before they were scheduled to lift off, but the crew was safe, officials said. The Russian Soyuz rocket was to carry NASA astronaut Tracy Dyson, Oleg Novitsky of Roscosmos and Marina Vasilievskaya of Belarus from the Russian-leased Baikonur launch facility in Kazakhstan.

The launch was aborted by an automatic safety system about 20 seconds before the scheduled liftoff at 1321 GMT. Russia's Roscosmos space corporation and NASA said the crew was safe, and Roscosmos chief Yuri Borisov said the next launch attempt is set for Saturday. Borisov told reporters that experts quickly pinpointed the cause of the launch abort, saying it was triggered by a voltage drop in a power source

The space station, which has served as a symbol of post-Cold War international cooperation, is now one of the last remaining areas of collaboration between Russia and the West amid tensions over Moscow's military action in Ukraine. NASA and its partners hope to continue operating the orbiting outpost until 2030. For Dyson, it was to be her third trip to the orbital complex, where she was due to spend six months. Novitsky, who was to make his fourth flight to the orbiting outpost, and

Vasilievskaya, on her first space mission as her country's first astronaut, were set to return to Earth after spending 12 days in orbit. The three astronauts were to join the station's crew consisting of NASA astronauts Loral O'Hara, Matthew Dominick, Mike Barratt, and Jeanette Epps, as well as Roscosmos cosmonauts Oleg Kononenko, Nikolai Chub, and Alexander Grebenkin.

Russia has continued to rely on modified versions of Soviet-designed rockets for commercial satellites, as well as crews and cargo to the space station. While the crew wasn't in danger, aborted launch was a significant mishap for the Russian space program. It followed an Oct'ber 2018 launch failure, when a Soyuz rocket carrying NASA astronaut Nick Hague and Roscosmos' Alexei Ovchinin to the International Space Station failed less than two minutes after the blastoff, sending their rescue capsule into a steep dive back to a safe landing.

Hague and Ovchinin had a brief period of weightlessness when the capsule separated from the malfunctioning Soyuz rocket at an altitude of about 50 kilometers (31 miles), then endured gravitational forces of 6-7 times more than is felt on Earth as they came down at a sharper-than-normal angle. The 2018 launch failure was the first such accident for Russia's manned program in over three decades.

## Hungary, Slovakia oppose sending of arms to Ukraine

PRAGUE (AP): Four Central European countries remain deeply divided over how to resolve Russia's war against Ukraine, their foreign ministers said. The foreign ministers from the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia met and discussed a Czech plan to acquire ammunition that Ukraine badly needs from third countries outside the European Union.

"It's necessary to boost support for Ukraine in all areas including military assistance," Czech Foreign Minister Jan Lipavsky said. Under the plan, the Czechs seek to obtain 800,000 artillery shells for Ukraine. Czech leaders previously said the first shells should be delivered to Ukraine no later than June. At least 18 countries have joined the initiative, Czech leaders have previously said. Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski called the Czech plan an "excellent idea."

"We're very happy to contribute," he said. Sikorski said Poland would contribute funds as well as help deliver the ammunition to the front. But the foreign ministers of Hungary and Slovakia said they are not ready to change their strict refusal to provide arms to Ukraine. "Hungary has not and will not send any weapons to Ukraine," Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto said. Slovakia's view has not changed because "the conflict does not have a military solution," its foreign minister, Juraj Blunar, said.

## Record number of UK children in poverty

LONDON (AFP): More children are living in poverty across the United Kingdom than ever before, according to official government figures released. Previous studies have shown that growing social inequalities in the G7 nation have hit children's health and rising numbers are forced to use food banks.

An estimated 4.33 million children were living in low-income households for the year to March 2023, the figures compiled by the Work and Pensions department showed. That was up from 4.22 million the previous year and is above the high of 4.28 million recorded for the 12 months to March 2020. "Today 4.3 million children are being failed. It is an outrage that 100,000 more children are in poverty. They are being forgotten," said Meghan Meek-O'Connor, of the charity Save the Children. A household is considered to be in relative poverty if it is below 60 percent of the median income after housing costs. The estimated total number of people in relative low income was at 14.35 million, down from 14.40 million the previous year, according to the figures.

The figures though showed a rise in absolute poverty -- another metric -- for the second year in a row, according to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF). Some 600,000 more people, half of them children, were living in absolute poverty compared to the year before -- a total of almost 12 million people. "The annual poverty figures published today confirm that the government failed to protect the most vulnerable from the cost-of-living crisis," said JRF chief analyst Peter Matejic. He said that the fall in relative poverty was "largely due to the incomes of middle-income households falling, rather than people on the lowest incomes being better off".

The statistics show how steep energy price increases following Russia's invasion of Ukraine pushed more Britons into poverty. The government said the figures came during a period of high inflation and said cost-of-living pressures on many families have now "eased". Work and Pensions Secretary Mel Stride said the "biggest cost of living package in Europe, worth an average of £3,800 per household" had prevented more people from falling into poverty.

## Indonesia's rescue of Rohingya refugees at sea is a reminder

BANGKOK (AP): A dramatic story of survival and rescue off the western coast of Indonesia's Aceh province has put the spotlight again on the plight of ethnic Rohingya Muslim refugees from Myanmar who make extremely dangerous voyages across the Indian Ocean to seek better lives.

Desperate survivors were pulled to safety from their capsized boat by local fishermen, after a yet-unknown number perished. For Rohingya refugees living in squalid refugee camps in Bangladesh, escaping across the seas might seem like a good option --- but it's often a deadly one. The UN estimates that as many as one in eight people die or disappear in the attempt. The UN refugee agency said in January that of 4,500 Rohingyas embarking on sea journeys last year in Southeast Asian waters, 569 were reported dead or missing.

Members of the Muslim Rohingya ethnic minority have long been considered by Myanmar's Buddhist majority to be illegal settlers from Bangladesh, even though many of their families lived in Myanmar for generations. Aside from social discrimination, nearly all have been denied citizenship since 1982, effectively rendering them stateless, and have been denied freedom of movement and other basic rights. In August 2017, Myanmar's military launched what it called a clearance campaign in northern Rakhine State in response to attacks by a shadowy Rohingya insurgent group.

The counterinsurgency action forced about 740,000 Rohingya to flee to neighboring Bangladesh and led to accusations that security forces committed mass rapes, killings and burned thousands of homes. International courts are now considering whether the campaign amounted to genocide. There are now about 1 million Rohingya residing in refugee camps in Bangladesh, including those who fled previous waves of repression. Most live in

large open camps in Cox's Bazar district, close to the border with Myanmar. There is inadequate water, sanitation, and health care in the overcrowded camps, which are susceptible to fire, flood and outbreaks of disease. There are few opportunities for meaningful work and violent criminal gangs operate unhindered..

A second major camp set up on the remote island of Bhasan Char in the Bay of Bengal houses about 30,000 refugees. It was supposed to help ease the overcrowding at Cox's Bazar, but critics say its housing resembles prison blocks, heightening an already dispiriting dead-end atmosphere, and it is vulnerable to flooding. An estimated 600,000 Rohingya still live in Myanmar, most in camps for internally displaced people or tightly restricted ghettos. Social and economic pressures convince some Rohingya living in camps in Myanmar as well as Bangladesh to embark on the dangerous sea voyage to Malaysia or Indonesia, which have Muslim majority populations. The suffer from a lack of economic opportunity, as well as unhealthy physical and psychological conditions in the camps. Because the majority of Rohingya refugees are stateless, they have no legal hope of resettlement.

The modest job opportunities they believe await them elsewhere are a strong attraction, and in some cases they can get help from relatives who have already started new lives abroad. But they are often exploited by human traffickers who charge extortionate amounts - anywhere from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars - to make the crossing on ramshackle boats with little concern for safety. In some cases, the traffickers deliver the refugees to confederates who trap them into jobs of virtual slavery.

The voyages can take weeks or even months on vessels without adequate supplies of food, water, and safety equipment. Some never complete the journey. "In a single deadly incident in November 2023, it is

feared that some 200 Rohingya lost their lives when their boat was reported to have sunk in the Andaman Sea," the UN High Commissioner for Refugees said in January. If they are not turned back or lost, the Rohingya refugees usually end up in Thailand, Malaysia or Indonesia.

Thailand tries to discourage refugee landings by offering food, fuel and repairs to send the boats on their way, though if the refugees make landfall they are detained. Malaysia is relatively more welcoming, allowing thousands of Rohingya refugees to disembark over the years. Like Thailand, it is a middle income country and needs low cost labor. Thailand, however, has a bottomless supply of low cost workers from immediate neighbors such as Myanmar and Cambodia, which Malaysia does not, so in Malaysia the Rohingya arrivals can help fill that gap. Indonesia has for many years welcomed Rohingya refugees, providing them with temporary accommodation and allowing them to register for resettlement in third countries, a process that can take years. In the past year, however, there have been signs of resentment in Aceh, where several hundred refugees have occasionally arrived in a single day, sparking protests about them taking advantage of local resources and other complaints.

The negative sentiment has been egged on by apparently coordinated online hate speech campaigns whose origins are unclear. While crises elsewhere around the world garner more attention, the UN continues to seek funds to ease the burdens of the Rohingya refugees and their hosts in Bangladesh. The UN last week launched an appeal to member nations to fund a \$852.4 million plan to provide "food, shelter, health care, access to drinkable water, protection services, education and livelihood opportunities and skills development" to the Rohingya refugees and the communities where their camps are.

## Uganda's leader appoints son as top commander

KAMPALA (AP): Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni appointed his son as top commander of the military, a controversial move in a country where many have long believed Museveni is grooming his eldest child for the presidency.

Museveni's son, Gen. Muhoozi Kainerugaba, has recently been holding rallies around the country, in violation of a law barring serving army officers from engaging in partisan politics. But Kainerugaba says his activities - including the recent launch of an activist group known as the Patriotic League of Uganda - are nonpartisan and aimed at encouraging patriotism among Ugandans.

Kainerugaba was promoted to his new post, according to a military statement. Two of his closest advisors have been given ministerial posts in a reshuffle of government ministers, also announced, fueling speculation that Museveni sup-

ports Kainerugaba's political activities.

Museveni, who first took power by force in 1986 and has been elected six times, has not said when he would retire. He has no rivals within the ruling National Resistance Movement party - the reason many believe the military will have a say in choosing his successor. Kainerugaba's allies are strategically deployed in command positions across the security services, according to observers. Uganda's next presidential election will be held in 2026.

Kainerugaba's supporters say he offers Uganda the opportunity of a peaceful transfer of power in a country that has not had one since independence from British colonial rule in 1962. But opposition leaders, critics and others eager for change say his rise is leading the East African country toward hereditary rule. Kainerugaba joined the

army in the late 1990s, and his rise to the top of the armed forces has been controversial, with critics dubbing it the "Muhoozi Project" to prepare him for the presidency. Museveni and Kainerugaba have long denied the existence of such a scheme, but it appears a transition is underway as Museveni, 79, serves what could be his last term without a recognizable successor within the civilian government.

Kainerugaba has most recently been serving as a senior presidential advisor in charge of special operations, after his father removed him as infantry commander in 2022. At the time, Kainerugaba was responsible for a series of offensive tweets, including an unprovoked one in which he threatened to capture the capital of neighboring Kenya. He has previously served as the commander of an elite group of special forces protecting the first family.

## Kenyan doctors stop providing services

NAIROBI (AP): Kenyan doctors stopped providing emergency services at public hospitals, as they escalated a national strike that entered its second week. Thousands of doctors have stayed away from hospitals over poor pay and working conditions, despite a court order calling for talks between the doctors and the Health Ministry.

Kenya Medical Practitioners Pharmacists and Dentists Union Secretary-General Dr. Davji Bhimji said the doctors escalated the strike and stopped providing bare minimum services because the government had shown no efforts to resolve the

labor dispute. "In the morning, we managed to close the emergency services that were being offered at the Kenyatta national referral hospital," he told journalists. Health Minister Susan Nakhumicha told local television station KTN that she had instructed two top referral hospitals to recruit doctors to replace those taking part in the national strike. "We will not allow a crisis to happen... We cannot afford to have a gap," she said, adding that doctors were offered temporary replacements starting. An Associated Press journalist confirmed that emergency services at the Kenyatta national referral hospital in

the capital, Nairobi, had resumed.

The ministry is due to issue letters to 1,000 medical interns who will be posted in various hospitals across the country. The striking doctors accuse the government of failing to implement a raft of promises, including a collective bargaining agreement signed in 2017 after a 100-day strike that saw people die from lack of care. A meeting between the union, ministry officials and State House officials is also due to be held aimed at resolving the stand-off, which has left thousands of Kenyans without much-needed public health services.

## Slovenia orders Russian diplomat to leave within seven days

LJUBLJANA (AP): A Russian diplomat has been declared persona non grata in Slovenia and ordered to leave the European Union country within seven days, its Foreign Ministry said. Slovenia is expelling the Russian diplomat over "activities incompatible

with the diplomatic status," the ministry said in a statement. It provided no further details.

Slovenia and Russia already have reduced the number of staff working at their embassies in Ljubljana and Moscow. A number of other EU coun-

tries have expelled Russian diplomats since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. Last year, authorities in Slovenia apprehended two Russian spies who used a real estate and antiques agency as a cover for their activities in the Alpine nation.

## Nobel laureates demand release of political prisoners in Belarus

TALLINN, Estonia (AP): In an open letter, 27 Nobel laureates have demanded the release of all political prisoners in Belarus including Ales Bialiatski, the winner of the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize. The Nobel laureates said the situation in Belarus is a "humanitarian catastrophe" and called for an immediate end to political repression in the country of 9.5 million people, which is isolated in Europe but a close ally of neighboring Russia.

"Over the past four years, more than 50,000 people have been subjected to political repression in Belarus, hundreds of thousands of citizens have been forced to leave the country, and thousands of people have been tortured", the open letter signed by the laureates and published online says. They include journalists, academics, doctors, musicians, students and defenders of human rights. Bialiatski, 61, was arrested after an unprece-

dent wave of mass demonstrations against the disputed result of a presidential election in 2020. In 2022, while in custody awaiting trial, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The following year he was convicted of financing actions violating public order and smuggling and sentenced to 10 years in prison. His wife, Natalia Pinchuk, told The Associated Press that Bialiatski has been in solitary confinement for more than six months in conditions she described as "torture." The letter was signed by four Nobel peace laureates including Dmitry Muratov from Russia and Alexandra Matviichuk from Ukraine. It was also signed by literature laureates including Svetlana Alexievich from Belarus as well as 19 others who hold prizes in the fields of physics, chemistry, medicine and economics.

In recent decades, Europe has not seen a

humanitarian catastrophe related to political repression on such a per capita scale as in Belarus," activist Dmitry Bolkonets said in a letter posted on his website. He is in exile in Warsaw. Today there are 1,411 political prisoners behind bars in Belarus, says the human rights group Viasna. The prisoners' families' and rights groups say they are kept in conditions akin to torture and are deprived of medical care. Belarusian authorities have been accused of keeping opposition leaders in complete isolation and of depriving them of communication with their lawyers and relatives. Exiled Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya told AP she has not heard from her imprisoned husband Siarhei Tsikhanouski for more than a year, a form of torture for both of them, she said. For more than a year there also has been no information from opposition activists Viktor

Babaryka, Maria Kolesnikova, Maxim Znakh and Mikola Statkevich. There are reports on almost a daily basis from human rights activists about the arrest of activists, journalists, and lawyers as well as police raids inside Belarus.

The Nobel laureates are calling on all European Union governments to take immediate action to pressure the government of President Alexander Lukashenko to stop the "brutal repression" in Belarus and release all political prisoners. The letter calls on Poland, as Belarus's largest western neighbor, to exert its influence by suspending the rail transport of goods to the EU from Belarus, including shipments in transit from Russia and China. "The commercial interests that European countries have cannot outweigh the issues of their national security and their duty to save innocent people being victimized in Belarus," the letter says.

## Martin Sellner, Austrian far-right activist facing trouble abroad

VIANA (AFP): After his radical ideas led to mass protests, Austrian far-right activist Martin Sellner this week grabbed headlines again, by being deported from neighbouring Switzerland and banned from Germany. In an interview with AFP, he insisted on his clean slate -- "white, like freshly fallen snow" -- and said he would fight against a "severe curtailment of my freedom to work, my freedom of expression and my freedom to travel".

Revelations that he had a meeting with members of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) in Potsdam last November already sparked a huge wave of protests early this year against the far-right party, with tens of thousands attending demonstrations across Germany. One of Sellner's main proposals is that of "remigration," expelling those without Austrian nationality "who are long-term unemployed" or that are living in "unassimilated parallel societies". "I think it's good when ideas about terms like remigration become known," said the

35-year-old, who talks with a reassuring tone, while slamming the press for, he says, creating around him "an aura of demonisation".

"I have never committed an act of violence. I am simply a dissident, author and controversial activist," said Sellner, who released a new book this month on his idea of "remigration". Sellner revealed on X that he has been banned from entering Germany for three years.

This followed his arrest and deportation from Switzerland over the weekend, where police said they prevented a hundred-strong far-right gathering he was due to address. His removal attracted attention online, including from Elon Musk, the billionaire owner of X, who asked "Is this legal?". Sellner, who works as a graphic illustrator and is married to a US conservative political activist and writer, was previously banned from X, then Twitter, but was readmitted earlier this month. Born into a well-to-do family in Vienna, he studied philosophy. In his

youth, he was briefly part of the neo-Nazi scene -- which he now says he regrets. He co-founded the white pride group Austrian Identitarians in 2012, described by Austrian intelligence services as "agents of modern right-wing extremism" and whose symbols were banned in 2021. The group, with hundreds of members before the ban, espoused the far-right "Great Replacement" conspiracy theory according to which white Europeans are being deliberately supplanted by non-white immigrants. They were also known for anti-immigrant stunts in the past, climbing the roofs of buildings or spreading fake blood. In 2021, Austrian prosecutors dropped an inquiry into Sellner over possible links with white supremacist Brenton Tarrant, who in 2019 killed 51 Muslims in attacks on two mosques in the New Zealand city of Christchurch. Sellner came under investigation together with some of his associates when it emerged that in 2018 he had received a donation of

1,500 euros (\$1,600) from Tarrant. Sellner admitted to having had contact with Tarrant on several occasions. Analysts say where-as Sellner's following has dipped in recent years after his links with Tarrant were revealed, his ideas and ideologies have been "seeping into the mainstream" after the mass protests in Germany and as far-right politicians are gaining ground across Europe. "Their topics and their strategies are on everyone's lips, so to say," Judith Goetz, an expert on far-right extremism at the University of Innsbruck, told AFP.

In addition, in Austria, the opposition far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) has espoused their ideas. It is currently the Alpine EU member's leading political force, according to polls, garnering around 30 percent ahead of elections expected in September. The identitarians provide "a useful strategy laboratory" for the FPÖ, according to Kathrin Gloesel, a far-right expert and editor-in-chief of social democratic magazine Kontrast.



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Energy security and Pakistan first slogan

PAKISTAN has once again reaffirmed its commitment to the Pak-Iran gas pipeline project, which has faced severe setbacks from US sanctions against Tehran since day one. Pakistan's Foreign Office Spokesperson Muntaz Zahra Baloch told the reporters that it is the sovereign decision of the government of Pakistan to move forward with the project and there is no room for any discussion or waiver from any third party for the construction of the pipeline inside Pakistan's territory.

Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran signed a multi-billion dollar joint venture to construct a 1931 kilometer-natural gas pipeline in 2013. Iran was to construct an 1150-kilometer pipeline in its territory while Pakistan was responsible for the rest of the 781-kilometer gas pipeline on its soil. Unfortunately, the project faced unlimited delay due to the US sanctions against Tehran and missed several deadlines for its completion over the past decade. Previously, Pakistan expressed its inability to pursue the project until US sanctions on Iran remained in place by issuing a notice of Force Majeure and Excusing Event to Tehran to suspend its contractual obligation on completion of the gas pipeline. Thus, prompting a warning from Tehran to pursue a case for a \$ 20 billion penalty against Islamabad for missing the deadlines set in the accord. Recently, the caretaker government and Cabinet Committee on Energy (CCoE) approved the construction of an 80 km long gas pipeline from the Iran border to Gwadar to meet the country's urgent energy needs through a short-term measure.

Historically, despite stringent US sanctions, Iranian fuel and petrochemical exports have surged in recent years. Several countries including Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and others have been trading oil and natural gas from Iran throughout the past. The average monthly volume of Iran's gas export to these countries is approximately 810 MMcf per day with the majority sent to Turkey under a 25-year contract. Meanwhile, Iran, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan signed a gas swap deal allowing for the exchange of up to 2 billion cubic meters (BCM) per year. Under this agreement, Iran receives gas from Turkmenistan and delivers an equivalent amount to Azerbaijan at the Astara border. Similarly, Russia, the UAE, and India had been procuring Iranian oil and gas directly or through intermediaries in the past. According to analysts, if and when sanctions are lifted against Iran, it is well positioned to expand sales swiftly across Asia and Europe.

Pakistan's energy crisis poses serious predicaments for its feeble economy and highly volatile national security environment. Prolonged power outages almost shut the industries and largely squeezed the economy. The country faces a lack of resources to acquire costly LPG or thermal fuel to generate electricity to meet its urgent needs. Amid such scenarios, the Pak-Iran gas pipeline is a unique opportunity that offers South Asian nation an uninterrupted supply of Iranian gas at special discounted rates which is otherwise impossible. Surprisingly, despite the biting energy crisis over the past decade, Pakistani leaders neither dared to violate the US sanctions nor made concerted efforts to take a waiver from Washington in the best interest of their country.

Unfortunately, Pakistani leaders proved to be more faithful and loyal to the US decree than their national interests and public demand. The matter is largely mishandled by the government by relying on the baboons sitting in the foreign office, who in turn wrote a note verbal to the State Department and waited for a reply over the past several years. Energy insecurity has now become fatal for the economic survival of the country, thus the political leadership must handle the issue themselves by directly conveying Pakistan's case to Secretary Blinken or US President Joseph R. Biden. Pakistan's economic security is paramount and it could not be achieved without the energy security. Pakistan suffered the utmost in subservience to other countries including the US, Afghanistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. It is time to uphold Pakistan first slogan from now onward.

World Water Day - 2024

PAKISTAN and the global community observed World Water Day on March 22nd to emphasize the importance of freshwater resources and their judicial and rightful uses along with justly acknowledging the rights of other communities on shared water reservoirs including ravines and oceans. The global event, initiated by the United Nations, aims to raise awareness about water and its critical role in the lives of all living organisms including humans. Historically, World Water Day serves as a ceremonial occasion to highlight the value of freshwater and advocate for its sustainable management. It draws attention to the 2.2 billion people worldwide who lack access to safe water. The ultimate goal of this global initiative is to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6, which focuses on ensuring water and sanitation for all by 2030.

This year's theme for World Water Day is Leveraging Water for Peace. That recognizes the importance and value of fresh water and that water can be both a tool for peace when communities and countries cooperate, and a source of conflict when access is denied or unfairly shared. The focus is on balancing everyone's needs and making water a catalyst for a more peaceful world. According to the UN statistics, 153 countries share water resources in the world while only 24 have cooperation agreements for distribution of shared water with a few facing serious discrimination at the hands of others.

Historically, Pakistan is one of the countries that has been a victim of water aggression from its staunch enemy which unfortunately sits on the up-riparian of the Indus Water System comprising multiple rivers. It is an open secret that India has not only been violating the globally recognized Indus Water Treaty (IWT) by obstructing and forcefully using Pakistan's share of the water from three western rivers but unlawfully constructed multiple water reservoirs and energy projects on the rivers purely dedicated for Pakistan's use. The Pakistan-India water dispute is a globally recognized issue that has the potential to inflame a nuclear conflict by pushing both nuclear armed states into a full fledged war.

There is a dire need for the United Nations and the global community to accelerate their work together across borders to join hands and implement the United Nations Water Convention, which promotes management of shared water resources sustainably and amicably. The nations around the globe must use water as a tool to promote peace, love and shared prosperity instead of a weapon to harass and desertify other nations in the lower riparian. So, this vital element of human life can easily be made available to all communities across the globe.

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A revolution in way Britain does politics has begun in Devon

George Monbiot

THIS is what democracy looks like: hundreds of people queuing in the rain, seeking to take back control of a political system that treats voters like an afterthought. Last weekend, a remarkable democratic experiment reached its first conclusion. A process that began here in South Devon and is now spreading to other constituencies has allowed voters to reclaim the initiative from centralised and self-interested political parties. It directly confronts our unfair electoral system.

Ours is one of many constituencies in the UK known as "progressive tragedies": places in which most people vote for parties to the left of the Tories but which, thanks to our iniquitous first-past-the-post system, end up with Tory representatives.

The Conservatives have ruled here since 1924, often without majority support.

The Labour and Conservative leaderships conspire to sustain this system, in the hope of absolute majorities. But it works, like other such truncations of democracy (think of our political funding arrangements) much better for the Conservatives than it does for Labour. As Neal Lawson of the democracy campaign Compass argues, of the 11 general elections since 1979, "eight were won by the Conservative party and only three by Labour. But cooperation among progressive parties could have averted all eight Conservative majority governments bar 2015."

Both within the Labour party and in the country at large, there's an urgent desire for a fairer system. Unfortunately, this desire is thwarted by the Labour leadership. The result? As Lawson points out, of the 15 wealthy nations surveyed by the ParGov project, voters in the UK are the most left-leaning, yet suffer the most rightwing governments. Sometimes it seems that Labour strategists would rather possess control than power.

This is not going to change in the near future. All pleas to work for the greater good, even when Jeremy Corbyn was leader,

have been met with stony refusal. As someone well-placed in the party told me, our undemocratic system, and the prospect it offers of gaining an absolute majority, "is like the ring in Lord of the Rings. You know it harms you, but once it's within your grasp, you can't give it up." The simple and brilliant idea of a group of people in the South Devon constituency was to take these decisions out of the hands of the parties and return them to the people.

But, by selecting a common champion, it reduces the chances of letting the Tory back in. Labour, thrown into chaos by the leadership's attempt to control their choice of candidates, has yet to field a contender, so was unable to participate. The party leadership would have blocked its involvement anyway.

The UK's first "people's primary" involved seven meetings held around the constituency. Candidates for progressive or vaguely progressive parties were invited to explain to voters why they would be best placed to evict the Conservative. After each meeting, constituents voted by secret ballot to choose their champion. When the aggregate result was announced, everyone in the constituency could see who other people believed was the most promising challenger.

Without this help, we have to guess other people's voting intentions, and we often guess wrong. The people's primary overcomes the prisoner's dilemma, ensuring we are less likely to waste our vote. The decision the constituents make doesn't prevent the other parties from standing. But, by selecting a common champion, it reduces the chances of letting the Tory back in. Labour, thrown into chaos by the leadership's attempt to control their choice of candidates, has yet to field a contender, so was unable to participate. The party leadership would have

blocked its involvement anyway. Their loss. The Liberal Democrat and Green candidates battled gamely across two weeks of meetings. The Lib Dem, Caroline Voaden, won decisively. So now we know that our best chance of helping to eject the dismal Tory MP is to vote for her.

I chaired the first of these meetings. Tickets sold out two days after they were issued. The questions were searching and pertinent. Whatever the results at the

managers. After the South Devon process had begun, a letter to candidates from the Lib Dem chair in England instructed them: "Under no circumstances are you to take part ... any candidate who ignores this instruction, and participates in a primary, risks having their approved status rescinded and the withdrawal of party support and resources."

The letter revealed an almost comical misunderstanding of what the primary process is and how it is conducted. It claimed that the primary could put candidates in breach of election law on both process and expenses. In reality, the process has been closely scrutinised by the Electoral Commission, and applies a long list of safeguarding rules. The spending (which is very small, as the primaries are created and run by volunteers) takes place before the champion is chosen, so, as the Electoral Commission has confirmed, doesn't eat into the candidates' capped election budgets. Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised by such reactions: any process involving a transfer of control, however beneficial, will be fiercely opposed by those who are losing it. Out of adversity comes better tactics. The Isle of Wight East constituency, after the refusal of both Labour and the Lib Dems to play, is designing a new process that doesn't rely on their involvement.

The primaries won't deliver a perfect system. We'll still be stuck with a centralised and coercive politics, unmatched to the needs of the complex system we call society, based on the illegitimate concepts of presumed consent and remote decision-making. We will properly reclaim that power only when our representative politics are accompanied by participatory and deliberative decision-making. But it's a start: a small, slow revolution in a country whose people have long been deprived of their democratic rights. Enough of command and control. Enough of tricks and truncations. Enough of lies and evasions. While they dissemble, we assemble.

The Guardian

EU looks to increase its defense, Ukraine support against a Bellicose Russia

Lisa Bryant

EUROPEAN Union leaders meet Thursday in Brussels amid growing calls for Europe to drastically ramp up its defense spending and industry, as Russia gains ground in Ukraine and fears grow that Moscow will not stop there if it wins the war. The two-day summit will also address other contentious issues, including the war in Gaza, future EU members, and immigration. But Ukraine and boosting the bloc's defense readiness top the agenda.

Backdropping the meeting is a grim assessment from European Council President Charles Michel, urging EU member states to shift to a "war economy" mode, along with a growing sense that Europe must go it alone, at least for now, as billions of dollars in US aid for Ukraine remains blocked in Congress. "If we do not get the EU's response right,

and do not give Ukraine enough support to stop Russia, we are next," Michel warned in an opinion piece published in European media Monday. "If we want peace, we must prepare for war," he added.

"I think we are finally seeing that the EU is getting serious about defense," Kristi Raik, deputy director for Estonia's International Center for Defense and Security policy center, told BBC's Newshour, reacting to Michel's comments. "There is a real risk that Ukraine might be defeated in this war," she added. "And we all agree in Europe that this means that the threat of war coming to us is actually something real - and we need to prepare for that and prevent that from happening."

The wake-up call is being met with a flurry of proposals. At the summit, EU leaders will consider Michel's suggestion to use

billions of dollars in profits from frozen Russian assets to purchase more weapons for Ukraine. The measure, endorsed by many foreign ministers this week, will require unanimous consent to pass. More than a dozen EU members also signed a letter calling on the European Investment Bank to change its policy on defense investment, to allow items like munitions and weapons. Earlier this week, Brussels approved an additional \$5.4 billion to support Ukraine's military. And more than a dozen European countries have signed up to a Czech initiative to buy artillery shells for Ukraine outside the bloc, as a stopgap to the bloc's lagging production. "Europe is waking up," analyst Raik said.

Calls for sharply ramping up Europe's defense preparedness have long sounded from Raik's Estonia and other EU

member states with proximity to Russia - and bitter memories of the Soviet empire. Now, they are increasingly being echoed by Western ones as well. Last month, French President Emmanuel Macron - who once warned against humiliating Russian President Vladimir Putin - sparked surprise and pushback by suggesting the EU might send Western forces to Ukraine. He stood by that suggestion last week, while noting it was not currently on the table.

Russia's war on Ukraine was "existential for our Europe and France," Macron told French TV, warning a victory by Moscow would mean "we have no security." To have peace in Ukraine, he added, "we must not be weak." Respected French analyst Francois Heisbourg said the shift in Macron's stance began

Australia should adhere to independent China policy to bolster trade

Qin Sheng

FOREIGN Minister Wang Yi's visit to New Zealand and Australia from Sunday to Thursday indicates an improvement in political mutual trust between China and the two countries, especially between China and Australia. Sino-Australian relations have undergone several recalibrations in recent years since former Australian prime minister Scott Morrison took office in 2018.

Due to the Morrison government's anti-China policy, Sino-Australian relations hit rock bottom, with bilateral economic and trade ties suffering a major setback. Bilateral relations took a turn for the better only after Anthony Albanese became Australian prime minister in 2022, particularly after the new government expressed its willingness to improve Sino-Australian relations and vowed to settle the trade issues through talks.

Over the past year, Australian officials, including the prime minister and the foreign minister, have engaged in pragmatic diplomacy, sticking to the principles of mutual respect and win-win cooperation, and respecting China's core interests. Such efforts eased the tensions and guided bilateral ties toward normalization, facilitating the resumption of economic and trade cooperation.

While bilateral trade is returning to normal, and Chinese investment in Australia has been gradually recovering, some trade issues remain to be resolved, including the issue of extra tariffs on Australian wine. But given the risks faced by the global supply chains and the world economy, the sooner the two sides resolve their disputes, the sooner people on the two sides will benefit.

Nevertheless, whether all the trade issues can be resolved depends mainly on Australia's attitude and actions. First, Canberra should treat Chinese enterprises' investment in Australia fairly. This is very important, because the United States has been using national security to view economic issues and has been strictly scrutinizing the activities of Chinese companies. And to counter China, the US has roped in the rest of the Western countries, including Australia, in its anti-China campaigns.

As a result, the normal business activities of Chinese enterprises in Australia, such as mergers and acquisitions, have faced excessive scrutiny in the name of national security, which has dampened the Chinese enterprises' enthusiasm to invest in Australia and impeded the development of Sino-Australian trade. As such, whether Australia can create a fair, transparent and predictable business environment and whether the legitimate interests of Chinese companies in Australia can be protected have become major concerns for the Chinese government.

Second, Australia needs to base its China policy on its own national interests, without allowing the US to hold Sino-Australian trade relations hostage, in order to fulfill its narrow political goals. Since China is Australia's largest trading

partner, and the two countries have a highly complementary economic structure, deeper bilateral trade can bring more tangible benefits to the people on both sides. So despite being an ally of the US, Australia needs to distinguish between its own interests and those of the US. By confusing US-Australia alliance interests as its own national interests, Canberra stands to lose the chance of benefiting from growing China-Australia trade and people-to-people exchanges.

And third, Australia should follow an independent foreign policy. The Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine conflicts have widened the rifts in the international community, giving rise to confrontations and triggering an arms race.

Only by deepening cooperation and avoiding confrontation can differences be resolved and misunderstandings cleared. The development of China-Australia relations over the past 50 years show countries benefit from win-win cooperation, not confrontation. In this regard, the negative effects of the Morrison government's anti-China policy should serve as a reminder to Australia that sticking to a stable China policy and strengthening trade relations are beneficial to Canberra.

Also, China-Australia economic and trade cooperation lags far behind that between China and New Zealand. For example, in 2016, China and New Zealand started talks on upgrading their free trade agreement and signed the Upgrade Protocol in 2021. The upgraded FTA not only promoted the liberalization of bilateral trade and investment but also bolstered the China-New Zealand comprehensive strategic partnership. And during Wang's visit to New Zealand, the two sides pledged to further deepen economic and trade cooperation.

On the other hand, Beijing and Canberra agreed to hold talks to upgrade their FTA in 2017, but the process was stalled due to the Morrison government's anti-China policy. With the emergence of new technologies and new industries, and the rapid growth of the digital economy, China and Australia need to take measures to unleash the full potential of their cooperation.

The two sides, for instance, can deepen cooperation in the fight against climate change, and secure new energy industry chains. Australia can also play a role in China joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, whose membership China has applied for.

Moreover, this year marks the 10th anniversary of the China-Australia comprehensive strategic partnership, thus this is the right time for the two sides to write a new chapter in bilateral relations. With geopolitical competitions, regional conflicts and lack of trust among countries intensifying, Wang's visit to Australia sends a message that Beijing and Canberra are willing to resolve their differences through talks and seek common ground to jointly contribute to regional peace and development.

VOA



# Britain’s prison system is brutal and broken

Simon Jenkins

**G**UESS which public service is hardly ever mentioned in stories about austerity? The answer is prisons. Last week, prison governors were told by the justice minister, Alex Chalk, to send prisoners home two months early to free up cells because 99.7% of prisons were full. He must have been desperate. Imagine hospitals being told to send patients home two weeks early because car parks were full of ambulances. Imagine schools leaving students unattended in classrooms because there weren't enough teachers. For a sign of a society in decay, you need to look no further than our booming prison population.

In 1960, there were 30,000 people in prison in England and Wales and the government of the day declared it "a crisis". In 2000, there were about 60,000; the present total of 85,000 is predicted to rise to up to 105,000 by 2027. The UK as a whole has almost 150 prisoners per 100,000 people; by contrast, Germany has 70 per 100,000. The nation is prison-mad, and has the largest prison population per head in western Europe. The total number was boosted in 2020 when normal sentence remission was reduced from half to a third in what seemed a fatuous bid to "get tough on crime". To that was added 25,000 immigrants and asylum seekers in detention - in effect prisoners awaiting Home Office bureaucracy at the taxpayers' expense. Such is the chaos in the court system that there are also 15,000 prisoners on remand, legally innocent until they are proven guilty. This is not cheap. Prison costs £48,000 a year for each inmate. That is almost the same as

Eton, perhaps a preferable source of rehabilitation.

British penal policy is stuck in the philosophical dark ages and obsessed with retribution rather than rehabilitation. Our prisons are

crime, they promote it.

Overcrowding has made prisons even less able to do their job. Two and even three prisoners are being confined to cells designed for one. Staff shortages mean that they can

*They seem utterly archaic and counter-productive. An estimated half of all prisoners use drugs while inside, and 15% become addicted while in prison. Supply is attributed to families, prisoner gangs and staff. One prison governor admitted to me that drugs were his chief defence against prison violence. Since a third of imprisonments are said to be either directly or indirectly related to Britain's drug laws, it is hard to see if in prison terms these laws are a force for good or evil.*

not havens of recovery, but academies of crime. In a speech last October, Chalk seemed to understand this, saying that prison should not "ruin the redeemable" or turn minor criminals into hardened offenders. Indeed, he wanted to reduce the number of short sentences of under a year on the grounds that 58% of short-sentenced prisoners in Britain reoffend. The rate in Norway, where prisons are devoted to rehabilitation, is 20%. Chalk pointed out that reoffending by convicted Britons on parole or community service was similar to the Norwegian rate. British prisons patently do not cure

be locked up for 22 hours a day and denied exercise, communal contact or rehabilitation. In the year to last September, the suicide rate in prisons rose by a shocking 24%. To visit many prisons - as I used to do - is to feel as Florence Nightingale must have done on visiting Scutari hospital. They seem utterly archaic and counter-productive. An estimated half of all prisoners use drugs while inside, and 15% become addicted while in prison. Supply is attributed to families, prisoner gangs and staff. One prison governor admitted to me that drugs were his chief defence against prison violence.

Since a third of imprisonments are said to be either directly or indirectly related to Britain's drug laws, it is hard to see if in prison terms these laws are a force for good or evil. Clearly the institution of "drug-free wings" in some prisons, where prisoners can recover from drug use, may be the least bad substitute for much-needed addiction centres in the community. But despite the drug-free wing at Hindley prison in Lancashire, more than 52% of prisoners tested positive for drug use on a recent inspection, due to a "near tsunami of drugs". Whatever prisons are doing, they are not stemming drug use.

To those who have followed prisons over the years, the most depressing thing is that, while all agree that penal policy is outdated, reform of any sort seems impossible. When the one-time junior minister Rory Stewart spent a brief few months trying to change prison conditions, he felt a great wall of opposition descend: bureaucracy, the Daily Mail, Tory backbenchers. When Tony Blair peddled his glib cliché, "tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime", no one noticed the omission. He never mentioned the cure.

Britain's prisons fall squarely into that unproductive no man's land of political debate, where whatever one side proposes the other must fiercely oppose. Issues where ideally all sides should agree - once put into the hands of royal commissions - are simply stalled. Whether on parliamentary reform, local taxation or today's definition of extremism, parties seem able to agree on nothing. Such kneejerk partisanship is no longer a check on the executive. It is the enemy of progress.

# Article 23 crucial for HK’s long-term development

Tony Kwok

**H**ONG KONG must remain ever vigilant so it can counter hostile forces trying to hinder the enactment of Article 23. The recent secret visit of US Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns, according to reliable information, to Hong Kong was more than coincidental. There are reasons to believe it was related to the enactment of Article 23.

Simultaneously, there have been unprecedented, coordinated efforts by the Western media to demonize the proposed law, called Safeguarding National Security Bill, by spreading fake news such as Hong Kong would shut down social media platforms or land Hong Kong residents behind bars, which are untrue. The law was passed by the Hong Kong Legislative Council on Tuesday and will become effective on Saturday.

The Western media's blatant interference in Hong Kong's affairs, that too using fake news, is a blatant violation of journalistic ethics and international law. As for the trial of media magnate Lai Chee-ying, it is significant and revealing that the evidence against him primarily comes from several of his former close associates who, after pleading guilty to conspiracy offenses, testified against him in court.

One curious media aberration is that while Lai's trial received extensive coverage in local newspapers, foreign media did not bother to cover its progress, although they had been reporting favorably of Lai's many confrontations with the Hong Kong authorities over the years. They refrained from reporting about all the facts revealed during the trial because they knew their readers and viewers would easily make their own judgment, which would not be to their liking. Unsurprisingly, some local media and the local opposition have coordinated their actions to resist the enactment of Article 23.

Rumors have been circulated on social media, saying people who violated the proposed law would be deported to the Chinese mainland despite the consultation document making it clear that all criminal proceedings related to Article 23 would be held in Hong Kong's courts. Why do the so-called prestigious Western newspapers publish fake reports and act as rumor-mongers? The answer can be found in a recent revelation by Reuters that a special unit was created under the Central Intelligence Agency during Donald Trump's presidency "to launch a clandestine campaign on Chinese media aimed at turning public opinion in China against its government".

And in 2021, the US Congress approved an annual grant of \$300 million to be used to curb China's global influence by supporting US international media to create fake news to demonize China. Given the open threats from hostile foreign powers and their radical cronies in Hong Kong, who are trying their best to exploit any situation to cause havoc in society at this critical juncture, it is only fitting that the Hong Kong government sped up the legislative process for Article 23. While the Western media are criticizing the government's moves to expedite the process, they have conveniently forgotten that after the Sept 11 terrorist attacks in 2001, the US Congress passed the Patriot Act in just 45 days, with the entire legislative process taking only three days to complete and that too with little debate. The Western politicians and media have once again unwittingly revealed their double standard.

But the West's attempts to sabotage Article 23 is doomed to failure, because the traumatic experience of being besieged and attacked by anarchic elements with the help of hostile foreign powers has made Hong Kong residents realize the urgent need for a legislative security umbrella. And Article 23 is that legislative security umbrella - it will ensure there are no more 2019-like protests and violence which threatened even the "one country, two systems" policy. The people of Hong

Kong have become wiser after undergoing an unprecedented ordeal in 2019. No wonder in a "legal consultation survey", 98.6 percent of the over 13,000 respondents supported the enactment. They understand how the new law will plug the loopholes exploited by the rioters and demonstrators in 2019, and know it would contribute to Hong Kong's long-term stability, especially given the central government's recent announcement to extend the "one country, two systems" policy beyond 2047.

Contrary to the claims of some Western politicians and media, the enactment process for the bill was not rushed through. It has undergone public consultation, and many public opinions collected have been taken into consideration before finalizing the bill. A clause-by-clause deliberation followed with the Bills

him or her from acting in any manner prejudicial to Singapore's national security or the maintenance of public order or essential services.

So, how can the West criticize Hong Kong when the law stipulates that a person can be detained for six days on suspicion of committing a national security offense, but it would be subject to a court's approval? It must also be stressed that no innocent Hong Kong resident will be convicted because, like all criminal offenses in the common law system, all national security offenses require establishing the mens rea of a suspect - the intention to commit an illegal act intended to harm national security. Despite the public support it enjoys, we need a contingency plan to deal with the governments of some foreign countries interference after the bill is passed.

Notably the US and the

*It has been delayed for 27 years, which made possible foreign interference in Hong Kong's affairs. Now that the bill is passed, there is a need to be more vigilant, and refute any false and misleading remarks by some foreign and local traditional media as well as social media, and trace their origin and funding sources to hold them accountable under the law. One effective way of doing so is to prepare a comparative chart with the national security offenses and penalties included in Hong Kong's proposed legislation on the one side and those included in similar laws in the United States, the United Kingdom and Singapore on the other. The chart would show that the law is moderate compared with those in Western, advanced countries. For instance, the Internal Security Act 1960 of Singapore grants executive powers to the president to authorize the detention of a person without charge for up to two years (which can be further extended) on the grounds of preventing him or her from acting in any manner prejudicial to Singapore's national security or the maintenance of public order or essential services.*

Committee of the Legislative Council holding 20 marathon sittings. Senior government officials, including the secretaries for justice and security, answered numerous questions from lawmakers and considered their suggestions on issues of public concern. The bill can be seen as striking the right balance between legal enforcement and human rights protection. Hong Kong residents understand that Article 23 is similar to a home alarm system.

The sooner it is installed, the sooner they can guard against burglary. Article 23, which would afford comprehensive legal protection against local and foreign-instigated hostile actions, is long overdue. It has been delayed for 27 years, which made possible foreign interference in Hong Kong's affairs. Now that the bill is passed, there is a need to be more vigilant, and refute any false and misleading remarks by some foreign and local traditional media as well as social media, and trace their origin and funding sources to hold them accountable under the law.

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UK may use this as an excuse to impose sanctions on Chinese enterprises, individuals and other entities, which would throw China's financial market and trading into disarray and deter foreign investors from investing in the country. They have already been using scaremongering tactics to suggest Hong Kong would lose its status as a global financial center after Article 23 is implemented. They might weaponize the US dollar, too, to weaken Hong Kong's status as a global financial and logistics hub, use dirty tricks to cause a slump in the Hong Kong stock market, and impose sanctions on individuals and entities in the SAR.

One thing is sure, the US and Western media, politicians and NGOs are likely to continue spreading rumors against Hong Kong, smearing and attacking the city to deter foreign investment and visitors. Therefore, the SAR government, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority and other monitoring bodies should be vigilant and prepare contingency plans to tackle all eventualities. Intensive publicity campaigns should be launched to raise public awareness and encourage them to report national security offenses. And the authorities should strictly enforce it, just like what the Independent Commission Against Corruption did after the passage of the new anti-corruption law in 1974, and turning it into a strong deterrence against foreign hostile forces. This should be a game changer, helping restore lasting peace and stability in Hong Kong, making it a magnet for investors and visitors alike, and allow the SAR government to focus on economic and social development.

# Brexit doom is wrong again: It didn’t cause recession

Julian Jessop

**T**HE usual suspects have been quick to blame Brexit for the news that the UK ended 2023 in recession. Fortunately, the claim that the economy would still be growing if only we had remained in the EU can easily be debunked.

Just look at the damage that the global energy crisis and higher interest rates has also done to the rest of Europe. The long list of countries where national output (GDP) fell in at least two successive quarters last year includes Austria, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, as well as both Germany and France (on the unrounded data). But even if Brexit was not responsible for the UK recession in the second half of 2023, perhaps it explains the apparent underperformance since 2016? A recent Goldman Sachs study is the latest to argue that UK GDP is already as much as 5 per cent smaller as a result of the vote to leave the EU.

This is in the same ballpark as estimates by John Springford at the

Centre for European Reform (CER), and others who have used a similar approach.

In a nutshell, these studies tend to run a computer algorithm to select a weighted combination of economies whose growth best matched that of the UK before the EU referendum. This actual performance of the UK economy since 2016 is then compared to a synthetic "doppelganger", and the difference taken as a proxy for the impact of Brexit.

The doppelganger models are a sophisticated way to solve the problem of the "counterfactual" - or what might have happened if the UK had not left the EU. They are also widely used in other fields. But I still would not trust them. For a start, using a computer algorithm to remove any potential "biases" in the choice of countries also reduces the scope for judgement about the most sensible benchmark for the UK. My preference is simply to compare UK GDP with that of our peers in the rest of Europe, notably

Germany, France and Italy, or an average of the euro area countries excluding Ireland (whose data are distorted by multinational companies).

On this basis, it is not at all clear that the UK has done much worse since 2016 (even on GDP per head). And if the UK had grown by an extra 5 per cent, we would have far outpaced our EU peers - which is simply implausible.

In contrast, the doppelganger models assume that, without Brexit, the UK would have continued to track a more diverse group of economies that happened to perform similarly in an earlier period - regardless of any other shocks or policy changes. Indeed, the team at Goldman's acknowledged this. In the words of their report, "not all of the UK's underperformance can be attributed to Brexit, as the UK economy might have been more adversely affected by the pandemic and the energy crisis than other countries".

In particular, doppelganger

models typically give a high weight to the US economy, which has benefited from huge fiscal stimulus, energy security, and different policy responses to Covid. The Goldman's economists have tried to get round this in two ways. One is to test the robustness of their doppelganger by tweaking the choice of countries and weights. But this risks defeating the purpose of using a computer algorithm in the first place. The other is to try to replicate the "top-down" results from the bottom up, by thinking through the mechanisms by which Brexit might have harmed the UK economy.

Business uncertainty and trade frictions have surely had some negative impacts, but do not appear to be anywhere near enough to add up to a 5 per cent hit to GDP. We also need to take account of the potential benefits of Brexit. Some will take longer to be realised and may be hard to capture with an elegant model, but the claim that Brexit has condemned us to an extended period of relative decline does not hold water.

# Chinese student deportations sign of shift in policy

Li Yang

**T**HE Chinese Foreign Ministry expressed disappointment and anger after a Chinese student was repatriated back to China from the United States last week. The student's visa was groundlessly revoked after being detained and questioned for more than 20 hours by US border control staff at San Francisco International Airport. This was at least the second time the ministry has responded to similar incidents in two months.

The US out of political purposes has been frequently harassing, interrogating, and deporting Chinese students without just cause since 2019. As Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said at a regular news conference on Friday in Beijing, the acts by the US far exceed the scope of nor-

mal law enforcement and have a strong ideological bias. The US moves seriously infringe on the legitimate and lawful rights and interests of the persons concerned, disturb normal cross-border travel between China and the US and go against the common understandings reached by the two presidents on enhancing and facilitating China-US cultural and people-to-people exchanges. That's why China strongly deplores and firmly opposes this and has made solemn demarches to the US.

The US always portrays itself as being open to US-China cultural and people-to-people exchanges and welcoming Chinese students to study in the US. In fact, as Mao pointed out, the US keeps overstretching the concept of national

security and takes selective, discriminatory and politically motivated law enforcement actions against Chinese students. These actions are essentially driven by the Cold War mentality held by certain people in the US. Washington should realize that its unfair treatment of Chinese students has already prompted many students who plan to study abroad to divert their attention from the US to other developed countries. If it does not change course, the US will lose its appeal to Chinese students and travelers.

That will unavoidably affect the US' interests, as the Chinese students, a major body of international students in the US, are not only a main source of revenue for the country's schools and colleges but

also a key source of foreign talents for US companies, labs and universities. For decades, the US administration pinned high hopes on influencing young Chinese people to regard the US as a friendly and open country, and work for the improvement of Sino-US relations in the future. That the US takes the initiative to turn down the young people from China who look forward to studying in the US would have been unimaginable back then. The only explanation is that Washington has de facto given up its plan of influencing the young Chinese people in that way. So although it still claims that it recognizes the importance of the people-to-people exchanges, its rude treatment of the Chinese students over the past few years is a clearly telling sign of a paradigm shift in its China policy.

# Putin is preparing for nuclear war

Hamish De Bretton-Gordon

**A**NOTHER speech from Vladimir Putin, another threat to press the big red button. In his big 'state of the nation' address to the Russian public - and, by extension the world - the dictator predictably raged against the West, saying that if it dared put troops in Ukraine - as mooted by French President Emmanuel Macron this week - then that will be the red line crossed to trigger nuclear armageddon.

It is true to say that Putin is investing in nuclear technology - perhaps most memorably the charmingly-named 'Satan 2' rocket - and it is also true that he is preparing a much larger arsenal in order to threaten the allies of Ukraine with. So would he actually fire a missile? Fat chance. As so often, he is bluffing - again. Every time in the last two years when things go badly for him, he threatens nuclear attack - but I am yet to see a mushroom cloud over

London, Paris, or Berlin. Anybody with the slightest understanding of nuclear brinkmanship knows he will not - and cannot - use his nuclear weapons. It would be insane for him to do so, ensuring his own annihilation and putting him on a collision course with his own armed forces.

Putin prepares for nuclear war because he knows it frightens cowardly figures in the West to back off. It has worked time and time again throughout this war. The nuclear threat is his trump card. You know things are serious in the West when only the French are speaking sense. Macron's proposition that boots on the ground in Ukraine might be necessary in some extreme circumstances was the sensible thing to say, even if only to may Moscow think twice about how it approaches this war. That's why it was utter madness for the British

and Germans to dismiss the idea out of hand. It shows a lack of strategic thinking and appears to dismiss, or at least side-line, the operational art of war.

This very week 33-years ago, many young tank commanders like me vanquished the illegal Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991 with British, US and French "boots on the ground". It was deemed necessary to do so. Whilst it is extremely unlikely that we would see that in Ukraine - though we must not rule it out - the First Gulf War still offers a 'blueprint' that Ukraine could replicate if we give them the weapons they have asked for. The truth is, by not providing that military support, and by ruling out boots on the ground, the West has ceded the strategic initiative to Moscow.

They can do what they wish with impunity. Presumably, now

Putin knows there is no chance Nato would deploy troops into Ukraine: that will allow him to redouble his efforts to subjugate the country in the knowledge he is safe.

It hands the advantage to the Russian war planners. Instead of restricting their freedom of manoeuvre, we are doing the reverse. Would Napoleon or Wellington have ignored opportunities to confuse their enemies?

There are so many bad things happening at the moment - from the cost-of-living crisis to climate change, to Gaza, to Yemen - but it is nothing compared to the potential of having to fight in and for Ukraine ourselves. If we do not sort it out this year, this is going to drag on and it is going to encompass us all. Putin knows that the nuclear threat is the best way to make us think twice. But we must not allow ourselves to be intimidated. If we do, the outcome for Putin is certain: victory.





# Weekly inflation decline by 1.13 pc

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed a decrease of 1.13 per cent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on March 21, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 323.50 points as compared to 327.21 points during the past week.

As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 29.06 per cent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs. 17,732, decreased by 1.83 per cent and went down to 314.20 points from last week's 320.06 points.

The SPI for consumption groups from Rs. 17,732-22,888, Rs. 22,889-29,517; Rs. 29,518-44,175 and above Rs. 44,175, decreased by 1.64 percent, 1.34 percent, 1.25 and 0.91 percent respectively.

During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 09 (17.65%) items increased, 17 (33.33%) items decreased and 25

(49.02%) items remained stable. The items, which recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included Tomatoes (36.73%), Onions (19.58%), Potatoes (4.02%), Garlic (2.87%), Pulse Mash (1.25%), Wheat Flour (1.02%), Sugar (0.95%), Pulse Masoor (0.86%) and Diesel (0.60%).

The items that recorded an increase in their prices included LPG (1.49%), Shirting (0.74%), Beef (0.53%), Rice Basmati Broken (0.48%), Mutton (0.42%), Mustard Oil (0.40%), Rice Irri 6/9 (0.25%), Powdered Milk (0.14%) and Georgette (0.03%).

On Year-on-Year basis,

the commodities that witnessed decrease included Cooking Oil 5 Litre (21.35%), Vegetable Ghee 2.5 Kg (18.48%), Vegetable Ghee 1 Kg (18.44%), Mustard Oil (13.90%), Bananas (13.52%), Diesel (2.47%) and Cigarettes (0.06%).

The commodities which recorded an increase in their average prices on year-on-year basis included Gas Charges for Q1 (570.00%), Chilies Powder (86.05%), Gents Sponge Chappal (58.05%), Garlic (57.41%), Onions (54.65%), Gents Sandal (53.37%), Gur (39.86%), Sugar (35.01%), Salt Powder (33.29%), Energy Saver (29.83%) and Pulse Mash (27.31%).



ISLAMABAD: Director IsDB Regional Hub Türkiye, Dr. Walid Abdelwahab and Secretary Ministry of Economic Affairs, Dr. Kazim Niaz signing the Agreement.

## Rupee gains 26 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Friday gained 26 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.13 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.39.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs278.2 and Rs280.95, respectively.



23 مارچ یوم قرارداد پاکستان کے موقع پر سب کو دل کی گھر اٹیوں سے مبارک باد



## OGDCL's ESG committee of board reviews progress on policy implementation framework

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Committee of the Board of Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) held a meeting under the chairmanship of Mr. Hassan Mehmood Yousafzai at the OGDCL

Head Office in Islamabad.

The committee discussed the company's ESG policy, Terms of Reference (ToRs) for the ESG committee, and the implementation framework. The committee of the board reviewed progress on the ESG policy implementation framework and discussed the material topics

to be covered in the upcoming OGDCL ESG report for the year 2024. The committee members appreciated the efforts of the Health, Safety, and Environment (HSE) team of OGDCL, emphasizing the importance of ensuring data reliability to uphold transparency in reporting practices.

During the meeting, the

committee members also raised pertinent questions concerning the implementation plan, material topics, outcomes of the process, and the identification of potential gaps.



## PSX stays bearish, loses 265 more points

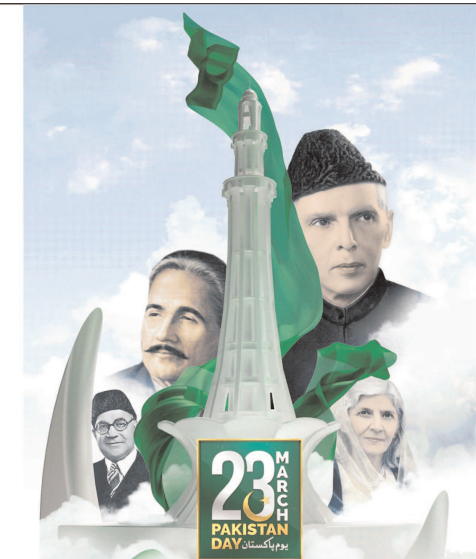
ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bearish trend on Friday, losing 265.57 points, a negative change of 0.41 percent, closing at 65,151.83 points against 65,417.40 points the previous trading day.

A total of 208,408,686 shares valuing Rs.7.149

billion were traded during the day as compared to 389,654,899 shares valuing Rs. 11.307 billion the last day. Some 332 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 120 of them recorded gains and 185 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 27 remained unchanged.

The three top trading

companies were Pak Reinsurance with 24,162,000 shares at Rs.13.08 per share, PIAC(A) with 16,544,000 shares with 25.54 per share and PTCL with 10,930,294 shares at Rs.14.65 per share. Rafhan Maize Products company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.175.00 per share price.



23 مارچ 2024

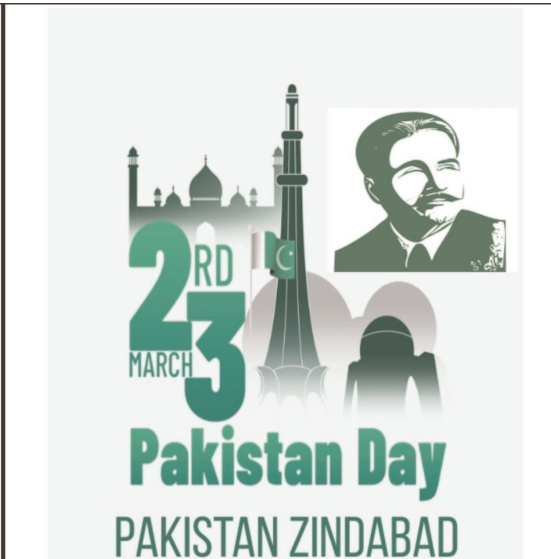
احلیان بونیر کو یوم قرارداد پاکستان مبارک ہو

بچوں کو سکول میں داخل کرائیں اور کانچ پونیورسٹی تک پڑھائیں اپنے گھر ارد گرد کے ماحول اور ملک کو سنوارے بچوں کو پڑھائیں

بچے ہمارا مستقبل ہے پاکستان کا روشن کل ہے

اپنے بچوں کو تعلیم کے زریعہ سے راستہ کریں

منجانب۔۔ افتخار لغنی ضلعی افسر تعلیم مردانہ بونیر



23 مارچ 2024

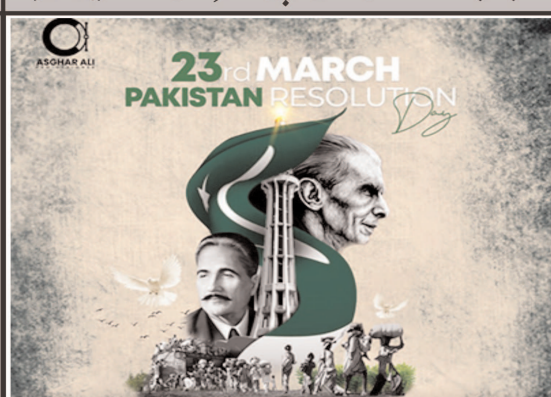
احلیان بونیر کو یوم قرارداد پاکستان مبارک ہو

ضلعی انتظامیہ عوام کو ہر بہت دینے کے لیے کوشاں ہے

تجاوزات سے پاک صاف تھرا سرسبز ماحول پر اپنا تول مناسب خرچ

ادورفت میں اسانیاں سماجی انصاف کی فراہمی میں انتظامیہ کا ساتھ دیں۔ شکریہ

منجانب۔۔ حامد علی خان ڈپٹی کمشنر ضلعی انتظامیہ بونیر



23 مارچ 2024

احلیان بونیر کو یوم قرارداد

پاکستان مبارک ہو

انتخابات میں ساتھ دینے

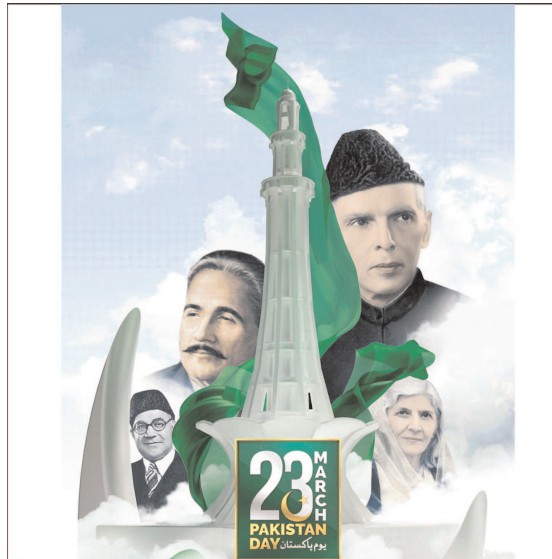
پراپ سب کا شکریہ

بھٹو خاندان کی قربانیاں حب الوطنی اور عوام دوستی متل رہا ہے

اعلیٰ علی زرداری بلاول بھٹو زرداری اور اصف بھٹو زرداری کی قیادت پر فخر ہے

منجانب۔۔ ڈاکٹر اوم پرکاش صدر پی ڈی ایف بونیر

ڈاکٹر سویرا پرکاش سابق امیدوار حلقہ پی کے 25 بونیر



23 مارچ 2024

احلیان بونیر کو یوم قرارداد پاکستان مبارک ہو

ہم تحصیل چغری کے بایسوں کو زندگی کی بنیادی سہولیات کی

فراہمی کے لیے کوشاں ہیں عوام ہمارا ساتھ دیں تاکہ ملکر صاف

ستھرا اور صحت مند ماحول فراہم کیا جاسکے

منجانب۔۔ حاجی شریف خان تحصیل چیئرمین

اختیار حسین باچا تحصیل میونسپل ایڈمنسٹریشن چغری ضلع بونیر



23 مارچ 2024

احلیان بونیر کو یوم قرارداد پاکستان مبارک ہو

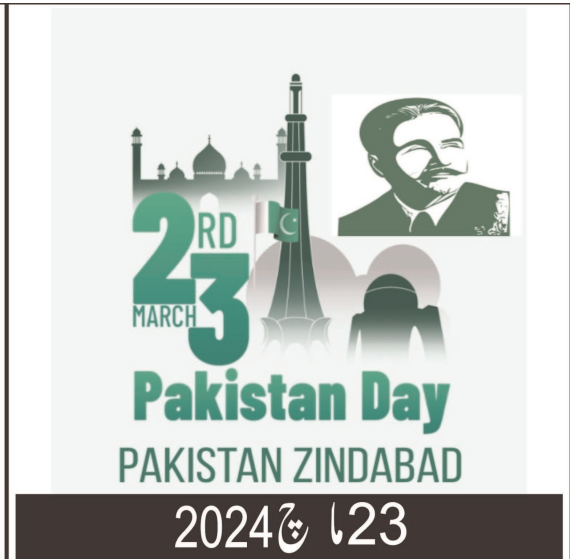
ہم تحصیل ڈگر کے بایسوں کو زندگی کی بنیادی سہولیات کی

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صاف ستھرا اور صحت مند ماحول فراہم کیا جاسکے

منجانب۔۔ حاجی روزی خان تحصیل چیئرمین

افیسر علی خان تحصیل میونسپل ایڈمنسٹریشن ڈگر بونیر



23 مارچ 2024

احلیان بونیر کو یوم قرارداد پاکستان مبارک ہو

ہم تحصیل گدیزی سلاز کی بایسوں کو زندگی کی بنیادی

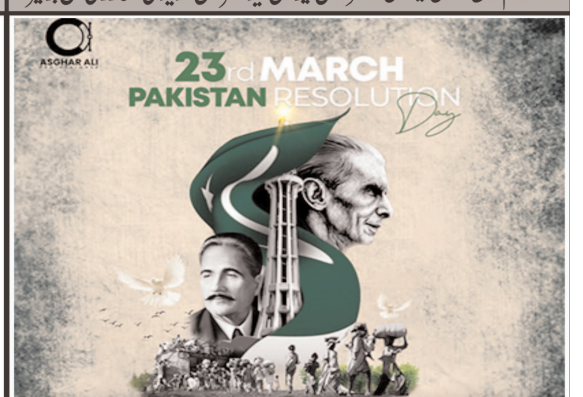
سہولیات کی فراہمی کے لیے کوشاں ہیں

عوام ہمارا ساتھ دیں تاکہ ملکر صاف ستھرا اور صحت مند

ماحول فراہم کیا جاسکے

منجانب۔۔ شیر عالم خان تحصیل چیئرمین

انور شمیم خان تحصیل میونسپل ایڈمنسٹریشن گدیزی سلاز ضلع بونیر



23 مارچ 2024

احلیان بونیر کو یوم قرارداد پاکستان مبارک ہو

ہم تحصیل گاگرہ کے بایسوں کو زندگی کی بنیادی

سہولیات کی فراہمی کے لیے کوشاں ہیں

عوام ہمارا ساتھ دیں تاکہ ملکر صاف ستھرا اور

صحت مند ماحول فراہم کیا جاسکے

منجانب۔۔ حاجی سالار خان تحصیل چیئرمین

میاں قیصر تحصیل میونسپل ایڈمنسٹریشن گاگرہ ضلع بونیر





## In brief

## 'I never refused to play one down'

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan's wicketkeeper batter Mohammad Rizwan has denied reports that he refused to move to the one-down position during the T20I series against New Zealand in January. During an interview with a local news outlet, Rizwan expressed his willingness to adapt to any role for the national team. He is ready to bat at any number, and even ready to relinquish his duties as a wicketkeeper. "I never refused to play one down. When I was asked, I said I am absolutely available," said Rizwan. "I even said that if I am needed for bowling, I am ready for that too. I can even leave my wicket-keeping," he further added. The top-order batter also pointed out that he has batted at almost all the batting positions, which reflects his flexibility to bat at any number. "If you look at my career so far, in 26 matches, I have gone to bat at numbers 7, 8, and 9. No batsman has gone in at number 9, I have," he said. "I cannot say that I will not do this. I was ready before, and I am still ready now." For the unversed, young opening batter Saim Ayub was included in the Pakistan team for the New Zealand series, requiring either Mohammad Rizwan or Babar Azam to move down the batting order to accommodate Ayub. The series saw Rizwan opening with Ayub, while Azam played at number three. Azam scored three consecutive half-centuries at number three, however, Pakistan lost the series 4-1.

## ICC Women's T20 fixtures

ISLAMABAD (APP): The fixtures for the ICC Women's T20 World Cup Qualifier 2024 would be held in Abu Dhabi, UAE from April 25 to May 7. A total of 10 teams would be battling for two Women's T20 World Cup spots to be held in Bangladesh later this year, said a press release. Ten teams, divided into two groups of five each, would compete in the Qualifier in two Abu Dhabi venues from April 25. The two table-toppers from the two groups would feature in the semi-finals on May 5 with the winners booking their tickets to Bangladesh and joining the hosts, Australia, England, India, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Africa and West Indies in the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2024 in September and October. Scotland, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uganda and the United States of America (USA) feature in Group A, while Ireland, Netherlands, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Vanuatu and Zimbabwe make up Group B. The event features eight teams from the five ICC Global Development Regions, as well as Ireland and Sri Lanka, who did not find a place in the top six of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2023 in South Africa and therefore missed out on automatic qualification for this year's ICC Women's T20 World Cup. The Qualifier would be staged at Zayed Cricket Stadium and Tolerance Oval, both form part of the Abu Dhabi Cricket and Sports Hub. Mohan Oval, also located in the same vicinity, will host two warm-up matches on April 21 and 23. On the opening day, Sri Lanka will take on Thailand, while Scotland will play Uganda at Tolerance Oval. At Zayed Cricket Stadium, Ireland will face UAE and Zimbabwe will take on Vanuatu. The final will take place on May 7 at Zayed Cricket Stadium. Four matches would be played on each of the group stage match days — two each at Tolerance Oval and Zayed Cricket Stadium.

# Chairman PCB emphasises importance of merit in national selection

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Chairman PCB Mohsin Naqvi met National Men's Chief Selector Wahab Riaz at the headquarters of Pakistan Cricket at Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore, to discuss matters related to national selection and preparation for the home T20I series against New Zealand. COO PCB Salman Naseer and Director International PCB Usman Wahla also attended the meeting.

Another agenda of the meeting also involved the selection of players for a fitness and conditioning camp in Kakul, Abbottabad, set to commence later next week. The chairman instructed to assemble a pool of players based on merit and performance.

Chief Selector Wahab Riaz also presented a detailed report regarding the performances of various players in the recently concluded HBL PSL 9.

Chairman PCB Mohsin Naqvi: "A pool of players

selected purely on merit and performances will possess the ability to perform well at the highest level.

The high performers of HBL PSL 9 should also be kept in mind and rewarded for their performances."

## Inter-College Ramadan T20 Cup 2024 to begin tonight

F.P. Report

LAHORE : The inaugural Inter-College Ramadan T20 Cup 2024 is set to kick off tonight in Lahore, followed by the Islamabad and Karachi legs to begin on 23 March. The matches in the Lahore leg of the tournament have been shifted to Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore from LCCA.

The opening ceremony will be held at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore and Chairman PCB Mohsin Naqvi will grace the occasion. The Chairman will unveil the trophy and address the ceremony.

The 21 matches in the Lahore leg will be broadcast LIVE on PTV Sports to provide an exposure of competitive cricket to the players. The ball-by-ball live scorecards of the whole tournament will be available on CricHQ.

The participating teams will use the home and away dressing rooms of the Gaddafi stadium, which is also the headquarters of Pakistan Cricket Board, while the wickets for the tournament will be curated by the stadium's dedicated ground staff.

The PCB has also allowed free entry for the spectators to watch the games and the Fazal Mahmood enclosure will be opened an hour before the start of the game.

The Islamabad leg of the tournament will take place at Miusam Cricket Ground from 23 March onwards while the matches in Karachi will take place at Eid Gah Ground Nazimabad and IBA Karachi University Ground.

# Nishikori defeated in comeback game, Wozniacki out in Miami



MIAMI (AFP): Former world number four Kei Nishikori's return to the ATP Tour after a lengthy injury absence ended in a first round 6-3, 6-4 loss to Sebastian Ofner.

Japan's Nishikori has barely played on the tour in the past two years with his last appearance on the ATP Tour coming at Atlanta July.

Given a wildcard by organizers, the 2016 Miami finalist was not surprisingly a little off the pace against 40th-ranked Austrian Ofner as he struggled to replicate his practice form.

"I thought I was practicing well, playing much better. I was feeling the rhythm and I was feeling the ball pretty good in the practice but during the match it's completely different," he told reporters.

"It was windy, he was hitting the ball very hard, very quick, the courts are quick. I was having a tough time making a lot of balls in the court and just the little things that I was not making, maybe I was supposed to hit the corner but the ball goes to the middle sometimes," he

added. At 34, Nishikori faces a real challenge to work his way back up the rankings but he believes that in time, he can get back to an elite level.

"I don't have the clear goal right now, you know I just want to play a lot of matches. I need some time to get used to (matches) and hopefully I can stay healthy, I think that's the only goal this year, I try to play as many matches as I can play," he said.

Gael Monfils, the 37-year-old Frenchman, turned on the style in his 7-6 (7/5) 6-4 win over Serbian Dusan Lajovic. "It was a great match, he played well and I am still playing for these moments, these challenges. I feel like the fire is still there," he said. Britain's Dan Evans battled back for a 1-6, 6-3, 6-4 win over Italian Lorenzo Sonego.

Rybakina rallied. In the WTA event, Caroline Wozniacki was a point away from winning in straight sets against Anhelina Kalinina but the Ukrainian ended up winning 5-7, 7-5, 6-4.

Wozniacki, who returned to the tour last year after a three-year

absence, during which she gave birth to two children, reached the quarter-finals at Indian Wells last week.

Fourth-seed Elena Rybakina suffered a scare against Denmark's Clara Tauson before battling back for a 3-6, 7-5, 6-4 win.

Rybakina, who had wins in Brisbane and Abu Dhabi as well as a runner-up finish in Doha, had to miss Indian Wells due to illness and said she was still finding her way back to her best. "I am happy with the win. It means a lot, I hadn't really played for more than a week and it's going to take time for me to get back in my best form but happy to get another chance," said Rybakina.

Maria Sakkari of Greece, beaten finalist to Iga Swiatek in California, defeated Yuan Yue 6-2, 6-2 to reach the third round.

Sakkari had lost her opening match in Miami in each of the last two years but she overcame the inform Yuan, in one hour and 19 minutes. The Chinese 25-year-old came into Miami after winning her first WTA singles title in Austin and then reaching her maiden WTA 1000 quarterfinal at Indian Wells.

Ninth seed Jelena Ostapenko, the 2017 French Open champion had to work hard for a 7-6 (7/3), 6-4 over qualifier Laura Siegemund of Germany.

Victoria Azarenka, a three time Miami Open winner, had to deal with some strong resistance from American Peyton Stearns before emerging with a 7-5, 3-6, 6-4 win. Belarusian Azarenka won in Miami in 2009, 2011 and 2016.



MELBOURNE: Charles Leclerc of Monaco driving the (16) Ferrari SF-24 during practice ahead of the F1 Grand Prix of Australia.



SHANGRAO: Judd Trump of England plays a shot in the Quarter-final match against Kyren Wilson of England on day five of the 2024 Huading Nylon World Open at Yushan Sport Centre.

## Trump reaches semi-finals at World Open in China

SHANGRAO (Agencies): Judd Trump, Neil Robertson, Ding Junhui and Jackson Page each won their quarter-final at the World Open in China.

Trump reeled off three frames in a row to secure a 5-2 victory against Kyren Wilson and will play Page, who beat Elliot Slessor 5-2, in the semi-finals. Ding knocked in breaks of 135 and 102 in a 5-0 win against Hossein Vafaei, who had knocked out Ronnie O'Sullivan. He will play Robertson, who beat Barry Hawkins 5-2 in Yushan.

Trump, the world number two, won the tournament last time it was held in 2019 and will hope to defend that title following its return to the tour after a four-year hiatus because of the Covid pandemic.

The 34-year-old is also aiming for his fifth title of the season before the World Championships start next month in Sheffield.

## Leclerc outpaces Verstappen in second practice

MELBOURNE (AFP): Ferrari's Charles Leclerc went quickest ahead of world champion Max Verstappen in second practice at the Australian Grand Prix on Friday, with Carlos Sainz third barely two weeks after surgery.

Leclerc clocked a best lap round the Albert Park circuit of one minute 17.277 seconds, 0.381 clear of Red Bull's Verstappen, who won the first two races of the season.

"It was a solid first day, everything felt good from the start and I was comfortable in the car," said Monaco's Leclerc, who was third in Saudi Arabia a fortnight ago. "It looks good for now but we have to wait and see how it will look tomorrow. I expect the field to be much tighter."

Verstappen ran over a kerb late in first practice in Melbourne and damaged the floor of his car, and the team were still working on the issue when the second session started. The Dutchman eventually emerged as the last driver out after missing 22 minutes and he struggled initially to make inroads on medium tyres as others switched to softs.

But when he made the tyre change he began flying to narrowly miss topping the timesheets at a circuit where he triumphed from pole last year. "Today was a little bit messy because of what happened in FP1. We had some damage to the floor and chassis, which took a bit longer to fix, meaning I had a bit of catching up to do," he said.

"I think we know what we have to focus on and we have a few things to fine-tune, but we are looking forward to tomorrow."

The Red Bull ace won in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia to start the season, but those victories were overshadowed by turmoil within the team camp. The 26-year-old is hoping to put the off-track distractions behind him with records on the line in Melbourne. Verstappen is chasing a 10th consecutive victory to match his own record feat last year, while Red Bull are attempting to score a third straight 1-2 finish for the first time in the team's history.

# Seamers put Sri Lanka in control as Bangladesh chase 280

SYLHET (AFP): Dhananjaya de Silva and Kamindu Mendis both hit knocks of 102 to help Sri Lanka post 280 in their first innings before their seamers rattled Bangladesh on the opening day of the first Test in Sylhet on Friday.

Bangladesh finished the day 32-3, trailing Sri Lanka by 248 runs, with Vishwa Fernando and Kasun Rajitha striking early in the innings for the visitors. Fernando trapped opener Zakir Hasan (nine) and Najmul Hossain (five) lbw with identical in-swinging deliveries, while Rajitha got Mominul Haque caught for five.

Opener Mahmudul Hasan survived the day on nine alongside Taijul Islam, who was yet to open scoring.

De Silva and Mendis fought back with their 202-run stand for the fifth wick-

et, helping Sri Lanka recover from a precarious 57-5 after a pace demolition of their top order.

Khaled Ahmed and Nahid Rana took three wickets apiece for Bangladesh, who opted to bowl first on a green surface. De Silva and Kamindu asserted their dominance after lunch to help Sri Lanka rebuild a respectable innings.

Kamindu reached his maiden Test century off 126 balls with a four through the covers off Rana but fell on the next ball, edging a catch to Liton Das off Rana. Skipper de Silva was soon to follow after trying and failing to hook Rana off a short ball, following a charging innings featuring 12 fours and a six.

Khaled gave Sri Lanka an early fright after seeing off the top order, forcing opener Nishan Madushka (2) to

offer a catch to Mehidy Hasan at third slip at the end of the second over.

Dimuth Karunaratne and Kusal Mendis made 37 runs for the second wicket before Khaled struck again when Mendis knocked the pacer's delivery to Zakir Hasan at gully. Mendis departed on 16, and Khaled bowled Karunaratne with an inswinger in the same over for 17. Najmul ran out Angelo Mathews for just five with a direct-hit to compound Sri Lanka's early woes.

Shoriful Islam joined the party when he removed Dinesh Chandimal for nine, with Mehidy grabbing his second catch of the morning down low at leg slip. Sri Lanka have never lost a Test series to Bangladesh. The second and final match of the series will be played in Chittagong from March 30.



SYLHET: Vishwa Fernando made early inroads in the final hour, Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka, 1st Test day 1.

# Flag change on new England football kit causes uproar

LONDON (AFP): British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Friday waded into a row over a new England football shirt sold by Nike that changes the colours of the St George's Cross, saying "we shouldn't mess" with national flags.

The US sportswear firm revealed it had altered the cross, the flag of England, using purple and blue horizontal stripes in what it called a "playful update" ahead of Euro 2024, which starts in June.

Nike and the Football Association said the colours on the back of the collar -- different from the traditional red cross on a white background -- were inspired by the training kit worn by England's 1966 World Cup winners. But the decision has led to a furious backlash from some fans and former players, with leading politicians adding their voices. Sunak -- a fan of Championship side Southampton -- said he "prefers the original" England shirt.

"My general view is that when it comes to our national flags, we shouldn't mess with them," he told reporters. "Because they are a source of pride, identity, who we are, and they're perfect as they are."

Culture Secretary Lucy Frazer, whose remit includes sport, said the Football Association and its kit partner had failed to put supporters first. "Fans should always come first, and it's clear that this is not what fans want," she said on X. "Our national heritage -- including St George's Cross -- brings us together. Toying with it is pointless and unnecessary."

'Unifier' Keir Starmer, the leader of Britain's main opposition Labour party and an Arsenal supporter, called on Nike to "reconsider" its decision. "I'm a big football fan, I go to England games, men and women's games, and the flag is used by everybody. It is a unifier. It doesn't need to be changed. We just need to be proud of

it," Starmer told The Sun newspaper.

"So, I think they should just reconsider this and change it back. I'm not even sure they can properly explain why they thought they needed to change it in the first place." But a Football Association spokesman said the FA was proud of the kit design, which was "meant as a tribute to the 1966 World Cup-winning team".

"It is not the first time that different coloured St George's Cross-inspired designs have been used on England shirts," he said. A Nike spokesman previously told media outlets: "The England 2024 home kit disrupts history with a modern take on a classic."

The debate over the new design comes with British politics in the grip of so-called "culture war" issues, pitting proponents of "traditionalist" values such as Sunak's ruling Conservatives against those with more liberal, "progressive" views. Former England goalkeeper Peter Shilton, who is England's most-capped player, told the BBC that he does not agree with the changes, describing himself as a "traditionalist".

"We have so many changes to kits these days so it really makes fans buy fresh kits to stay up to date and it is very expensive," he told the BBC. "It is a colour difference and I think it is significant."

"Once you start changing colours there is no end to it. There is no need to change the colour of the flag." Shilton's former teammate John Barnes, however, said he could not understand the fuss.

"I don't get involved in culture wars anymore but this whole furore... I didn't even know there was a St George's Cross," he told the PA news agency.

He added: "They are not changing the colour of the shirt, the lions are still there. If they were going to change the national flag for England and change the colours then that's a proper debate to have."





## In brief

### Nisar Basmi remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 17th death anniversary of iconic music director and composer Nisar Bazmi was observed on Friday. Nisar Ahmed was born in Mumbai in 1924. He changed his last name to Bazmi to embark on a film music career. He was hired by the 'All India Radio' in 1939 as an artist and his first composed songs were broadcast on the Bombay Radio Station in 1944. His first film, 'Jumna Paar', was released in 1946 and immediately established him as a first-rate composer. Bazmi composed songs for more than 40 films in India, 28 of which were released before he migrated to Pakistan. He composed music for more than 60 Pakistani films. Nisar Bazmi died on this day in 2007 in Karachi.

### World Water Day

ISLAMABAD (APP): World Water Day was observed on Friday, with the aim of highlighting the importance of water worldwide and raising general awareness about its increasing scarcity and pollution. The theme of World Water Day 2024 was 'Water for Peace'. World Water Day was celebrated for the first time on March 22 in 1993 after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development confirmed it.

### CTP finalize arrangements

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi have finalized all the arrangements for Pakistan Day Parade on March 23. According to a CTP spokesman, over 133 officers and wardens would be on duty for implementation of the traffic plan. Traffic duty would start at 6:00 a.m. and there would be ban on entry of heavy traffic on Pakistan Day while other traffic would be diverted to other routes. Traffic coming from Muzaffarabad via Murree would be stopped at Lower Topa while traffic coming from Abbottabad would be stopped at Barrian. Similarly traffic from Murree would be stopped at Satra Meel, he informed. National Highway and Motorway Police would stop heavy traffic coming from Peshawar at Attock Bridge, Haro Bridge, Margalla, Taxila, and Chungi Number 26. Similarly, traffic coming from Lahore other traffic coming from G.T Road would be stopped at Gujrat, Jhelum, Mandra toll plaza and Rawat, he said. He further informed that 21 inspectors and 101 traffic wardens under the supervision of Superintendent of Police/STO and 10 DSPs would make all-out efforts to regulate traffic on city roads.

### Police arrest two bike lifters

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested two bike lifters and recovered five stolen motorcycles from their possession, said a Police spokesman here on Friday. He informed that a team under the supervision of SHO, Wah Cantt Police Station managed to net two bike lifters namely Hanzala and Aurangzeb and recovered five stolen motorcycles, a snatched mobile phone and other items from their possession. A case has been registered against the accused while further investigation is underway. Superintendent of Police, Potohar, Nasir Nawaz said the accomplices and facilitators of the accused would also be sent behind bars.



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Power Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari, presenting shield to the US Ambassador Donald Blome.

## Minister urges to take all stakeholders on board over social media rules, reforms

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar Friday urged the government to take all stakeholders on board before implementing the social media laws and bringing reforms to curb its alleged misuse.

Talking to a private news channel, he said that freedom of expression was good, but false allegations against state and its institutions were wrong which

needs to be fixed, adding that public should not misuse the social media platforms and avoid using abusive language, defamation and other forms of hate speech online.

Minister further said that such actions were violating public morals and can cause damage to an individual's reputation, honor, and social standing in the society.

He urged the public to use social media platforms

responsibly, and avoid making offensive comments. Replying to a question, minister of Law said that the protection of state interests should be the first and foremost priority for all, adding, but no one would be allowed to criticize and violate the constitution and the law as well. "Political stability and social harmony were essential elements for ensuring progress and prosperity in the country", he added.

## Minister lauds Punjab CM practical steps to combat climate change, launch of online plantation drive app

ISLAMABAD (APP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari Friday lauded Chief Minister Maryum Nawaz Sharif for taking practical steps to address the challenges of climate change where Punjab government had launched an application to track an ongoing tree plantation drive in the country through geo-tagging technology.

Talking to a private news channel, she said it was the first time that modern technology was being employed in Punjab to carry out the plantation drive, adding, a special feature of geo-tagging will enable the forest departments' officers to keep the plantation record.

She said CM Punjab has also announced various other measures to cope with the smog challenge in Punjab where a comprehen-

sive safe city project will be extending to all districts of Punjab for enhancement of security measures across Punjab and fostering a safer environment for all.

She said government's successfully implementing of the project would pave the way for initiating the same project in other big cities of the province.

"Safe City project is an important step towards making Punjab a safe, prosperous and peaceful province", she added.

Replying to a question, she said that the legal action will be taken with the mutual cooperation of the environment department against all the personal-use and commercial vehicles across the city. Furthermore, various instructions have been issued by the traffic police to tackle the situation of

smog for the ones travelling on the road, she added.

She further warned that under the instructions of CM, Punjab government will take strict action against the heavy smoke-emitting vehicles in reducing the environmental pollution significantly, adding, all the citizens of Lahore are advised to properly maintain their vehicles and play their part in this environment-friendly move.

While commenting on issue of smog, she said that next season of winter will be better than previous seasons as we will take all necessary steps for quality air and to control smog. Azma added that CM Punjab is also seriously concerned with the issue of Dengue fever spread and taking all early preventive measures to reduce the burden.

## ANF recovers 280 kg drugs in eight operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting eight operations across the country managed to recover 280 kg drugs and arrested five accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday.

He informed that 740 grams Ice was recovered from a Qatar-bound passenger arrested at Multan Airport.

54 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from a Jeddah-bound passenger at Islamabad Airport.

In two separate operations at a courier office in Rawalpindi, 14 grams weed

were recovered from two parcels sent from the UK. 204 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of two suspects rounded up from Dera Ismail Khan Road while 62 kg morphine was recovered from Lakpas Mustang area.

In seventh operation, 13 kg heroin was recovered from an area near Peshawar toll plaza. In eighth operation, 190 grams hashish was recovered from a passenger nabbed on G.T Road Jhelum. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.

## NLPD organizes seminar on role of Urdu language in Pakistan Movement

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Language Promotion Department (NLPD) on Friday organized a seminar titled "the role of Urdu Language in Pakistan Movement" in connection with Pakistan National Day celebrations to be held on March 23. The seminar was chaired by Chairman Higher Education Commission (HEC) Prof. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, while Prof Dr. Riaz Ahmed, former Director National Institute of Historical Cultural Research, Quaid e Azam University, Islamabad was the keynote speaker on the occasion.

The speakers at seminar highlighted the importance

and role of Urdu Language and said that it won't be unjustified to say that Urdu language and two nation theory were inevitably indispensable for each other. With reference to that, prior to the establishment of Pakistan, the Muslims of subcontinent participated with great vigor with a conviction for Urdu language as their national language despite having other and thus made it possible to accomplish the achievement of Pakistan, they added.

The speakers further said that Urdu language not only emerged as a symbol of Muslim unity during the course of Pakistan

Movement but it was also established that it had all the traits to be a powerful factor in affirming the need for a separate state for Muslims in Indo-Pak subcontinent where they could be free to lead their lives according to their religion and culture.

Director General NLPD Prof Dr Saleem Mazhar thanked Chairman HEC and Prof Dr Riaz Ahmed for their participation in the seminar. He said that Urdu is a major language of the world. Today, the need of the hour is that Pakistan should utilize its resources to develop and nourish the national language, he added.

## Police carry out search operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi District Police here on Friday carried out search operations in the jurisdiction of Chontra, Saddar Baroni, Jatli, Gujar Khan, Rawat, Murree, Kalar Syedan, Dhamial, Morgah, Wah Cantt, Race Course, Cantt Rwp, Airport and Saddar Wah police stations. According to a police spokesman, the search operations were conducted in order to maintain law and order and flush out suspects following the directions of City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Hamdani. He informed, senior police officers and police personnel including women police took part in the search operation.

## Parliament-to-parliament contacts vital for regional prosperity: Ayaz Sadiq

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speaker National Assembly of Pakistan Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Friday said that Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates(UAE) enjoy cordial ties based upon shared religious and cultural values. He said that parliament-to-parliament contacts are vital for regional prosperity and economic development.

He added,"UAE has always supported Pakistan in difficult times and Pakistan values its tie with UAE."He expressed these views during his meeting with the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates Mr. Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Alzaabi who called on him in Parliament House, said a news release.

While talking about the significance of enhanced bilateral ties between the two countries, he emphasized the need to revive the Parliamentary Friendship group. He also extended an invitation to the Speaker Parliament of UAE to visit the Parliament of Pakistan. He said that

Pakistan has vast opportunities for investment and trade.

He added, "Pakistan is bestowed with a skilled labour force which can play a significant role in the development of UAE".

He also appreciated the support and facilities provided by the UAE government to the Pakistani diaspora in UAE. He said that the Pakistani diaspora in UAE has a substantive role in bringing both Nations closer. Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates Mr. Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Alzaabi extended warm felicitations to Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on his successful election as Speaker of National Assembly of Pakistan. He expressed hope that parliament-to-parliament contacts between UAE and Pakistan would further improve ties between both nations.

He also said that the UAE is committed to facilitating Pakistani workers in UAE and values the services offered by the Pakistani diaspora in UAE.

## Govt striving for economic growth, job creation: Mashood

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senior leader of the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N), Rana Mashood Ahmed Khan said on Friday that the current government is making significant efforts to boost the country's economy, enhance employment opportunities, and achieve self-sufficiency in the country.

Speaking to the media alongside Minister of State for Information Technology and Telecommunication and MNA Ms. Romina Khurshid Alam, he emphasized that the government under Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's leadership is tirelessly striving to revive the economy. He said efforts were underway to enhance investments in the country by streamlining the investment environment. A legal reforms committee has been established to devise strategies aimed at revitalizing the economy.

He noted that the Shehbaz government

has garnered remarkable credibility globally, as evidenced by the warm reception received from leaders worldwide upon assuming the prestigious position of Prime Minister of Pakistan.

He remarked that the country's challenges began after the removal of PML-N's supreme leader Nawaz Sharif from power in 2017. Instead of being credited for ending issues like load shedding and terrorism, Nawaz faced conviction on flimsy legal grounds, he added.

He said that the disqualification of Nawaz Sharif led to a significant surge in inflation and a steep rise in the dollar-rupee exchange rate. Strongly condemning the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf-led government post-2018, he said the party severely damaged the country's economy. During its four-year tenure, the PTI government failed to initiate any major projects in the country, he said.

## ECP sets April 2 deadline for by-election postal ballot requests

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has set April 2 as the last day to apply for postal ballots for the upcoming by-elections in Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Baluchistan. An ECP spokesman stated that according to the law, this service has been expanded to individuals in government positions, members of the armed forces, their spouses, and their eligible children residing with them, given they are registered voters and typically reside away from their constituency location.

People with physical disabilities who are unable to travel and possess a national identity card with a physical disability logo issued by the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) can also vote via postal ballot, the poll body spokesman stated.

Additionally, individuals who are detained in prison or held in custody are also eligible to vote by postal ballot. The ECP advised that individuals appointed by the returning officers, including police personnel, to perform duties at polling stations other than where they are eligible to vote, should apply for a postal ballot to the returning officers within three days of their appointment.

Applications for a postal ballot must be submitted using the designated form to the returning officer responsible for the respective constituency. Additionally, it was mentioned that application forms for postal ballots are available from the respective returning officers and the ECP's website.

The ECP stated that individuals issued postal ballots will not have the right to vote in person at polling sta-

tions. Finally, it emphasized that the application must be forwarded and endorsed by the office or department of the voter to prevent unauthorized persons from applying for a postal ballot. The by-elections will be held in 23 constituencies of National and Provincial assemblies, including NA-8 Bajaur, NA-44 Dera Ismail Khan-I, NA-119 Lahore-III, NA-132 Kasur-II, NA-196 Kamber Shahadkot-I, and NA-207 Shaheed Benazirabad-I. The Punjab Assembly constituencies consist of PP-22 Chakwal-Cum-Talagang, PP-32 Gujrat-VI, PP-36 Wazirabad-II, PP-54 Narowal-I, PP-93 Bhakkar-V, PP-139 Sheikhupura-IV, PP-147 Lahore-III, PP-149 Lahore V, PP-158 Lahore-XIV, PP-164 Lahore XX, PP-266 RY Khan-XII, and PP-290 DG Khan-V.

## Trend of online home-cooked Sehri, iftari getting momentum during Ramadan

ISLAMABAD (APP): With the ongoing festivity of holy month of Ramadan, the trend of delivery of online home-cooked Sehri and Iftari trend getting momentum among the various cities of the country where food delivery apps have made it easier for citizens to order food from any restaurant while paying minimal delivery fees. Home-made food business is thriving because an increasing number of working people lack the time to cook but prefer home-cooked food over restaurant meals, said a report aired by a private news channel.

"We regularly promote Sehri and Iftar deals and have received a very positive response during this month", said a cooking chef since 2020. "The demand for online food delivery has increased amid

Ramadan, said Sumera Fatima an online seller, adding, it is too early to calculate the percentage of growth rate as only ten days has passed."

We are providing best frozen food items at reasonable prices, said Humaira another woman who is running online homemade food business, adding, we are delivering our products in twin cities. There are hundreds of sites on social media marketing Ramadan products made by women who take advantage of the season to boost their income, said a male homemaker.

Mostly people want low-oil and low-sodium food with home-made cooking so we cater to customers' needs specially in month of Ramadan, said another online retailer.

Citizens specially youngsters and working women tend to go for home-

made food options, said a citizen.

As rising popularity of homemade meals delivery services during Ramadan is gaining ground elsewhere in country through providing respectable earning opportunity to both men and women, said a youngsters while commenting the trend.

Consumers' desire to receive groceries and iftar deals at their doorstep has undoubtedly increased, and when they buy food in bulk, they find online delivery options to be the most convenient, according to a female regular online customer. Bookings open for home made hygienic frozen food by uzma's kitchen during Ramadan special frozen items available for delivery, said another women with satisfactory remarks with her earning during this month.



ISLAMABAD: The Federal Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal presides over a progress review session concerning Pakistan Radio Station Sautul Quran FM Radio Channel.



**Three dead due to flooding**  
FARYAB (TOLOnews): As a result of the floods in Faryab, Sar-e Pol, and Jowzjan provinces, 3 people have died. According to local officials, more than 280 homes, hundreds of acres of agricultural land, roads, and bridges have been destroyed due to these floods, and hundreds of livestock have also perished. Esmaatullah Muradi Faryabi, the spokesperson for the governor of Faryab, said: "Most of these damages occurred in the districts of Khwaja Sabzposh, Almar, Qaisar, and Kohistanat."

**Installation of CCTV cameras**  
PUL-E-KHUMRI (Ariana News): The Ministry of Interior said on Thursday that the process of installing security cameras has started in Pul-e-Khumri city of Baghlan province. Faridullah Abid, who is heading up the installation process, says so far 20 security cameras have been installed in different parts of the city and at the entrance gates to ensure security. "Security cameras will soon be installed on a number of highways, strategic points of the city and 15 districts of this province," said Abid.

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

# Over 520,000 Afghan migrants expelled from Pakistan: IOM



KABUL (Khaama Press): The International Organization for Migration (IOM) states that nearly 525,000 Afghan migrants have returned from Pakistan to Afghanistan through the Torkham and Spin Boldak border crossings. The organization said on Thursday on its social media platform X that many returning Afghans have abandoned everything in Pakistan and returned to Afghanistan. The International Organization for Migration adds that return-

ing Afghans from Pakistan need assistance. It is worth mentioning that Pakistan began the process of deporting undocumented Afghan nationals in November of last year. Following the initiation of the deportation process of Afghan migrants from various states of Pakistan, hundreds of thousands of migrants were forcibly and voluntarily deported to Afghanistan in recent months. This is happening while Pakistan is set to begin the second phase of deporting and return-

ing Afghan migrants from the country. Some Pakistani media outlets recently reported that the Ministry of Interior of Pakistan has instructed the Punjab provincial government to start the second phase of deporting Afghan citizens holding Afghan citizenship cards on April 15 of this year. Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan face dire conditions upon return to Afghanistan, including lack of foodstuffs, shelter, water, and job opportunities. Many of them left

everything behind in these host countries and now struggle to reintegrate into a homeland plagued by conflict and instability. Despite efforts by international organizations, the scale of need often overwhelms available resources, leaving these vulnerable populations in a precarious state. Long-term solutions addressing both the root causes of displacement and the challenges of return and reintegration are urgently needed to alleviate the suffering of Afghan refugees.

# UNESCO: girls' education ban hinders Afghanistan's progress

KABUL (Khaama Press): As the new academic year begins in Afghanistan, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) states that 1.4 million girls above the sixth grade in Afghanistan are deprived of attending school. UNESCO in Kabul wrote on its social media platform X on Thursday, stating that the deprivation of girls from education will cause severe psychological and emotional harm to them. The organization continues to warn that the deprivation of girls from education will hinder Afghanistan's development. Meanwhile, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women emphasizes girls' education in Afghanistan, stating that education is critical to a brighter future for the country. Alison Davidian, the representative of the UN Women's Office in Afghanistan, updated on Thursday in a post on the social media platform X that the ban on girls' education in Afghanistan must end. At the beginning of the new academic year, many international organizations and institutions reacted strongly to the continuation of girls' deprivation of education, calling for lifting this restriction. This comes as the Taliban administration commenced the new academic year on Wednesday, the first of the month, without any mention of the fate of secondary schools and girls' high schools. For the third year in a row, the Taliban have banned girls from attending school beyond the sixth grade and universities. This has had a devastating impact on the mental and economic development of females in society.

# 50% of Afghans live in poverty: Advocacy Advisor of NRC

KABUL (TOLOnews): Becky Roby, advocacy adviser for the Norwegian Refugee Council Afghanistan (NRC), quoted the World Bank, as saying that 50% of Afghan citizens live in poverty. Officials of NRC in Afghanistan have assured that they will continue their support for the people of Afghanistan, especially women and children, under current conditions. The advocacy adviser for NRC Afghanistan, said: "In addition to the emergency humanitarian assistance that we are providing, we start to prioritize long-term assistance and that helps people to find durable lasting solutions to the displacement."

The World Food Programme has also added in its recent report that it has helped more than seven million people in Afghanistan in the past month. Meanwhile, a number of economic analysts emphasized the continuation of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan and considered delivering aid to needy families as important. "Under current conditions, the level of unemployment and poverty in the country is high. In this situation, delivering humanitarian aid by the World Food Programme to the Afghan people and distributing it transparently to needy families is very essential," said Mir Shekib Mir, an economic analyst. "Despite many flaws and shortcomings, these aids can solve some of the people's problems and reduce part of the poverty," said Sayed Masood, an economic analyst. The Ministry of Economy emphasized the continuation of aid in the country. Abdul Latif Nazari, Deputy Minister of Economy, said, "Aid agencies can help improve the economic situation of Afghanistan in humanitarian and developmental dimensions by continuing their aid, and our request is that all international institutions continue their support."



# Acting Minister of commerce visits Uzbekistan joint market

MAZAR-E-SHARIF (BNA): Acting Minister of Industry and Commerce, Al-Hajj Nooruddin Azizi, visited the joint border market between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan. During his visit, officials of the joint market provided valuable information to representatives of the Afghan Chamber of Commerce. Authorities from Uzbekistan informed BNA that this small market has been established as a large free trade market between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan at the zero point of the border. The market offers facilities for Afghans and traders from both countries, where industrial products are sold four times a year.



# At the beginning academic year, girls in Afghanistan await school reopening

**Hakim Bigzaad**  
As the 1403 academic year starts in the country, female students beyond the sixth grade are asking the Taliban administration to let them attend their classes. The Ministry of Education of the de facto administration rang the school bell on Wednesday, the first of the month, during a meeting. However, this bell was only rung for boys, and the fate of female students above the sixth grade is still shrouded in ambiguity. Mahdeya, a girl who graduated from the sixth grade last year and is now unable to continue her studies, is urging the Taliban to open the doors of schools for girls above the sixth grade as well. Speaking to a reporter from Khaama Press, she said, "I completed the sixth-grade last year, but I am prepared for the new year as well. I hope I can return to my class again." Meanwhile, Abdul Salam Hanafi, the administrative deputy of the Prime Minister's Office of the Taliban, stated during a school bell-ringing ceremony that they have no opposition to modern sciences. However, none of the officials of the Taliban spoke about the reopening of girls' schools in this gathering. Hanafi added, "Whether in science or modern technology, we must either move forward with others or at least keep pace with the world." The Ministry of Education said that it, but they should allow us to pursue our aspirations."

Meanwhile, the US State Department called the exclusion of girls from schools "heart-breaking." The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan also said in a statement that Afghan girls have been deprived of education for over 900 days.



# Islamic Emirate requests formal recognition in new solar year

KABUL (TOLOnews): As the new solar year begins, the Islamic Emirate is seeking formal recognition from countries around the world. Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate, told TOLOnews that they want close political relations with all countries, as these relations will be beneficial for all nations. According to Mujahid, pressures on the caretaker government are not effective, and it is necessary for the Islamic Emirate to be recognized this year. He told TOLOnews, "We see in the world that countries are interacting with us. There are a few countries that were defeated in Afghanistan; they are still looking for excuses. Other countries that are interacting with us, if we advance too much with them, the remaining countries will themselves come to a point where they start official interactions with Afghanistan." The spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate said that in the year 1402, the Islamic Emirate had many achievements in the political area and in economic, and other sectors, and they are trying to increase these achievements in the current year and also reduce the unemployment rate in the country. Zabihullah Mujahid said: "The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is making its best effort in various fields to provide services to our compatriots this year in reducing unemployment, improving security, as well as with diplomatic and political relations with countries around the world." Meanwhile, some political experts said that the Islamic Emirate should also accept the legitimate demands of the international community for recognition. Experts added that the Islamic Emirate should make more efforts in the field of human rights, especially women's rights, adopting a constitution, and formalizing the caretaker cabinet. Idris Zazai, a political expert, said: "Fulfill the demands of the nation; we are formulating a foreign policy, inviting the entire region and the world that we are formulating a balanced and neutral policy." Kamran Aman, a political expert, said, "the constitution must be adopted as soon as possible, and the issue of the interim government must end. Until we have a constitution, no country will recognize us, and our domestic and foreign policies must be clarified." More than two and a half years have passed since the Islamic Emirate's reign in the country; however, the caretaker government has not yet been recognized by the international community. The issue of formalizing the caretaker cabinet, adopting a constitution, and the tricolor flag remains unclear.





## UNSC fails to pass US resolution on Gaza ceasefire

NEW YORK: The United Nations Security Council has failed to pass a United States draft resolution calling for, but not demanding, a ceasefire in Israel's continuing war on Gaza after two permanent members chose to veto it. The draft put before the Council on Friday received 11 votes in favour, three against – from Russia, China and Algeria – and one abstention by Guyana.

Russia and China both exercised their veto against the resolution, which would have spoken of the "imperative of an immediate and sustained ceasefire" and condemned the October 7 attack by Hamas. Moscow accused Washington of a "hypocritical spectacle" that does not pressure Israel. Russia's ambassador to the UN, Vassily Nebenzia, said the draft was exceedingly politicised and contained an "effective green light" for Israel to mount a military operation in Gaza's southern-most city of Rafah, where more than 1.5 million Palestinians are sheltering.

Nebenzia said there was no call for a ceasefire in the resolution's text and accused the US leadership of "deliberately misleading the international community". China's representative, Zhang Jun, said the draft "dodged the most central issue, that of a ceasefire" through its "ambiguous" language. "Nor does it even provide an answer to the question of realising a ceasefire in the short term," he added.

While the US promoted the measure as calling for a ceasefire, critics pointed out that the draft falls short of demanding an end to the war. The proposal backs the "imperative" for "an immediate and sustained ceasefire to protect civilians on all sides", differing from previous draft resolutions vetoed by Washington, which demanded an unconditional ceasefire. The US draft resolution also ties the ceasefire to the ongoing talks to secure a truce deal that would see the release of Israeli captives in Gaza.

"It says it's important that there is a ceasefire; it doesn't seem to be demanding one," Al Jazeera's diplomatic correspondent James Bays, who had obtained a copy of the draft resolution, said earlier this week. "And it's also linking this ceasefire directly with the release of the remaining captives being held by Hamas and other groups in Gaza." After Friday's vote, US ambassador to the UN, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, said Russia had prioritised politics over progress by using its veto, adding that both Russia and China were doing nothing meaningful to advance peace.

The US, Israel's closest ally, has vetoed three resolutions demanding a ceasefire, the most recent being an Arab-backed measure supported by 13 council members with one abstention on February 20. A day earlier, the US had circulated a rival resolution, which went through major changes during negotiations before this Friday's vote.

It initially would have supported a temporary ceasefire linked to the release of all hostages, and the previous draft would have supported international efforts for a ceasefire as part of a hostage deal. On Friday, Algeria's UN ambassador, Amar Bendjama, said that had the Council passed its February resolution, thousands of innocent lives could have been saved. More than 32,000 Palestinians – mostly women and children – have been killed since the war began last October.

France will also work on a new UN resolution for a ceasefire in Gaza, French President Emmanuel Macron said on Friday. "Following Russia's and China's veto a few minutes ago, we are going to resume work on the basis of the French draft resolution in the Security Council and work with our American, European and Arab partners to reach an agreement," Macron said at the end of a European Union leaders summit in Brussels. — Aljazeera

## Two soldiers martyred in DI Khan suicide attack

F.P. Report

DI KHAN: At least two soldiers of Pakistan army embraced martyrdom in Dera Ismail Khan suicide attack.

According to Inter-Services-Public-Relations, two security personnel embraced martyrdom as a vehicle-borne suicide bomber exploded himself on a security forces' convoy in Dera Ismail Khan District.

In a statement, the ISPR said such sacrifices of our brave soldiers including Naib Subedar Yasir Shakil and Sipoy Tahir Naveed further strengthen our resolve in the war on terrorism. It said that the perpetrators of this cowardly attack will be brought to justice.

Yesterday, security forces gunned down most wanted terrorist in an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Panjgur. According to Army's media wing, armed forces conducted an intelligence-based operation in Panjgur and killed Chakar Liaquat, a wanted terrorist while two others sustained injuries.

## Senate Polls: Tribunal adjourns hearing on pleas

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Election Tribunal Judge Justice Shakeel Ahmad adjourned hearing on eight pleas regarding Senate Election scheduled in April 2024 till 25th March.

PTI back independent candidates including Murad Saeed, Azam Swati, Khurram Zeeshan and Azhar Mashwani nomination were challenged before Election tribunal on different grounds.

Moreover, Pakistan People's Party nominate candidate Robina Khalid, Kareez Khan, Fida Khan and Jammat-e-Ulema Islam Fazal (JUFI) candidates Dilawar Khan and Shazia nomination were challenged by PTI leaders named Ayesha Bano and Irfan Salim before the tribunal.

During hearing Election Commission of Pakistan's lawyer Mohsin Kamran Saidq, Babar Khan Yousafzai, Qazi Anwar, Ali Azeem advocates and Barrister Waqar appeared before Election Tribunal on behalf of their clients while argued the pleas in this regard.

Shah Mahmood son obtained transit bail: Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Muhammad

Ibrahim Khan granted transit bail to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) vice chairman Shah Mahmood's son named Zain Qureshi and ordered to appear before concerned courts, on Friday.

During hearing Ali Zaman advocate along with applicant and Member National Assembly Zain Qureshi were present before Chief Justice PHC. The counsel argued that Zain Qureshi in 13 cases in different areas of the country. He added that the cases were registered at different localities to indulge Zain Qureshi in court's proceedings across the country.

The lawyer requested PHC for transit bail as there is fear of Zain Qureshi's arrest before his appearance at concerned courts for contesting the cases as a law-abiding citizen. He added that the petitioner will contest the allegation on the platform of concerned court of law.

Chief Justice PHC Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan granted transit bail to Zain Qureshi on two personal sureties along with Rs0.1million surety bond and ordered PTI's vice chairman Shah Mahmood's son to appear before concerned courts.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister of Planning Development & Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal receives Chinese Ambassador, Jiang Zaidong upon his arrival at Planning Ministry.

## Court orders Adiala jail authorities to produce Imran, Qureshi

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A district and sessions court Friday approved a request seeking to produce Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and party leader Shah Mahmood Qureshi in court, directing authorities to ensure the politicians' pro-

duction on April 20.

The petition, requesting their production, was heard by Judicial Magistrate Mureed Abbas in relation to the Parliament attack case against Imran Khan and others, in which the former prime minister's lawyer, Naeem Panjotra, gave his arguments.

The lawyer, during the

hearing, argued that the Superintendent of Adiala jail does not obey the order of any court. He insisted the court to ensure that the jail officials adhere to the orders and produce Khan. He added that jail authorities make excuses and the PTI founder is not even presented for a hearing via video link.

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SINDH GOVERNMENT AT THE FOREFRONT OF SERVING ITS PEOPLE



Information Department,  
Government of Sindh