

**Pakistan Day celebrated**  
**F.P. Report**  
ISLAMABAD: Nation is celebrating Pakistan Day on Saturday with a renewed pledge and commitment to transform the country into a true Islamic welfare state as per the ideology of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and ensure its progress, prosperity and a strong defence. The day is observed to commemorate the passage of historic Lahore Resolution on 23rd March in 1940.

# Pakistan, S Arabia has close brotherly ties

## Prime Minister, Saudi Defence Minister discuss regional issues, security cooperation

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Saudi Arabia's Minister for Defence Prince Khalid Bin Salman Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif here on Saturday and discussed regional matters and cooperation in defence.

Minister for Defence Khawaja Asif and Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir also attended the meeting held here at the PM House. During the meeting, the two sides held an in-depth discussion on bilateral matters. Issues related to regional peace, security and situation in the region also came under discussion.

The Prime Minister and Saudi Defence Minister exchanged views on increasing cooperation between the two countries in the areas of defence and security. He congratulated the Defence Minister on receiving Pakistan's highest civil award Nishan-e-Pakistan and thanked him for attending the Pakistan Day Parade as the chief guest.

PM Sharif requested the Saudi dignity to convey his best wishes and immense gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques His Majesty King Salman Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud and Crown Prince and Prime Minister Prince Mohammed Bin Salman Al Saud. He said Pakistan was looking forward to the visit of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman.

The Prime Minister underlined that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia had close brotherly ties based on the common religion, history and culture, which were further strengthening with the passage of time. Pakistan, he said, greatly valued its relations with Saudi Arabia, adding that Saudi Arabia fully supported Pakistan through thick and thin.

Sharif said during his previous tenure as a prime minister, Saudi Arabia played a critical role in improving the economic condition of Pakistan. The people of Pakistan have a special place in their hearts for the

Saudi royal family, he added. About the Special Investment Facilitation Council, the Prime Minister said 'one window operation' was created for the investors through the establishment of the council, which would facilitate business activities and investment.

He said that immense opportunities were present in Pakistan in different fields including agriculture, livestock, information technology, mining, renewable energy, etc. The Prime Minister also underlined the need for further cooperation between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia in the fields of defence and economy.

The Saudi Defence Minister felicitated the Prime Minister on assuming his office and expressed best wishes for him. He thanked Pakistan for inviting him as a chief guest for the Pakistan Day parade and said he had the opportunity to witness the best capabilities of the Armed Forces of Pakistan during the parade. He mentioned that the recent visit of Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir to Saudi Arabia was very important and fruitful to further promote defence relations between the two countries.

**Constitution of steering committee to revamp country's economy:** Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's decision to constitute various committees with an aim to revamp economy is a positive step to boost country's economic condition. The Economic Coordination Committee will play a positive role in achieving the positive results to improve the economy of the country.

According to sources, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who will himself head these committees, is seriously considering to work for the economic betterment alongwith creation of employment opportunities for the youth. As per sources, the tax to GDP will be the top priority of the government for achieving its goals.

The Finance Division will provide Secretarial support to the steering committee, which will monitor the

## KP govt to facilitate overseas Pakistanis

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government, as an important initiative to facilitate the overseas Pakistanis in their country of residence, has extended online driving license renewal facility to the Pakistani overseas who have already been issued driving licenses from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. Thus, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has become the first province of the country to extend this facility to overseas Pakistanis.

To avail the online facility, the overseas applicants can approach their respective embassies, High Commission and Consulates with the scanned copies of relevant documents which will be forwarded to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Traffic Police by the concerned embassies, High Commissions and Consulates through official email. After verification of the documents received through email, renewed driving license will be issued and handed over to the nominee of the applicant here at the local level.

Traffic Police KP has sent a formal letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to further inform all the Pakistani Foreign Missions worldwide. Pakistani High Commission in Canda and other diplomatic missions have appreciated this important step of the provincial government to facilitate the overseas Pakistanis and urged upon other provinces to extend the same facility to the overseas.

In a statement issued here in this regard, Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has said that the online facility for renewal of driving license was an overdue demand of the overseas, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has become the first province to extend this facility to the overseas.

He has termed overseas as real assets of the country, and said that the provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is committed to extend all possible facilities to the overseas Pakistanis and resolve all their issues related to the provincial government.



ISLAMABAD: Minister of Defence of Saudi Arabia, Prince Khalid bin Abdulaziz Al Saud called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

## Russia arrests gunmen as concert toll soars to 143

MOSCOW (Reuters): The Kremlin said Saturday that it has arrested 11 people — including four suspected gunmen — in connection with a shooting rampage that killed at least 143 people in a concert hall near Moscow.

Reuters reported the militant group Daesh claimed responsibility for Friday's attack, the deadliest in Russia for 20 years. But there were indications that Russia was pursuing a Ukrainian link, despite a statement from Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak that Kyiv had nothing to do with it. A statement issued by Kremlin, on Saturday, stated that President Vladimir Putin was apprised by FSB security service chief Alexander Bortnikov that the suspects, among the detained, included "four terrorists".

It further mentioned that the service was working to identify their accomplices. Russia's Investigative Committee said the death toll had leapt to 115 from the attack on Crocus City Hall, located in the outskirts of the Russian capital, in which camouflage-clad gunmen opened fire with automatic weapons at concertgoers near the capital on Friday.

Russian lawmaker Alexander Khinshtein said the attackers had fled in a Renault vehicle that was spotted by police in Bryansk region, about 340 km (210 miles) southwest of Moscow on Friday night and disobeyed instructions to stop. He said two were arrested after a car chase and two others fled into a forest. From the Kremlin account, it appeared they too were later detained.

Khinshtein said a pistol, a magazine for an assault rifle, and passports from Tajikistan were found in the car. Tajikistan is a mainly Muslim Central Asian state that used to be part of the Soviet Union. Daesh has claimed responsibility for the attack, the deadliest in Russia since the Beslan school siege in 2004.

The shooting took place on Friday evening at Crocus City Hall, a concert venue just west of Moscow where a Soviet-era rock band was due to perform. Verified video showed people taking their seats in the hall, then rushing for the exits as repeated gunfire echoed above screams. Other video showed men shooting at groups of people. Some victims lay motionless in pools of blood. "Suddenly there were bangs behind us - shots. A burst of firing - I do not know what," one witness, who asked not to be

identified by name, told Reuters. "A stampede began. Everyone ran to the escalator," the witness said. "Everyone was screaming; everyone was running."

Kyiv, meanwhile, strongly denied any involvement in Friday's attack on the Crocus City Hall music venue in Krasnogorsk, which the Daesh group's affiliate in Afghanistan claimed responsibility for in a statement posted on social media channels linked to the group. Kyiv accused Putin and other Russian politicians of falsely linking Ukraine to the assault in order to stoke fervor in Russia's war in Ukraine, which recently entered its third year.

A US intelligence official told The Associated Press that US agencies had confirmed that IS was responsible for the attack. Putin said authorities have detained a total of 11 people in the attack, which also injured scores of concertgoers and left the venue a smoldering ruin. He called it "a bloody, barbaric terrorist act" and said Russian authorities captured the four suspected gunmen as they were trying to escape to Ukraine through a "window" prepared for them on the Ukrainian side of the border.

# The Frontier Post

**Four shot dead in Peshawar**  
**F.P. Report**  
PESHAWAR: Armed men gunned down four people over property dispute here in provincial capital on Saturday. A woman was also injured in the firing. According to details, the incident took place at Warsak road in Mithra police station jurisdiction where armed men of rival group sprayed bullets at members of opponent group with whom they were in old dispute property issue.



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari addressing the Pakistan Day Parade ceremony, at Shakarparian Parade Ground.

## COAS, Saudi Minister discuss coop

**F.P. Report**

RAWALPINDI: Defence Minister of Saudi Arabia Prince Khalid bin Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud met Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir in Rawalpindi on Saturday.

They discussed matters of mutual interest, promotion of bilateral ties and ways to enhance cooperation in different fields especially defence.

Speaking on the occasion, the Saudi Defence Minister said Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have strong and historical brotherly relations and have always remained well-wishers of each other. Concluding his day long visit to Pakistan, Prince Khalid bin Salman left for home. He was bid farewell by the Army Chief at Noor Khan Air Base.

## Tarar calls for strong Pakistan

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar on Saturday emphasized the collective efforts to transform Pakistan into an ideal, strong and prosperous nation.

Speaking on Pakistan Day, he urged everyone to channel their efforts towards this common goal. Highlighting the significance of Pakistan Day, Tarar recalled how the Pakistan Resolution of 1940 laid the foundation for the nation's independence. This resolution, passed during the annual meeting of the All India Muslim League in Lahore, became a pivotal moment in the struggle for a separate homeland for Muslims in the subcontinent.

The minister underscored the historical importance of the Pakistan Resolution, stating that it infused a renewed sense of purpose and unity among Muslims, spurring them to persevere in their quest for independence. He paid homage to the sacrifices made by leaders like Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, whose vision and determination led to the creation of Pakistan on August 14, 1947.

On Pakistan Day, the information minister urged the nation to commemorate the struggles of its forebearers and commit to upholding their legacy. He reminded Pakistanis of the preciousness of their hard-won independence and urged them to contribute towards making the country stronger and more developed.

Calling for unity, Tarar urged people to set aside their differences and work together as a cohesive nation. He emphasized that Pakistan's progress hinges on the collective efforts of its citizens and encouraged every Pakistani to play their part in advancing the nation's prosperity and well-being.

## No compromise on Pakistan's sovereignty

President says Kashmir solution in line with UN resolutions key to regional peace

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Saturday said that Pakistan was a peace-loving and responsible nuclear state but it would neither make any compromise on its sovereignty nor would tolerate any efforts of terrorists or any group aimed at destabilising it.

"Pakistan wants relations with all our neighbors. We are a peace-loving country and a responsible nuclear state. However, let me make it clear that we will not compromise on our sovereignty... We will not tolerate any efforts by terrorists or any group to destabilize our country," the president said addressing the Pakistan Day Parade ceremony held here. Pakistan Day is observed in remembrance of the adoption of the Lahore Resolution on March 23, 1940. This resolution, put forth by the All-India Muslim League, called for the creation of a distinct homeland for Muslims of the subcontinent.

The day started with a 31-gun salute in the federal capital and a 21-gun salute in the provincial capitals. Besides President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, federal cabinet members, services chiefs, diplomats, notables from different walks of life and a huge number of citizens attended the ceremony.

Saudi Defence Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman Al Saud, who previously served as an F-15 pilot in Royal Saudi Air Force, was the guest of honour of the ceremony. In his address, President Zardari said that the Pakistani nation and armed forces were always ready to respond to any aggression at all times. "Today's parade is a reminder of our unity, strength, and pride," said the president who earlier reviewed the parade after arriving at the venue escorted in his chariot by the presidential guards mounted on horses.

The president congratulated the nation on the Day which commemorated the historic struggle of the Muslims of the subcontinent to achieve a separate homeland under the leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. He also paid tribute to the martyrs and Ghazis with a resolve to make all-out efforts to protect national security and sovereignty.

The president's address encompassed domestic subjects like recent elections, efforts against terrorism, economic challenges, and the establishment of SIFC, and the regional situation including the human rights abuses in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir as well as Gaza. He

told the gathering that the Kashmir dispute was the main reason for instability in the region as the people of Kashmir had been demanding their self-determination rights for the last 76 years.

Condemning the Indian brutalities and the human rights violations in Kashmir, President Zardari urged the international community to play its role in the implementation of the UN Security resolution. He also assured the Kashmiris that the people of Pakistan would continue standing by them till they were given their right to self-determination. Coming to the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, he appealed to the international community to take measures to ensure that killings of women and children was stopped and a ceasefire was declared, besides establishing a humanitarian corridor.

The president also reiterated Pakistan's continued support for the Palestinian people till the resolution of the issue as per their aspirations. Recounting the country's journey marked with many ups and downs, he said despite numerous challenges, the Pakistani nation achieved distinctions in the fields of defense, agriculture and technology, besides its internationally recognised contribution to fighting against terrorism.

Highlighting the current social, political and economic challenges facing the country, he said following the successful holding of elections and the formation of a democratic government, it was the responsibility of all to seek solutions to all the issues. "I believe that the way we faced the difficulties in the past, can steer the country out of the pervading problems even today. The Pakistani nation is hardworking and intelligent. The youth, using their mental capabilities, can guarantee a bright future," he remarked.

President Zardari told the ceremony that the Special Investment Facilitation Council had been formed to attract investment in agriculture, livestock, mining, Information Technology and energy sectors. He also requested all the political parties to set aside their political interests and work unitedly to bring in country's prosperity. The president also thanked the friendly countries including China, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and the UAE for supporting Pakistan in the difficult times. The parade commenced with the national anthem, the recitation of verses from the Holy Quran, after a special salute was paid to the national flag. President Asif Zardari reviewed the parade led by Parade Commander Brigadier Shahzad Ali Arshad which followed the fly-past formation of the Pakistan Air Force and the Pakistan Navy.

## WB approves \$149.7m in financing for two projects

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: In order to support Digital Economy Enhancement Project (DEEP) and Sindh Barrages Improvement Project (SBIP), the World Bank's Board of Executive Directors has approved \$149.7 million in financing for Pakistan.

DEEP worth \$78 million will support the expansion of digitally enabled public services delivery for citizens and firms, while the second additional financing for the Sindh Barrages Improvement Project (\$71.7 million) will support better resilience to floods and improvements in the reliability, safety, and management of the provincial barrages, a statement issued.

"The catastrophic floods that hit Pakistan in 2022 were a tragic reminder of the importance to build resilience to such disasters, including by strengthening barrages and their management," said the bank's Country Director for Pakistan Najy Benhassine. "Also, supporting the growing digital economy in Pakistan is key for economic and social development, broadening connectivity and access to government and financial services for citizens and entrepreneurs, particularly women."

DEEP would develop digital authentication and data-sharing platforms to enable Pakistan to respond more effectively and efficiently to shocks, deliver better e-government services to citizens and firms, and support regulatory reforms in the sector, including to enable greater private participation, and strengthen personal data protection and online safety. The project would also promote financial inclusion by enabling women in particular, to open bank accounts or apply remotely for credit through a smartphone application. It will also contribute to addressing barriers such as limited mobility and digital literacy.

The second additional financing for the SBIP would support the full completion and commissioning of the Guddu and Sukkur barrages rehabilitation works and improve the management of three barrages in Sindh including Guddu, Sukkur and Kotri. Having safe and effective barrages to convey flood waters downstream is a crucial part of building climate resilience in Sindh.

The additional financing will also contribute to strengthening the provincial barrage management unit's technical capacities, promoting women's participation in emergency preparedness, and implementing extensive citizen engagement and stakeholder participation.







# Pak Day celebrated with national zeal, enthusiasm

PESHAWAR (APP): Like other parts of the country, Pakistan Day was celebrated with national enthusiasm in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and merged districts with a vow to collectively work for progress, development and prosperity of the mother-land.

The day dawned with special prayers in mosques for solidarity, sovereignty and integrity of the country. Seminars, declamation contest, rallies and functions to mark the day were held in all districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa wherein speakers highlighted the importance of Pakistan Day and tireless struggle of forefathers to get a separate homeland for Muslims of subcontinent.

Art exhibitions and programs were also held in schools of different districts highlighting importance of the day.

TV channels, Radios stations and newspapers also aired and published special programs to commemorate Pakistan Day.

In a message issued here, Advisor to Chief Minister on Youth Affairs, Syed Fakar Jehan said that Pakistan Day reminds us the matchless sacrifices of Muslims leaders that resulted in creation of a separate homeland for Muslims living in subcontinent.

He said that we should reiterate pledge on the day to take forward vision of our forefathers and work for betterment of country and its people.

A ceremony to celebrate Pakistan Day was held in The Educators School Al Noor Campus Baghdda Mardan, addressing the ceremony, General Secretary Radio Broadcaster Association, Ajmal Shah informed people about the reasons behind creation of Pakistan and tireless struggle of Mulsim leaders.

He urged people to shun difference and work for progress and prosperity of the country. Programs including declamation contests, tableaux and national songs competition were also held on the occasion.

Assistant Commissioner Upper Orakzai, Imtiaz Ali Shah led a rally at Khalju to mark Pakistan Day. The rally was participated by large number of people, teachers, students and local elders.

District administration Kurram held a flag hoisting ceremony in connection with Pakistan Day in Governor Cottage Parachinar.

Addressing the ceremony, Deputy Commissioner Kurram, Javaid Mehsud highlighted sacrifices of people for the motherland and urged people to work for development of the country.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Health Syed Qasim Ali Shah presiding over a meeting. MNA Sher Ali Arbab also present on occasion.

## 23rd March: Historic day signifying Muslims epic struggle for Pakistan

PESHAWAR (APP): The 23rd March 1940 is a momentous day in the history of subcontinent that signified Muslims' epic struggle and strong commitment for Pakistan.

Rejecting the negative policies of Congress and offers of colonial masters, the Muslims of Indo-Pakistan subcontinent had united at Iqbal Park Lahore in 1940 where that set a clear direction for creation of Pakistan.

Like other provinces of Pakistan, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's people had extended allout support to the Father of the Nation Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah when he came here to mobilize its people for Pakistan following an adoption of the historic resolution.

The arrival of the great leader committed to the cause of a separate homeland for Muslims had moved the people of KP (then NWFP) whom decorated their homes, bazaars, vehicles, and towns with Muslim League flags inscribed with different slogans of Pakistan and Quaid-i-Azam Zindabad besides showered rose petals on their beloved Quaid.

Quaid-i-Azam had received a rousing welcome when he came to Peshawar in 1945 at Peshawar and later Islamia College Peshawar (ICP).

From Chitral to DI Khan and Waziristan to Kohistan, the people of all 37 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa arrived to see few glimpses of the legendary Quaid besides raised full throated slogans of Pakistan and Quaid e Azam Zindabad.

"The students of Muslim Students Federation of ICP had presented him Rs 8,000 as fund for the Pakistan Movement and assured him to present 8,000 committed educated workers for accomplishment of his great mission when he came again to ICP" said former Vice Chancellor ICP, Professor Dr Muhammad Naushad Khan while talking to APP.

"It was the love of people of KP with Quaid-i-Azam that Muslim League had won more than 50 seats in this province and after that nobody could stop independence movement of Pakistan from here."

He said Quaid-i-Azam visited Islamia College Peshawar three times in his life to acknowledge the outstanding role of its students for Pakistan.

Visited ICP in 1936, 1945 and 1948, the legendary Quaid was greatly impressed by the devotion of its faculty, staff and students besides the building's domes, lush-green lawns, and majestic edifice of its beautiful architecture.

Dr Naushad said that Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah had considered students of ICP and people of KP as a frontline force in his constitutional and peaceful struggle for independence of Pakistan.

In his last visit to the ICP as Governor General of Pakistan on April 12, 1948,

he said establishment of a quality university in Peshawar was very nearer to his heart, which would be great centre of culture and learning from where the rays of knowledge and culture can spread upto the Middle East and Central Asia and soon people of this province would get a quality university here.

Following a gap of one year, the Government of Pakistan, had established the University of Peshawar near Islamia College Peshawar in 1949.

Quaid-i-Azam also became an honorary member of the Khyber Union, a debating society of the college, in 1936.

He said Mr. Jinnah's love for ICP could be judged from his will written on May 30, 1939 in Bombay in which he declared ICP, Muslim University Aligarh and Sindh Madrassatul Islam, Karachi, as among the inheritors of his property.

The Quaid Trust later paid Rs10.81 million in different installments to the college. The amount was spent on the establishment of Quaid-i-Azam College of Commerce, University of Peshawar, construction of Jinnah residential quarters for the college employees, Jinnah College for Women and the newly-constructed Takbeer block.

Dr Naushad Khan said that it was a day of making a firm pledge to work hard in our respective field for progress and prosperity of Pakistan.

On students' demands, the great Quaid presented glowing tributes to the services of its students towards making of Pakistan in these words.

"I am indeed very happy to be present here today and to have the privilege of addressing the students of this great Darul Uloom, who are the future builders of Pakistan."

In fact, he reminded the students that now we have achieved the national goal of Pakistan and it was our collective responsibility to work hard in our respective professions with high-level of dedication, commitment and sincerity to make it one of the greatest state of the world.

He advised the students to develop a sound sense of discipline, character, initiative and a solid academic background and devote themselves wholeheartedly towards studies.

"Now we have our own government, therefore, we must be constructive in criticism and students can make a big contribution towards promotion of harmony, unity and development of Pakistan."

Quaid-i-Azam while addressing students said that remember your government was 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."

On students' demands,



PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Higher Education Meena Khan Afridi addressing at St John's Girls High School.

## Mouthwatering cuisines of KP attract faithful ahead of Iftar

PESHAWAR (APP): The mouthwatering cuisines including Peshawari rice polao, chappli kabab and beef behari besides chicken achar have become the most sought after item of Muslims during Iftar parties in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Great rush was being witnessed in outlets of these food shops at Qissa Khwani, Namak Mandi, Furdus and other bazaars ahead of Aftari where the shopkeepers are making roaring business.

Arif Ahmad (45), a famous Chappli Kabab and Peshawari Rice Polao seller, who keeps up deluge of the parcel orders of fasting people for mouthwatering Peshawar's traditional cuisine just prior to Iftar and earning maximum capital.

Arif Ahmad, who looks well composed saddled up in high armchair amid hustle and jostle of shoppers with stretched hands at his shop established by his grandfather Jumma Khan in 1950, is working against the clock to meet the takeaway and home delivery orders usually weighting from one kilogram to five KGs.

Sitting on left side of a long black frying pan beneath big gas flames cooking the famous Chappli Kabab and 50KG marinated meat in a tray on right side of his two-storey famous shop in front of Kanungam Park, Arif said, "these days most of Chappli Kabab lovers ask for parcels from one KG to five KG for Iftar parties at home rather than eating it in restaurants" Arif who inherited the hard-earned business from his father told APP.

"I had inherited Chappli Kabab's business from my father, Jalil Ahmad after he took over it from his own father, Jumma Khan in 1950. Following the death of my father, all his (Jalil Ahmed) six sons had carried forward legacy of this hard-earned business and continued till date with a lot of hope to transfer it to next generation," he recalled.

"My grandfather had started chappli kabab business from a single 'Karahi' (frypane) 75 years ago and today with grace of Allah Almighty we have six more shops including one at melody food street, Islamabad, two each at Firdous and University Road, one each at Gul Bahar and Faqirabad Peshawar," he added.

"We use minced meat and once it is rightly crushed by an experienced labourers, tomatoes, red chili powder, onions, dry coriander leaves, eggs, ginger, lemon juice, salt, masala and pomegranate seeds go into its marinated meat, making it delicious," he said, adding it takes only 10 minutes to make a complete Chappli Kabab served with chutney, ketchup, salad, yogurt and naan to customers.

Eminent writer and traveler, Qari Javed Iqbal in his book 'Saqafat Sarhad Tarikh K Ayeene Me' (frontier culture in mirror of history) wrote that people of united India were mostly vegetarians but all kings and invaders from the west including Mughals, Turks, Ghazni and Afghans who conquered India loved these traditional fruits of this region.

They introduced the habit of eating meat in united India where Mughals made meat-eating a cultural dish by making it a substitute for beef and buffalo meat by adding various spices and ingredients to it.

Before marching towards India, he said the kings, warriors and invaders had stayed in Peshawar by introducing Chappli Kabab's recipe during Mughal dynasty, which had later gained

international fame owing to its appetizing aroma and delectable taste.

Its recipe was later shifted to Karachi, Lahore, Quetta and other cities of Pakistan besides Jalalabad and Kabul in Afghanistan and Amratsar, Lucknow and Dheli in India.

In Peshawar, more than 3,000 chappli kebab small and big outlets were existed mostly in Firdus, Bakhshu bridge, Warsak Road, Ring Road, Nothia, Mandai, Mandai, Hashtnagri, Ramadas, Faqirabad and Board bazaars, attracting foodies.

"Chappli Kabab and Peshawari Rice Polao are my favorite dishes and my Iftar seems incomplete without tasting its aromatic bites," said Professor Ehtisham Khatra, a resident of Wapda Town Peshawar while talking to APP at famous Chappli Kabab shop at Qissa Khwani bazaar for parcel.

He said there are over dozens of kabab recipes such as shami, boti, sekh kabab, behari, delhi, lahori and kashmiris in subcontinent but none of them can compete with famous Peshawari chappli kabab in taste and deliciousness.

He said one KG chappli kabab was being sold at Rs850 to Rs900 in Ramadan in Peshawar against Rs750 to Rs800 per KG in normal days that needed to be checked by the district administration.

Besides Chappli Kabab, Arif said takeaway service of traditional cuisines including Peshawari rice polao, paye, dampkoh, namak mandi karahi, lamb chops, BBQ and others traditional foods have also shined in Ramadan.

Arif said people also dispatch it to UAE, Saudi Arabi and other countries for their friends, relatives and loved ones besides used in walima, engagements and haaqeeqa of the newborn in normal days.

The spokesman of Food Services and Halal Authority told APP that countering of adulteration in spices products mostly used in traditional cuisines including chappli kabab, paye, dampkoh and mutton karahi was a big challenge.

To counter the challenge, he said seven mobile testing laboratories were setup at divisional headquarters of KP, adding ten more such labs would be established in major cities including Swabi, Batagram, Chitral, Haripur, Manshera, Charsadda, Nowshera, Dir and Chitral.

KP's lacked the facility of state-of-the art food testing laboratory since long and mostly relied on Punjab province. In case of person or factory is found guilty of adulteration in food related items, heavy fine were being imposed while the accused could be sent behind the bar besides confiscation of materials/units.

Three foods training schools at Mardan, Peshawar and Abbottabad have been completed. He underscored the need for establishment of nutritional wings, food screening laboratories and halal food research wings in all districts besides inclusion of food subjects in curriculum and constant awareness campaign by media and religious scholars necessary to win fight against menace of adulteration in milks and food products.

The crackdown against adulteration in food cuisines and milk were underway in the province where adulteration goods including spices, ice cream, beverages were being disposed off.

He said it was mandatory for hotels and food restaurants to ensure maintain hygiene of kitchens and eatery halls while chefs should have a license of having no communicable disease. He sought cooperation of masses imperative to win fight against adulteration.

### Inquiry ordered into death of youth

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial Health Minister Qasim Ali Shah taking notice of news regarding death of a young boy allegedly due to a wrong injection administered by a quack has directed Health Care Commission to investigate the matter.

Expressing regret over the death, Qasim Ali Shah stated that no unregistered clinic or practitioner should be allowed to jeopardize lives of patients.

He highlighted that a crackdown on unregistered clinics and hospitals across the province is underway adding that government is committed to close all that clinics and facilities that are being run by unqualified medical practitioners.

### KP float praised for display of tourism, cultural assets

**F.P. Report**

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) erected a cultural float that showcased the land of ancient civilization, rich cultures, brave and hospitable people, e-governance system, Tourism Police, BRT, historic sites, traditional Khattak dance, the famous musical instrument Rabab and much more.

KPCTA Director General Barkatullah Marwat said that like other provinces, the KPCTA had also prepared a decorated float, which beautifully presented the essence of tourism and cultures in the province.

In front of the float, he said the Administration Block of the University of Peshawar was smartly designed. Established in 1950, he said the University of Peshawar was one of the oldest education-

al institutions of Pakistan that has equipped thousands of people with the ornament of education and produced great personalities in almost all the fields since its inception.

The Swat Motorway tunnel was another eye-catching image having a 160-km four-lane highway managed by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. It helps tourists from across the country to access the Swat Valley and other northern regions.

The float also contains the gateway to the subcontinent - the famous Bab-e-Khyber - located near the Pak-Afghan border.

The camping pods installed in various tourist destinations are also visible on the float that meet the needs of domestic and foreign tourists in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

## Know your rights: The Right to Information Act 2013

**Haji Akbar Afridi**

In our democratic puzzle, the Right to Information (RTI) Act 2013 is like a key thread, bringing the ideas of fairness and responsibility into how our government works. This law, made to help people and make things clear, is a big part of what makes our democracy strong.

So, what does the RTI Act do? It's a handy tool for regular folks like you and me to ask the government for information they have. It's like a way for us to connect with the people in charge, showing that having people who know what's going on is really important for our democracy.

One cool thing about the RTI Act is that it covers a lot of ground. It's not just about big government offices; it goes all the way down to local levels. This means you can ask about anything from big decisions to what's happening in your own neighbourhood. It's the Act's way of saying that everyone deserves to know what's happening in our government.

The Act also talks a lot about responsibility. It makes sure that there are people in the government, called Public Information Officers (PIOs), whose job is to help us get the information we want. Plus, it says they have to be quick about it, so we're not left waiting for too long. This keeps things moving smoothly and makes sure everyone is doing their part.

But there's more! The RTI Act is like a superhero against bad stuff in the government. It lets us check what the government is doing and helps stop things like cheating or making bad choices. When people know they're being watched, they're more likely to do the right thing. Even though the RTI Act is awesome, it does have some challenges. Not everyone knows about it, and sometimes, the government makes it a bit hard to get the info. But that's where we come in - by learning more about our rights and keeping an eye on things, we can make the Act work better for all of us.

Concluding, the RTI Act is not just a rule; it's about what makes our democracy special. As regular folks, let's use this tool wisely, asking questions, and being part of making our government open and responsible. It's how we keep our democracy strong and make sure it works for everyone.

## Shahida appointed as convener of FPCCI women regional body

PESHAWAR (APP): Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Vice President, Qurrat-ul-Ain has appointed Mrs. Shahida Perven as convener FPCCI women KP regional standing committee on women empowerment and development for the year 2024-25, representing women chamber of commerce and industry, Peshawar division.

She is authorized to select and appoint professional and experienced members throughout KP region (minimum 9 members) in her committee from the relevant field within 14 days as per SOPs of FPCCI standing committees, who can contribute effectively and convene meeting of the committee within 30 days of the nomination, says a statement here.

She is advised to hold at least one meeting of her respective committee quarterly and summary of actions to be taken by the committee may be furnished to the FPCCI secretariat for necessary dissemination to the executive committee. The performance and contribution of the committee would be highlighted and published in the FPCCI performance report.

The activities of the committee would be reviewed on quarterly basis and if the committee remained non-functional, the convenership would be withdrawn.





## In brief

### 80 illegal miners held in Kohat Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Police launched a major crack-down against the mafia extracting gold from the Indus River and initially arrested 80 people who were extracting gold through illegal mining. During operations at different places of the Indus River heavy machinery and other equipment used in mining have also been seized as a result of the raid. Cases under the Mining Act have been registered against the detained persons in Gumbat police station. According to police sources, after confirming the complaints received by District Police Officer (DPO) Kohat Muhammad Umar Khan, a mega crackdown was launched against the illegal mining mafia and the police initially raided the areas of Kamar, Chor Lucky, Indus River Channel and Khushalgarh 80 people involved in illegal mining have been arrested as a result of the operation at the site. Heavy machinery and vehicles have also been taken into custody during the operation. The action was taken by SHO of police station Gumbat kohat Riaz Hussain and his police team along with the Department of Minerals. The police registered cases under the Mining Act against the suspects involved in the illegal mining of gold in the Indus River and illegal extraction of minerals in the Gumbat police station and investigation has been started against the mafia extracting pure gold (placer gold) from the Indus River through illegal mining.

### 4 drug peddlers arrested F.P. Report

DI KHAN: Dera police during the successful operation against the drug peddlers arrested four accused and recovered 1 kg of ice and 55 grams of heroin from their possession here on Saturday. According to the police spokesman, on the direction of the District Police Officer Dera Nasir Mehmood, Cantt police station led by the SHO Gul Sher Khan with police team conducted the successful operation against the drug peddlers. During the operation police arrested Fiaz son of Rab nawaz resident of Kandiyal and recovered 370 grams of ice from his possession. Similarly, another accused Imran son of Ramzan arrested and 55 grams of heroin recovered from his possession. Ashir son of Azeem resident of Awanaabad was arrested and 331 grams of ice recovered from his possession. Meanwhile police arrested Anser Shah son of Manzoor Shah and recovered 372 grams of ice from his possession. Police registered the separate cases against the arrested drug peddlers and started further investigations.

### TB awareness walk organized F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: An awareness walk held on World Tuberculosis (TB) Day by the TB Control Program officials of Toba Tek Singh. The awareness walk was led by CEO Health Dr. Kashif Mehmood Kamboh. In which health department officers and other staff participated. World TB Day is celebrated on March 24 across the world. The aim of the awareness walk is to make the public aware of the disease like TB and to take preventive measures to prevent it. On this occasion, CEO Health Dr. Kashif Mehmood Kamboh while talking to media representatives said that TB is a hundred percent curable disease.

# Contaminated water kills 0.25m children yearly

## F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Speakers at a function pointed out that about 250,000 children died of consuming contaminated water each year in Pakistan. The Al-Khidmat Foundation (AKF) arranged the function at a private school in Talash here to mark the World Water Day that is observed each year on March 22nd.

The assistant commissioner Timergara Dr Nida Iqbal, AKF project manager clean drinking water Naseeb Zada, engineer Muhammad Ali, Ihsanullah and others addressed the function which was attended by social and political activists, students and area elders.

The speakers said that 'water for peace' was declared the theme of the Day as water scarcity always led to conflicts among individuals, communities and tribes. They said that clean water reservoirs across the globe were rapidly decreasing due to which about 700 million people would have to be migrated in the world by 2030. The speakers said that about 2.2 billion around the world and 22.1

million people in Pakistan did not have clean drinking water close to their homes. They pointed out that only 20 percent of the total population had access to safe drinking water in the country.

The speakers were of the view that many infectious diseases were spread in communities due to consumption of contaminated water. They suggested the governments and concerned quarters should take adequate measures to provide safe drinking water to people in Pakistan.

The speakers feared that future wars would be fought for water if the issue was not tackled thoughtfully. They asked people of Pakistan to avoid the wastage of clean drinking water and use little water while taking a bath or making ablution.

**HCC visits private clinics for registration:** The healthcare commission (HCC) has asked the owners of private clinics, medical laboratories and pharmacies to get them registered with the commission soon. Sources in the health department told this reporter that a total of team teams formed by the HCC

on the directives of the provincial government would soon visit the Lower Dir district for registering private clinics, medical laboratories and pharmacies.

The sources said the process of registration would continue till March 31st. The HCC has asked the owners to get them registered with those teams as soon as possible and help it end quackery in the region.

**Bajaur-Dir bridge construction enters to final stage:** Jamiat Ulema Islam Fazl leader Maulana Muhammad Nabi Shah claimed that work on the Talash Bridge over a dry stream at Shamshi Khan was in its final stage.

Talking to local journalists at Timergara the JUI-F leader said the bridge was being built with a cost of Rs 90 million and the traffic to Upper Dir, Bajaur, Chitral and upper parts of Lower Dir would be diverted on it after Eid ul Fitr. Maulana Nabi Shah said that several people had lost lives in the past because of floods in Talash stream. He said that former federal minister Maulana Assad Mahmood took notice of the matter and approved appropriate funds for the bridge.

# March 23: A day to pledge with motherland

## F.P. Report

QUETTA: Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri, while congratulating the nation on the occasion of Pakistan Day on March 23, said in her congratulatory message that March 23 is the day of renewal of the pledge to establish a separate country for Muslims in the subcontinent.

A resolution was passed for the establishment of Pakistan on this day in 1940 and the Muslims of India turned the dream of Allama Muhammad Iqbal into a reality on August 14, 1947 through a peaceful struggle under the able leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

Today, the youth of the nation have a huge responsibility to compete in the world, to specialize in modern education and to play their role in the development and prosperity of the country, because in the future, our beloved homeland of Pakistan to take over the reins and We strongly hope that our youth will work day and night for the country and make the country developed by removing it from the list of developing countries.

She said that today we will not allow any kind of fire to come on the motherland Pakistan and all together we will fight the enemies of Pakistan and forget our personal interests and differences and collective interests for the country. Will work for the whole nation have to stand side by side for the security and stability of our country and face all the challenges together. For this, forgetting their differences and showing the best performance in their respective fields even today, Pakistan is facing internal and external enemies who do not want peace and order in Pakistan and development of Pakistan.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri said that in these circumstances there is a need for the Pakistani nation to realize the spirit of that revolutionary resolution and move beyond the traditional kind of renewal and work for the ideological and geographical completion of Pakistan according to this resolution. In order to make this God-given kingdom truly the Pakistan of Quaid-e-Azam and Iqbal, we have to show the same continuous and selfless sacrifice at the individual and collective level which was characteristic of the trained soldiers of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

The whole nation is united on the issue of security and the people of Pakistan together with their brave forces are determined to thwart any conspiracy against the motherland. She said that our beloved country Pakistan has seen many ups and downs since independence. Enemies have done many things for the instability of Pakistan but our forces have always thwarted their nefarious intentions and for this purpose our soldiers have sacrificed their lives which can never be forgotten.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri said that Pakistan is our country we all have to work together for the protection of this country, as Pakistan is facing internal and external enemies at this time we all have to play our role to fight for our beloved country. Our elders have made eternal sacrifices to get the value of the sacrifices of our elders. Let us pledge today that we will always strive for the development and prosperity of our beloved homeland Pakistan and will not spare any sacrifice for the sake of the country.

# Govt urged to take solid steps for provision of clean drinking water

## F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Speakers at a function held here pointed out that about 250,000 children died of consuming contaminated water each year in Pakistan. The Al-Khidmat Foundation (AKF) arranged the function at a private school in Talash here the other day to mark the World Water Day that is observed each year on March 22nd. The assistant commissioner Timergara Dr Nida Iqbal, AKF project manager clean drinking water Naseeb Zada, engineer Muhammad Ali, Ihsanullah and others addressed the function which was attended by social and political activists, students and area elders.

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They pointed out that only 20 percent of the total population had access to safe drinking water in the country. The speakers were of the view that many infectious diseases were spread in communities due to consumption of contaminated water. They suggested the governments and concerned quarters should take adequate measures to provide safe drinking water to people in Pakistan. They feared that future wars would be fought for water if the issue was not tackled thoughtfully. The speakers asked people of Pakistan to avoid the wastage of clean drinking water and use little water while taking a bath or making ablution.

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Timergara the JUI-F leader said the bridge was being built with a cost of Rs 90 million and the traffic to Upper Dir, Bajaur, Chitral and upper parts of Lower Dir would be diverted on it after Eid ul Fitr.

## Bazaars inspected F.P. Report

KARAK: District Food Controller (DFC) Karak Abu Bakar Mehmood along with Assistant Food Controller Aurangzeb Khan visited various markets and inspected edible items, on Saturday.

DFC checked general stores, butchers, fruit sellers, vegetable sellers, milk sellers, etc. Fine of thousands of rupees is deposited in the national treasury for violating the Food Law. Warning to various shopkeepers that Ramadan is the month of blessings and earning good deeds.

So, avoid taking unfair advantage, make sure to sell things as per the official rate. Violators of the official price list will be penalized and strict legal action will be taken. He made it clear that in the light of the orders of the provincial government, the series of actions against those who take illegal profits and hoard will continue.



LARKANA: Children enjoy bath in Rice Canal to get some relief from hot weather in the city.

# Scrutinization of govt offices directed in larger public interests

## F.P. Report

MARDAN: Commissioner Mardan Shaukat Ali ordered administrative officers to scrutinize the functioning of schools, hospitals, and other government offices. He emphasized ensuring prompt resolution of citizens' grievances at government offices.

Addressing a monthly review and performance session in his office, Commissioner Shaukat Ali was joined by Additional Commissioner Naeem Akhtar, Deputy Commissioner Dr. Tariqullah, Additional Deputy Commissioner Mardan Saeedullah Jan, and other officials. The meeting encompassed evaluations of officials' performances, revenue collection, court cases, and various administrative matters in Mardan and Swabi districts.

During the session, Commissioner Shaukat Ali expressed concerns over the persistent use of polythene bags, attributing them to environmental degradation and sewage blockages. He urged officials to enhance their efforts in curbing the use of polythene bags and crackdown on businesses violating regulations. Highlighting the government's legislative measures against polythene bags, he noted the administration's shortcomings in enforcement and emphasized the

need for stricter implementation. He vowed to not tolerate any further laxity on this issue.

Commissioner Mardan also directed the Town Municipal Officers to intensify efforts against illegal encroachments and unauthorized constructions in Mardan and Swabi. He stressed the importance of launching special drives against such violations and ensuring adherence to the law. Additionally, he urged the Traffic Management Organization to play an active role in addressing these concerns and fulfilling their responsibilities effectively. Measures to tackle unlawful activities and maintain law and order were also discussed during the meeting.

The directives issued by Commissioner Shaukat Ali underscore the administration's commitment to improving governance, addressing citizens' grievances, and upholding the rule of law in Mardan and Swabi districts.

**Ramzan package among 95 families distributed:** Save The Life Welfare Foundation in Baghdad Mardan extended a helping hand to ninety-five deserving families by distributing Ramadan food packages worth Rs. 480,000 as part of their Ramadan Package initiative. Each package comprises essential food items such as flour, rice, cooking oil,

sugar, lentils, dates, chickpea flour, and black tea, ensuring sustenance for families throughout the holy month of Ramadan.

The Foundation's Patron-in-Chief, Maulana Abdul Haq led a special ceremony to mark the occasion, attended by various members and volunteers of the foundation. The President of the foundation Maulana Ziaur Rehman Farooqi explained that a Google form was utilized to identify beneficiaries particularly orphans and widows within the community's jurisdiction.

After thorough verification 25 widows and orphans were categorized as the primary recipients, while 70 families were included in the secondary category. The distribution of Ramadan food packages aims to spread the joy of Ramadan among financially vulnerable families and provide them with essential sustenance during the blessed month.

Furthermore, Maulana Ziaur Rehman Farooqi outlined the foundation's future plans, highlighting their commitment to supporting orphans' education through scholarships. By offering educational opportunities, the foundation seeks to empower orphans to pursue better education paths, fostering integrity and satisfaction in their academic pursuits.

## Pakistan Day celebrated with enthusiasms F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Pakistan day celebrates adoption of historic Lahore Resolution on this day in 1940. Special prayers were offered in mosques after Fajr prayers for prosperity and solidarity of the country. National flag is hoisted on government buildings in the district while government buildings illuminated with colorful lights at night.

In this connection, Flag hosting ceremony held at district complex where Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad unfurled National Flag. ADCR Imtiaz Ali Baig, ADCG Hamadullah, AC Munawar Hussain and other officers participated the ceremony. Special prayers were offered for progress, prosperity and integrity of the country.

Addressing on the occasion, DC Sundas Irshad said that March 23, was being celebrated to renewed pledge to work hard for progress and prosperity of the country as well as to pay tribute to founder of Pakistan Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal and their companions who struggle for getting an independent and sovereign Islamic country. She lauded unforgettable services and sacrifices of martyred of Pakistan Movement.

## Man slits wife's throat

KASHMORE (INP): An angry husband killed his wife by slitting her throat with a sharp-edged knife in Kashmore district of interior Sindh after an argument over domestic issue on Saturday.

Deceased 30-year-old Shahida was mother of four children. After the incident, police reached the crime scene and arrested accused Asif Mirani. The incident occurred in Kashmore's Guddu Police Station's limits. After the gruesome incident, panic gripped the area while neighbours and relatives expressed condolences with the parents of the victim.

# Mashal annoys sanitation condition at shelter houses

## F.P. Report

MARDAN: Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mashal Azam Yousafzai visited Mardan, expressing displeasure over the poor sanitation situation in the shelter houses. Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Zakat and Ushar, Social Welfare and Women's Development Mashal Azam Yousafzai here the other day visited Mardan where she did her iftar along with travelers on Ramzan Dastarkhwan at the shelter located in DHQ Hospital Mardan.

Advisor to Chief Minister Mashal Azam Yousafzai directed the administration to lay a separate Dastarkhwan for women alone. Advisor to Chief Minister Mashal Azam Yousafzai inspected the shelter and expressing her displeasure at the poor

sanitation situation, directed to improve the sanitation situation and find an alternative place for the shelter.

Talking to media representatives on this occasion, Advisor to Chief Minister Mashal Azam Yousafzai said that with the after establishment of the provincial government, shelters and " langar khana " were reactivated in the light of the orders of Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur. During the month of Ramadan Mubarak, special measures were taken for the arrangement of Sahari and Iftar, where this facility is available to the travelers.

In response a question, Mashal Azam Yousafzai said that till 20th of Ramadan, Rs.10000 will be distributed among more than eight lakh families. In this way, district level committees have been formed

to include the beneficiaries who were left out of the Ehsaas program in the Ramadan relief package.

She further said that according to the vision of Founder Chairman Imran Khan, no one will sleep hungry and without a roof. Both factories and Langar Khana will be built for the people. Now 100% of the population in the province can avail health card facility. We are not running Government on Tik Tok and photo shoot. We want to take Pakistan out of the quagmire.

If anyone wants to compete with us, then compete with us in giving welfare to the people of Pakistan. She said regarding the closure of the salaries of the employees of shelters that steps are being taken in this regard and their salaries will start soon.

# Volunteer dies under avalanche in Chitral

## F.P. Report

UPPER CHITRAL: One died under avalanche at Booni Bozand road near Istaro village at Upper Chitral when a labor was clearing road from debris.

According to detail a local man Muhammad Ishaq son of Zar Gul was clearing road from debris voluntarily to open the road for traffic on self help basis. Meanwhile heavy land sliding hit him as a result of

this unfortunate accident, Muhammad Ishaq, resident of Trich Shooth was died on the spot.

Talking to our representative on phone, the local people said that the attention of Communication and Works (C&W) department and the relevant authorities was drawn to the serious situation of this difficult and dangerous road, but according to them, no action was taken by C&W to clear the road from

heavy boulders and debris and today an innocent took live of a poor man who was clearing the road on voluntary basis.

The local people raised the question whether the maintenance and cleaning of this road is not included in responsibilities of C&W department. Is the protection of basic human rights and life and property of the people not included in the responsibility of the administration?

# Pakistan Day celebrates at Chandka medical college

## F.P. Report

LARKANA: Pakistan Day ceremony was organized in Larkana, Chandka Medical College, on Saturday.

According to details, prayers were offered for prosperity, later a Pakistan Day rally was organized under the leadership of Principal Prof. Dr. Zameer

Ahmed Soomro, Dean Prof. Dr. Bashir Ahmad Sheikh, Dean Prof. Dr. Muhammad Hanif Sheikh, Prof. Muhammad Saleem Sheikh, Prof. Amanullah in the rally. Abbasi, Director Physiotherapy Dr. Mukesh Kumar, Vice Principal Prof. Dr. Shahid Hussain Soomro, Dr. Fauzia Chandio, Dr.

Masood Ahmad Qureshi, Security Chief Sultan Ahmad Bhutto, Admin Officer Waheed-ul-Zaman, Mushtaq Ahmed Mirani along with faculty, officers and employees participated in the rally. At the end, the participants of the rally planted saplings in accordance with the day.





# Philippines accuses China of new water cannon attacks in Sea

MANILA: Manila has accused China's coastguard of firing water cannon at one of its supply boats, in the latest incident between the two countries in the disputed South China Sea. The Philippine military said the Saturday morning confrontation lasted for nearly an hour and took place as it sought to resupply a small garrison of sailors on board the sunken Sierra Madre off Second Thomas Shoal.

The shoal, known as Ayungin in the Philippines, has been the site of multiple similar stand-offs in recent months. It lies about 200 kilometres (124 miles) from the western Philippine island of Palawan, and more than 1,000 kilometres (621 miles) from China's southern Hainan island. The military released a video clip showing a white ship marked China Coast Guard crossing the bow of a grey vessel it identified as the Philippine supply boat Unaizah May 4, and unleashing its water cannon.

"The UM4 supply boat sustained heavy damages at around 08:52 (00:52 GMT) due to the continued blasting of water cannons from the CCG vessels," the military said in a statement, without going into detail about the damage. A Philippine Coast Guard escort vessel later reached the damaged boat "to provide assistance", the military said.

Gan Yu, a spokesman for the China Coast Guard, said that the Philippine convoy "forcibly intruded into the area despite the Chinese side's repeated warnings and route controls", adding the Chinese carried out "control, obstruction and eviction in accordance with law". China claims almost the entire South China Sea, despite an international court finding in 2016 that the nine-dash line on which it bases its claim was without merit. The Philippines claims areas of the sea around its coasts as do Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam. The self-ruled island of Taiwan is also a

claimant. Manila has revived and expanded its military ties with the United States, a long-time ally, as the situation has become more tense. The United States lays no claims to the strategic waters but has sent Navy ships on transit missions through the waterway in what it calls "freedom of navigation" operations, which have been criticised by China. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited the Philippines last week and stressed the US commitment to Manila was "ironclad".

Two days after that visit, the Chinese coastguard also tried to drive away Filipino scientists who landed on two cays near Scarborough Shoal, a contested South China Sea outcrop that Beijing seized from the Philippines after a months-long standoff in 2012. The Unaizah May 4 had returned to sea after being damaged in a China Coast Guard water cannon attack off Second Thomas Shoal earlier this month. It was escorted by two Filipino coastguard vessels and two Philippine Navy ships, a Philippine military statement said.

Commodore Jay Tarruela, a Philippine Coast Guard spokesman for South China Sea issues, said in a separate statement that one of the escort vessels, the BRP Cabra, was "impeded and encircled" by three Chinese coastguard and other vessels early Saturday. As a result, Cabra was "isolated from the resupply boat due to the irresponsible and provocative behaviour of the Chinese maritime forces", he added.

The Chinese side showed a "disregard" for the Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGS), the statement said. The Sierra Madre was run aground in 1999 and the troops living on the warship need frequent resupplies of food, water and other necessities. — Aljazeera

# Refugee camps in Chad are overcrowded

METCHE CAMP, Chad (AP): Overcrowded refugee camps in eastern Chad are set to run out of money soon, exacerbating a dire humanitarian crisis caused by the spillover from a deadly conflict in Sudan, the United Nations said.

More than a million people in Chad, including refugees, face losing access to lifesaving aid unless more funding is raised to help, the UN World Food Program said this month. The devastating conflict between feuding generals in Sudan has killed more than 5,000 people there and displaced over 5 million, the United Nations said. In Chad, refugee numbers are at a 20-year high. The UN has warned that the conflict is on course to become the world's worst hunger crisis, with a third of Sudan's 18 million people facing acute food insecurity already.

At refugee camps in eastern Chad, lack of clean drinking water and sanitation is causing dangerous diseases to spread. Doctors Without Borders said it has recorded almost 1,000 cases of hepatitis E in the camps and several pregnant women have died. "The sit-

uation is dire in all camps," said Erneau Mondesir, the group's medical coordinator in the region. "Without swift action to improve sanitation infrastructure and enhance people's access to clean water, we risk witnessing a surge in preventable illnesses and unnecessary loss of life."

At the Metche Camp, which is sheltering some 40,000 refugees, people are in dire need of water, food, shelter and basic sanitation. Earlier this month an Associated Press reporter saw aid workers unload sacks of grain from trucks for distribution as fierce winds blew across the rocky, sandy terrain. Aid workers used loudspeakers to explain the work and distribute tokens among refugees. "Here we do distribution in a targeted manner," Ahmat Absakine, an aid worker with Caritas, another aid group in the region.

Water shortages are causing diseases to spread, and aid workers fear a catastrophe if supplies run out. "The spillover from the crisis in Sudan is overwhelming an underfunded and overstretched humanitarian response in Chad. We

need donors to prevent the situation from becoming an all-out catastrophe," said Pierre Honnorat, the World Food Program's top representative in Chad.

Analysts also fear the humanitarian situation could cause Chad's own political tensions to erupt. In February, opposition leader Yaya Dillo was killed in the capital. He was the president's cousin and a strong contender in the presidential election scheduled for May. Finances and aid supplies at humanitarian operations are critically low. This will increase competition over resources between refugees and host communities in eastern Chad, further fueling local tensions and regional instability," said Andrew Smith, senior Africa analyst at Verisk Maplecroft.

Chad's interim president, Mahamat Deby Itno, seized power after his father who ran the country for more than three decades was killed fighting rebels in 2021. Last year, the government announced it was extending the 18-month transition for two more years, which led to protests across the country.

# Venezuela opposition leader names alternate

CARACAS: Maria Corina Machado, the opposition leader in Venezuela's upcoming presidential election, has thrown her support behind an alternate candidate as she continues to face a ban from running for office. She named the 80-year-old historian and professor Corina Yoris to be her replacement in the July 28 race.

The announcement came, as the administration of President Nicolas Maduro received international condemnation for its alleged pressure campaign against Machado. Earlier in the day, the United States Department of State issued a statement condemning the arrests of individuals close to Machado, including two members of her campaign: Dignora Hernandez and Henry Alvarez.

"The decision by Maduro and his representatives to detain two members of the leading opposition candidate's campaign and issue warrants for seven others represents a disturbing escalation of repression against Venezuela's opposition parties," spokesperson Matthew Miller said in a statement. "We continue to call for the immediate release of all political prisoners." Alvarez had served as national coordinator for Machado's liberal party,

Vente Venezuela. Hernandez, meanwhile, was the party's political secretary.

They both were arrested on conspiracy charges, for allegedly fomenting violence. Venezuela's Attorney General Tarek William Saab described them as participating in schemes to attack military installations, among other acts aimed at "destabilising" the country. Other party members, including Machado's close associate Magalli Meda, had arrest warrants issued for similar charges.

But Machado has denounced all the charges as "completely false", and international observers warned Maduro's administration against attempts to derail the opposition. Chile's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for instance, called the arrests "an action contrary to the democratic spirit that should prevail in any electoral process". Human rights organisations have long accused Maduro and his allies of using government forces to violently quash opposition, including through arbitrary arrests and torture.

Machado, a former member of Venezuela's National Assembly, has herself been banned from holding public office in the country. In June, the comptroller general announced

she was disqualified from running from public office for 15 years, due to her support of US sanctions. But at the time, Machado was the frontrunner for the opposition primary, and she ultimately won that race in October.

An estimated 2.4 million Venezuelans voted in the primary election, which was designed to select an opponent to Maduro. Early results showed Machado received over 93 percent of the primary vote, a landslide. She has long been considered a favourite to run against Maduro, who is seeking a third six-year term. The October opposition primary unfolded as Maduro's government accepted a deal, known as the Barbados Agreement, to hold a competitive presidential election in 2024, monitored by international observers.

In exchange, the US eased certain sanctions, on the condition that the deal was upheld. It has since reimposed some of those sanctions after a Venezuelan court upheld Machado's ban in January. But Machado remained under the ban, even after the Barbados Agreement. And the opposition faced a deadline to name a candidate to appear on the presidential ballot. — Aljazeera

# Orbán congratulates Putin on election win

BUDAPEST (AP): Hungary's populist prime minister, Viktor Orbán, has congratulated Russian President Vladimir Putin on his victory in an election whose outcome was never in doubt after systematic crackdowns on dissent.

Orbán, widely seen as Putin's closest ally in the European Union, sent the letter of congratulations after the release of official election results in Russia, according to his press chief. The Hungarian leader was the only head of a EU country to congratulate Putin on his reelection, which will extend his nearly quarter-century rule of Russia by another six years.

Putin's landslide victory was widely criticized by Western leaders, who characterized the result as pre-ordained in Russia's repressive political system. The EU criticized the election as taking place in a "highly restricted environment exacerbated also by Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine." "Russian authorities have continued to increase the systematic internal repression by cracking down on opposition politicians, civil society organisations, independent media and other critical voices with the use of repressive legislation and politically motivated prison sentences," an EU statement said.

Orbán's letter said that the cooperation between Hungary and Russia, "based on mutual respect, enables important discussions even in challenging geopolitical contexts." He also pointed out what he called Hungary's "commitment to peace," which has taken the form of repeated calls for an immediate cease-fire in Ukraine without outlining what such a step would entail for that country's territorial integrity.

Orbán's government has taken a differing approach to the war in Ukraine from its EU and NATO allies since Russia began its full-scale invasion more than two years ago. Hungary has refused to supply Ukraine with weapons or allow their transfer across its borders, and has held up EU efforts to supply Ukraine with badly needed funding. Hungary has also sought to deepen energy deals with Moscow even as other countries in Europe have decreased their dependency on Russian fossil fuels. Orbán's approach has led to significant tensions with Ukraine's government and with his partners in the EU.

# Kenyan doctors hold protest

NAIROBI (AP): Hundreds of Kenyan doctors protested in the streets demanding better pay and working conditions in an ongoing nationwide strike that has entered its second week.

The doctors carried placards and chanted against the Kenyan government, saying it had failed to implement a raft of promises, including a collective bargaining agreement signed in 2017 after a 100-day strike during which people died from lack of care. Kenya Medical Practitioners Pharmacists and Dentists Union Secretary-General Dr. Davji Bhimji said the strike will continue until all the demands are met.

"We have nothing else to lose but the chains of poverty and distress that we've been having," he said. The standoff has left thousands of Kenyans without much-needed public health services. Health Minister Susan Nakhumicha said she had instructed two top referral hospitals to recruit doctors to replace those taking part in the national strike.

Bhimji said the hiring of new doctors to replace those on strike would not settle the underlying labor concerns that caused the strike. "I'm very sure those doctors cannot run those hospitals because those terms are quite exploitative and demeaning," he said. The doctors stopped providing emergency services at public hospitals as they escalated the strike despite a court order calling for talks between the union and the Health Ministry.

# Kate Middleton reveals cancer diagnosis

LONDON: Kate Middleton, the Princess of Wales, has disclosed that she has cancer and is undergoing chemotherapy. Kate released a video update regarding her health. The message, recorded, was broadcast two days later. It came after weeks of speculation about her whereabouts and health since she was hospitalised in January.

"In January, I underwent major abdominal surgery in London and at the time, it was thought that my condition was non-cancerous," Kate said. "The surgery was successful. However, tests after the operation found cancer had been present. My medical team therefore advised that I should undergo a course of preventative chemotherapy and I am now in the early stages of that treatment."

She explained her diagnosis was a "huge shock". "As you can imagine, this has taken time. It has taken me time to recover from major surgery in order to start my treatment. But, most importantly, it has taken us time to explain everything to George, Charlotte and Louis in a way that is appropriate for them, and to reassure them that I am going to be OK," Kate added, referring to her three children with Prince William, the eldest son of King Charles and heir to the British throne.

Prince George is 10 years old; Princess Charlotte, 8; and Prince Louis, 5. Kate didn't reveal what type of cancer she had been diagnosed with, while she also asked for space and privacy. "We hope that you will understand that, as a family, we now need some time, space and privacy while I complete my treatment," she explained.

"My work has always brought me a deep sense of joy and I look forward to being back when I am able, but for now I must focus on making a full recovery." The cancer diagnosis is the latest in a series of health challenges that the royal family has had to battle. King Charles was diagnosed with cancer in February, less than 18 months after succeeding his mother Queen Elizabeth following her death in September 2022. He has since stepped back from public engagements. Buckingham Palace has not said at what stage his cancer was found.

On January 21, Prince Andrew's ex-wife, Sarah, Duchess of York, said she had malignant melanoma, a form of skin cancer. Kate, 42, had what was described as abdominal surgery on January 16. The news wasn't announced until the next day when Kensington Palace revealed that the princess was recovering from a planned operation. At the time, officials said her condition wasn't cancerous but did not specify what kind of surgery she had, saying only that it was successful. They also explained she was unlikely to return to public duties until after Easter, which falls this year on March 31.

Kate was released from the London Clinic, a private hospital located near Regent's Park in the heart of the UK capital, on January 29. Following her discharge, she went back to Windsor, which is situated to the west of London, to further her recuperation. Charles was discharged from the same hospital on the same day as Kate. Despite the palace explaining the timeline of the princess's recovery, Kate's health and



location triggered huge speculation. Kate made her first public appearance on March 4 when she was spotted in Windsor. She was seated in the front passenger seat of a car driven by her mother, Carole Middleton.

The speculation continued to grow and amid a social media frenzy, Kate and William published an official photograph of her and her three children on Mother's Day – celebrated on March 10 in the UK. But instead of ending the speculation, it fuelled it further, after news agencies retracted it because it appeared to have been manipulated. A day later Kate admitted that she had edited the photograph, and apologised.

She was later photographed alongside her husband in a car departing Windsor Castle. "First of all, why in this current climate do you think you can release a manipulated image and get away with it," Afua Hagan, journalist and royal commentator, told Al Jazeera.

"But what really baffles me is Kate didn't do this alone. She has a team around her," Hagan said. "There is also an issue with the public relations and communications team, which has badly let you down. Your team has thrown you under the bus, Princess of Wales, and you are taking the blame," she added. While it's rare to find cancer after surgery for a noncancerous problem, it does happen in about 4 percent of such surgeries, said Yuman Fong, a surgeon at the City of Hope cancer centre in Southern California.

"That 4 percent figure represents someone who's going to the operating room for what is thought to be benign disease such as a procedure to remove the gallbladder or ovarian cysts," Fong said. The palace statement said no details would be provided about her cancer or her treatment, other than that she started it in late February. After successful surgery, chemotherapy is often used to help kill any stray cancer cells and to prevent the cancer from coming back. Treatments have evolved, and when chemotherapy is used now, it's sometimes for shorter periods or lower doses than it once was.

"Fatigue, nausea, tingling in the

hands and feet, and sometimes hair loss are side effects of chemotherapy," said Monica Avila, a doctor at Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa, Florida. "But there are medications for improving these side effects. And cold caps that cool the scalp can prevent hair loss," Avila said. "A patient can take anywhere from a few weeks to a month or two to recover from those effects," Avila added. Numbness and tingling can take longer to disappear, she added.

Cancer is rare in young adults. But in developed countries, rates of some cancers are rising among younger adults. Kate is 42. "We hate it when young people get cancer, but at the same time, they are the ones that recover best," Fong said. According to Macmillan Cancer Support, "about 393,000 people in the UK are given the news that they have cancer" every year. According to the centre, in the UK on average someone is diagnosed with cancer at least every 90 seconds.

And about 167,000 people die from cancer every year in the UK, an average of "460 people every day". Prince Harry and his wife Meghan, who have been estranged from William and Kate since their move to California in 2020, wished the princess well. "We wish health and healing for Kate and the family, and hope they are able to do so privately and in peace," they said in a statement.

Kate's brother James Middleton also offered his support, with a photo of the two of them when they were children. King Charles said he was very proud of Kate for speaking about the cancer. Charles is "so proud of Catherine for her courage in speaking as she did" and has "remained in the closest contact with his beloved daughter-in-law throughout the past weeks," after they spent time in hospital together, a Buckingham Palace spokesperson said. Charles and his wife Camilla "will continue to offer their love and support to the whole family through this difficult time," the spokesperson added. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said Kate "has the love and support of the whole country". — Aljazeera

# Mexico's president says he won't fight drug cartels on US orders

MEXICO CITY (AP): Mexico's president said he won't fight Mexican drug cartels on US orders, in the clearest explanation yet of his refusal to confront the gangs.

Over the years, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has laid out various justifications for his "hugs, not bullets" policy of avoiding clashes with the cartels. In the past he has said "you cannot fight violence with violence," and on other occasions he has argued the government has to address "the causes" of drug cartel violence, ascribing them to poverty or a lack of opportunities.

But, while discussing his refusal to go after the cartels, he made it clear he viewed it as part of what he called a "Mexico First" policy. "We are not going to act as policemen for any foreign government," López Obrador said at his daily news briefing. "Mexico First. Our home comes first."

López Obrador basically argued that drugs were a US problem, not a Mexican one. He offered to help limit the flow of drugs into the United States, but only, he said, on humanitarian grounds. "Of course we are going to cooperate in fighting drugs, above all because it has become a very sensitive, very sad humanitarian issue, because a lot of young people are dying in the United States because of fentanyl," the president said. Over 70,000 Americans die annually because of synthetic opioids like fentanyl, which are mainly made in Mexico from precursor chemicals smuggled in from China.

López Obrador's view — like many of his policies — harkens back to the 1970s, a period when many officials believed that Mexican cartels selling drugs to gringos was a US issue, not a Mexican one. "For decades, past administrations in Mexico have thought the war against drug cartels was basically a US problem," said security analyst David Saucedo, noting that Mexican domestic drug consumption, while growing — especial-

ly methamphetamines — is still at relatively low levels.

"On the other hand, the drug cartels provide jobs in regions where the Mexican government can't provide economic development, they encourage social mobility, and generate revenue through drug sales to balance trade and investment deficits," López Obrador has argued before against "demonizing" the drug cartels, and has encouraged leaders of the Catholic church to try to negotiate peace pacts between warring gangs.

Explaining why he has ordered the army not to attack cartel gunmen, López Obrador said in 2022 "we also take care of the lives of the gang members, they are human beings." He has also sometimes appeared not to take the violence issue seriously. In June 2023, he said of one drug gang that had abducted 14 police officers: "I'm going to tell on you to your fathers and grandfathers," suggesting they should get a good spanking.

Asked about those comments at the time, residents of one town in the western Mexico state of Michoacan who have lived under drug cartel control for years reacted with disgust and disbelief. "He is making fun of us," said one restaurant owner, who asked to remain anonymous because he — like almost everyone else in town — has long been forced to pay protection money to the local cartel.

"The president said out loud what we had suspected for a long time, that his administration is not really fighting the drug cartels," said Saucedo, the security analyst. "He has only decided to administer the conflict, setting up what may have to be a crusade against the cartels in the future that he won't have to fight." López Obrador has also made a point of visiting the township of Badiraguato in Sinaloa state, the home of drug lords like Joaquín 'El Chapo' Guzman, at least a half dozen times, and pledging to do so again before he leaves office in September.

It's also a stance related to prickly

nationalism and independence. Asked in November why he has visited the sparsely populated rural township so many times, López Obrador quoted a line from an old drinking song, "because I want to." The president has imposed strict limits on US agents operating in Mexico, and limited how much contact Mexican law enforcement can have with them.

The US Embassy in Mexico had no comment on López Obrador's most recent remarks. But it did note the US Treasury Department announced sanctions on a Sinaloa Cartel money-laundering network in which the proceeds of fentanyl sales were used to buy shipments of cell phones in the United States, which were then sold in Mexico. John Kirby, spokesman for the White House National Security Council, credited "strong partnership with the government of Mexico, with which we coordinated closely and for which, we are grateful," in investigating that case.

While Mexico has detained a few high-profile gang members, the government's policy no longer matches what Mexican drug cartels have become: extortion machines that make much of their money, not from trafficking drugs, but extorting protection payments from businessmen, farmers, shop owners and street vendors, killing anyone who doesn't pay. They take over legitimate businesses, kill rival street-level drug dealers, and murder bus and taxi drivers who refuse to act as lookouts for them.

The cartels control increasingly large swathes of territory both in northern Mexico — their traditional base — and in southern states like Guerrero, Michoacan, Chiapas and Veracruz. It is unclear if peaceful coexistence was ever possible with Mexican drug gangs. While some regions have produced marijuana or opium poppies for at least 50 years, the illegal trade always brought violence.



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## Pakistan Day and need for nationalism

**P**AKISTAN Day was observed with traditional zeal and national spirit on the 23rd of March across the country. The day dawned with a 31-gun salute at the Federal Capital and a 21-gun salute at all provincial capitals. Special prayers were offered after Fajr prayer in mosques for the progress, prosperity, and security of the country and the freedom of India's illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). The central event of the Pakistan Day ceremonies was the traditional Tri-Services Parade at Shaker Perian Parade Ground Islamabad which was a landmark demonstration of Pakistan's defense preparedness, the valor and professionalism of our defense forces, and a symbol of national unity and prestige. Graceful change of guards ceremonies were held at the Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah mausoleum and Mizar-e-Iqbal. Fateha Khawani and Quran Khawani were also held for the leaders and workers of the Pakistan Freedom movement and for the heroes who laid their lives for the protection and wellbeing of the country afterward. In the afternoon, awards distribution ceremonies were held at the Presidency and all Governors Houses wherein prizes and awards were distributed to those who rendered valuable services to the nation in diverse fields.

The idea of an independent and sovereign Muslim state was the long-held and foremost dream of the Muslims of the Indo-Subcontinent since they lost hope for a Muslim-ruled Hindustan during the Freedom War of 1857 against British colonial power. The Muslims who ruled the Indo-subcontinent for nearly 800 years, faced endless disparity, inequality, and discrimination at the hands of the British and Hindus in that era of darkness and oppression. The Britians pushed the Muslims of the Indo-Subcontinent to the wall as they considered them arch-rivals whereas the Hindus were also staunch enemies of Muslims amid allegations of ruling their land for several hundred years since the arrival of Mughals in India.

In British India, the Muslims were deprived of all kinds of political, economic, and human rights, and their educational and intellectual decay further pushed them into deep depletion in each field of life. Amid such darkness and oppression, renowned Scholar, educationist, and political thinker Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and other Muslim leaders such as Moulana Muhammad Ali Johar, Moulana Shoukat Ali, and Nawab Waqar-ul-Mulk etc. installed new hope in the Muslims of Indo subcontinent by founding All India Muhammadan Educational Conference (AIMEC) to teach them modern subjects to compete with Hindus and other communities in British-ruled India. Later, the foundation of the All India Muslim League (AIML) gave new impetus to the political struggle of the Muslims in the Indo-subcontinent. Historically, the two-nation theory and the passage of the Pakistan Resolution during the annual session of the All India Muslim League on 23rd March 1940 were pivotal moments that changed the history of the Indo-Subcontinent and led to the creation of an independent, and sovereign state of Pakistan. Which is home to over 240 million Muslims, where they live a dignified life and practice the teaching of Islam.

Today's Pakistan is an embodiment of the vision and dreams of our forefathers, who not only struggled hard and sacrificed time, money, and lives to change that dream into a reality. Pakistan is a magnificent legacy of our forefathers that we all have to preserve, protect, and further hand over to our future generations in a more developed, stable, and strong version. Today's internal political division and social polarization seriously hurt the philosophy of the nation theory and the vision of a sovereign Pakistan. Pakistan Day demands a judicial self-assessment and accountability from all of us including the political leadership, civil and military bureaucracy, and common citizens as well. How much this nation gave to us and what we individually, as a team or institution paid back to our country. Our professional, social, and moral obligations are fulfilled, or any one of us is involved in the abuse of authority, menace of corruption, and theft of national resources including electricity, gas, tax evasion, or other social or moral ailments that surely mount to sedition to the nation. A true Pakistani must assess his role in society, and try to implement essential traits of a good and loyal citizen of the country. So, Pakistan emerges as a successful and strong nation on the map of the world.

## Women's right to inheritance

**T**HERE has been a significant increase in the cases of confiscation of women's right to inheritance in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and other parts of the country. According to the report of the Federal Ombudsperson Secretariat for Protection against Harassment (FOSPAH), as many as 699 women haven't received their due share in the property, depriving them of their rightful inheritance since last year. Approximately 613 women were unable to obtain their property share in 2023, while 86 such cases have been reported in the first quarter of the current year. The FOSPAH was successful in securing property for two women only.

A woman has the right to inherit anything whatever any of his loved ones bequeathed to her as an inheritance or death gift equally with brothers and other family members. Women's right to inherit property has evolved significantly in various societies and legal systems over time across the world. In many ancient societies, property inheritance was primarily governed by patriarchal norms. Typically, men (sons) were the primary heirs, while women had limited or no rights to inherit property left by their parents, husbands, or heads of the families. During the Middle Ages, European feudal systems often restricted women's inheritance rights, the same goes for Asia and Africa. Historically, Islam gave women their due share in the inheritance left by their father as well as the legacy left by the husband and other blood relatives including son, brother, mother, etc. Meanwhile, a woman can hold sole ownership of any inherited or allotted property as well as file a lawsuit to obtain her share if confiscated forcefully by any one.

Unfortunately, our society has adopted the traditions of medieval-age Europe and backward ancient Africa wherein the tribal leaders, landlords, and rich segments of the society avoid distribution of their properties among its rightful inherits particularly women or girls for fear of division or going into the hands of other person/tribe. To avoid such circumstances, either girls are not married out of the family or they are deprived of their inheritance altogether.

Despite being a legally protected right, the denial of inheritance to women remains a conflicting reality that plagues the socio-economic landscape of the country. Although efforts are being made to empower women socially and economically, yet Pakistani women are conditioned to acquiesce with a secondary status that stifles self-reliance, self-worth, and a sense of independence in certain families, regions, and societies across the country. Although, several mechanisms have been in place to protect women from such discrimination but situations have not changed so far. Our system is still weak and needs reforms and empowerment to effectively address this issue in our society.



## To save Britain from disaster, Rishi Sunak must go

Allison Pearson

**A**NYONE who has ridden the rapids of misfortune will attest that loyalty is a marvellous quality in a friend but, as Mark Twain observed, "loyalty to petrified opinion never yet broke a chain or freed a human soul". Nor rescued a political party from extinction, we might add.

Despite yesterday's poll, which put the Conservatives on a parlous 19 per cent and Reform on a fast-closing 15, despite a death-rattle net approval rating of minus 48 (lower than Boris Johnson or Jeremy Corbyn when they resigned), Rishi Sunak survives as Prime Minister. That is largely due to the misplaced loyalty of his colleagues, but also because, as one Tory MP said, the idea of a leadership challenge at this stage is "utterly bonkers". It really isn't, you know. What is bonkers, truly, madly deeply delusional, in fact, is sticking with a course so calamitous, so certain to end in ruin, that it could spell the demise of a political party which celebrates its 190th birthday this year. I am not exaggerating. Cabinet ministers with majorities of 18,000-plus are facing their own Portillo Moment (a metaphor coined after the 1997 general election humiliation of then Cabinet star Michael Portillo.)

Of the 348 current Tory MPs, how many do you reckon will be left standing after the Autumn Annihilation? Present polling suggests the losses of the Charge of the Light Brigade - 113 killed, 134 wounded - were a mere scratch compared to what lies in wait electorally for the Conservative parliamentary party. So, what? I hear you cry. It's no more than the b-----s deserve. Spitting in the face of their base with 745,000 legal net migration in a single year, outbidding normal families for scarce rental properties to get thousands of asylum seekers out of hotels (and hide them away) so Rishi can claim to have kept his "promise" before the general election. And they seriously think people who voted Tory in 2019 -

clue: immigration is our Number 1 concern - are going to make that mistake again?

Normally, I would agree. The sense of betrayal runs very deep, the desire to teach the Tories a lesson they won't forget is almost overwhelming. A bunch of Lib Dem cuckoos has taken over the nest built from our votes, our efforts. How dare they, those simpering Alicias and Carolines with their "Let them buy heat pumps!" condescension and ridiculous pronouns. So, you may not like it when I say that acting quickly now to install a true Conservative as leader of the Conservatives is well worth the gamble, but please hear me out. Do we really want 10 years of Labour supercharging Woke in our institutions, brainwashing school-children to despise their country and feel guilty about its remarkable history, abolishing patriotic feeling (Bye bye Rule Britannia on the Proms, so long Union Jack!), banning parents from talking their own children out of mutilating their young bodies, giving comfort to Islamists and far Leftists who wish to destroy our way of life, repatriating Shamima Begum (Sham's human rights being more important than ours, of course), pursuing a "safe routes", all-barbarians-welcome immigration policy, expanding the WFH quango class and suffocating the spirit of free enterprise. Purse-lipped cultural revolutionaries making that British pastime "having a laugh" illegal (just you wait). To cap it all, legislating away free speech to the point where even discussing any of the above is a hate crime.

Make no mistake, that is the very real danger if we, as many of the right-minded among us intend to do, either vote Reform UK or refuse to vote at all. Unfairly, Reform will end up with no seats and the Tories could hold so few that it will be the work of more than one term to get back into government. The Conservative Party may deserve that decade in the wilderness, but what

about Britain? I am scared, quite frankly, hugely apprehensive. Afraid that our beloved country will be irretrievably lost under a moronocracy led by clod-hopping class warriors like Angela "Tory scum" Rayner. A courageous new conservative Conservative leader - a Kemi, Suella, Priti, Robert - committed to leaving the European Convention on Human Rights and taking back immediate control of our borders, who is elected straight after the certain bloodbath of the 2 May local elections, could do much to mitigate that awful fate, I think.

There is a precedent. In May 2019, Theresa May's government suffered the worst Tory local election performance in 24 years (Sunak is about to seize that grim title). The Conservatives lost over 1,300 seats. Three weeks later, Mrs May announced her resignation. Boris Johnson became party leader on 23 July. Five months later, the new prime minister won an 80-seat majority with 43.6 per cent of the popular vote. I am not suggesting a victory of that miraculous magnitude can be pulled off now. The rot has gone too deep. Whatever your personal frustrations, Labour does not deserve the landslide it will have pocketed by the end of the year if Conservatives don't ditch Rishi.

Study the result of every recent by-election, and you detect no great enthusiasm for Sir Drear Starmer. Quite the contrary. Wellingborough saw the Left's total go up from 13,737 in 2019 to 13,844. A mere 107 votes. It was disillusioned Conservative voters like thee and me who handed Labour the seat on a silver salver.

The Tory vote plunged from 32,277 in 2019 to 7,408. With Reform hovering up 3,919, only 11,327 Right-wing voters bothered to go to the polling station. Where were the missing Conservatives? At home, chucking darts at the Rishi Sunak dartboard. As long as Sunak remains, wild horses on their bend-

ed knees could not persuade those voters to give the Tories another chance. Hang on, Allison, won't a fourth change of leader in as many years make the Conservatives a national laughing stock?

It sure will. Better to be mocked than deceased, I say. Anyway, people soon move on and I bet they will relish a feisty woman knocking seven bells out of drippy Keir. Conservatives have a reputation for ruthlessness. I say, let's play to our strengths! A leadership contest could be swift. No need for a national beauty parade. MPs whittle candidates down to two. Then, party members need to choose between the finalists. With online voting, the whole thing could be over in under a fortnight.

By the end of May, the Conservatives will have themselves a brand new leader who is actually prepared to honour their manifesto pledges and Rishi Sunak will have brought forward his private-jet flight to California by six months.

I've got a question for all those Conservative MPs still insisting that the hugely unpopular PM will lead them into the general election while denigrating "rebels" who plot to oust him. What good is it being loyal to "petrified opinion"? To whom should you really owe your loyalty? To a member of the billionaire class you know full well will abandon you as soon as he has lost his party hundreds of seats or to the British people who deserve a Right-of-centre leader to stick up for them and fight the Left for the soul of our nation? "Half a league, half a league, Half a league onward, All in the valley of Death rode the six hundred."

The Conservative Party is not obliged to re-enact the pointless slaughter of The Charge of the Light Brigade, which appears to be the current strategy. Try another Tennyson poem, my favourite: "Some work of noble note, may yet be done". Pick a Conservative leader who will restore the faith of at least some Conservatives and give them something to hope for. Faced with the alternative, it's got to be worth a try.

## UK government targeting Palestinian flags, not extremism

Mohamed Chebaro

**E**XTREMISM, terrorism, incitement and hate speech should have no place in any society. But Britain's new definition of extremism offers little in terms of clarity of purpose as to how it could help the country become safer. Or how it will help the UK's many religious and ethnic communities to continue to coexist cohesively under properly defined and fair laws that allow all to live freely in peace and in a way that upholds the ethos of tolerance and respect for the country's historically entrenched democratic values.

The unveiling of the new definition last week came, according to the government, in response to an "eruption" of hate crimes against Jews and Muslims in the country since Hamas' Oct. 7 attacks on Israel. But many critics believe it risks infringing on people's rights and freedom of speech, despite it being an answer to warnings expressed by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak last month, when he claimed that the UK's multi-ethnic democracy was being undermined by both Islamist and far-right extremists.

Many justifications have been given as to the necessity and timing of the new extremism definition, but I believe that it is an effort by the UK government to stamp out pro-Palestinian protests and remove the Palestinian flags that have sprung up in many places, as Muslims and non-Muslims alike show their solidarity with Gaza, irking some pro-Israeli communities across the country. Some even think that this Conservative government is again trying to capitalize on the spreading of fear, this time from extremism, just like the fear from migration before that.

Communities Minister Michael Gove, whose department introduced the new definition, claimed that British "democracy and our values of inclusivity and tolerance are under challenge from extremist groups, which are radicalizing our young people and driving greater polarization."

Gove's new definition shifts the focus from sanctioning action to ideology. In 2011, the government's "Prevent" strategy defined extremism as the "active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs."

The new definition says extremism "is the promotion or advancement of an ideology based on violence, hatred or intolerance, that aims to negate or destroy the fundamental rights and freedoms of others; or serve to undermine, overturn or replace the UK's system of liberal parliamentary democracy and democratic rights."

But critics, from the archbishop of Canterbury to former Conservative ministers and opposition parties, believe that the new extremism definition could be used to silence those who disagree with the government. They fear it could do more harm than good, stigmatizing Muslim groups, feeding the victimization syndrome of followers of the far right and maybe even criminalizing the activities of environmental activists.

The definition does not offer any new insights as to how law enforcement could better police the alleged no-

go areas of London or prevent some fringe elements from demonstrating outside the homes of politicians and holding banners that reflect anti-Israel or anti-Jewish views. Gove's distinction between Islam as a religion of peace and Islamism as a dangerous and destructive ideology was widely welcomed, but his naming of some specific Muslim groups simply for their views on the Israel-Hamas war could escalate anti-Muslim prejudices. This is especially the case when it comes from a party that itself is not entirely free from accusations of Islamophobia and racism.

As a journalist covering UK news since the early 1990s, I have repeatedly found myself surprised over the years at how tolerant various governments and local authorities have been in authorizing public rallies for "Islamist groups" such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, whose narrative is clearly rooted in anti-democratic, anti-liberal and even anti-British ideologies. My questions to officials from governments, the police and local authorities have repeatedly been repelled by saying that the UK prides itself on upholding the freedoms of expression and belief for all, as long as no violence is perpetrated on British soil.

Surely, that would be something to applaud if it was not also naive to believe that those groups were not bent on preaching, inciting and even recruiting and financing many activities that, if scrutinized, would not meet the most basic of "Britishness" tests.

From the days of the fatwa against author Salman Rushdie in the late 1980s to the proliferation of many "preachers of hate" that occupied newspaper front pages in the 1990s, official Britain has been sleepwalking into legitimizing some groups despite being warned about the threats they pose both domestically and abroad.

Furthermore, the UK has at times chosen to amplify the role of so-called moderate unelected Muslim community leaders at the expense of the established democratic and constitutional norms of representation. Muslims and everybody else in the country should be represented by their elected members of Parliament nationally and their councillors at the local level.

What is clear to many is that the new definition of extremism rests on poor foundations and it fails to eliminate threats, undo polarization and divisions, and reduce the increased assertion of competing identities, whether religious or ethnic. Many people tend to forget that civic responsibility imposes limits on every member of society's freedoms, such as when they start infringing on the freedoms of others.

It is evident that the new extremism definition is, at best, counterproductive and will fail to weed out extreme Islamists or white supremacists. It is a distraction from the many failures of this Conservative government in an election year. I have a strong hunch that it is also a half-baked, half-thought-out drive to please some part of the electorate, who believe that they have seen too many Palestinian flags raised in various British streets in solidarity with people under bombardment for the past five months in Gaza.

Arab News

## Could a third world war really be fought virtually?

Khaled Abou Zahr

**T**ENSIONS on the front line in Ukraine continue to grow, bringing forward the possibility - as French President Emmanuel Macron declared last week - of a serious and grim expansion of this war further into Europe.

At the same time, other hotspots around the globe, from Asia to Africa, keep heating up. In light of all these events, one cannot help but wonder what a third world war might look like. Obviously, this goes beyond (or before) a nuclear holocaust that would reduce the planet to radioactive waste. Would the new technologies we keep hearing about mean it would be different from the first two world wars?

As we read of new defense tech developments that involve humanoids or drones coupled with artificial intelligence and quantum technology, there is an indirect dissemination of information telling the gen-

eral public that any potential big war will be similar to science fiction. It will be a war where these drones and humanoids face each other, while children, women and men stay safe at home waiting for a winner. A war where everything is virtual and cyberattacks replace bombs and shells, leaving interruptions to Wi-Fi and short power cuts as the biggest risks.

We will not delve into the point that cyberattacks on key infrastructure, such as energy sites or dams, could cause catastrophic damage. But is this view that many in the general public hold actually true: that they will be safe at home while war takes place in another dimension with lasers and other tech gimmicks we cannot see? A preliminary answer refuting this view comes straight away. It lies in the discreet yet persistent focus of Western leaders on reestablishing a military-industrial capacity. Indeed, all Western

leaders are facing the reality that, as war rages in Ukraine, Russia has a military-industrial capacity that overwhelms all of Europe and the US combined.

On the other hand, the US and Europe can only produce about 1.2 million munitions per year to support Ukrainian forces, according to a senior official from a European intelligence service cited by the American media. And so, the war in Ukraine is already giving us a first answer. War is war and will stay a dirty business. And Macron's declaration on sending troops to Ukraine would not only be a possibility but a certainty if a new world war starts.

If we focus on defense technologies, where does the world stand? In this context, the focus of Western researchers is mainly the competition between China and the US, not with Russia, when it comes to key tech-

nologies. It is said that history does not repeat itself but it often rhymes. In that sense, the situation in 2024 resembles the situation in 1935, whether in terms of Western military-industrial capacity or technological competition between the two opposing sides. Moreover, we also notice a similarly troubled world map, where order is no longer clear and conflicts arise in an unpredictable manner, without a clear understanding of the endgame. Conflicts where ideology, brute force and technology all come into the mix. Some even see the Spanish Civil War in many places on the map of the world.

And so, following these lessons of history, how did new technologies impact war? Have they ever prevented the loss of life? The answer is simple and comes in the form of another question. Did this new technolo-

gy give total superiority to one side and force the other into total submission? Without this, wars take a heavy toll. But this is what happened when vehicles replaced cavalry or when air superiority gave a clear advantage, with soldiers and civilians alike paying a heavy price. One might even say that, today, the length of time for which total superiority lasts has shrunk. It is becoming rare for one side to maintain indefinite total superiority over the other.

The situation in Ukraine with its rules of engagement is probably the best answer to what a world war might look like. The reality is that nothing has changed and

war will be a meat grinder in the worst possible sense. Once drones match drones, humanoids match humanoids, AI matches AI and quantum computing matches quantum computing, all technologies and their use will cancel each other out. Then, war will take its usual and ugly form of men killing men and trenches that look like the ones used in the First and Second World Wars, only with more powerful bullets. Thinking, as many of the public tend to believe, that robots and drones will do the fighting, just as apps allow food to be cooked and delivered for us, is complete delusion.

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# Foreign policy challenges loom large over EU summit

Andrew Hammond

AS the clock ticks toward June's big European Parliament elections across the EU's 27 member states, politics in Brussels is becoming increasingly domestic-focused. However, there has rarely been a time in recent years when so many red lights are flashing outside of the bloc, in what has been called an "arc of instability."

That term was first used in the 1990s, especially by Australians, to describe a chain of politically unstable nation states in the Asia-Pacific region. However, more recently, it has been utilized by some US policymakers to highlight instability in a different, broader geography. That is a spectrum of states from sub-Saharan Africa through North Africa, into the Middle East, Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, plus South and Central Asia and possibly parts of Southeast Asia too.

Some of this vast geography will be among the key topics of discussion at the ongoing summit of the EU's 27 presidents and prime ministers. One example is the growing tensions in the Middle East, with the EU's chief diplomat Josep Borrell this week condemning Israel for creating what he said was a "manmade" famine in Gaza.

Borrell added: "Before the war, Gaza was the greatest open-air prison. Today, it is the greatest open-air graveyard." Moreover, he said European leaders have told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu they cannot stand by and watch

Palestinians starve to death.

In North Africa, meanwhile, Sudan could face a catastrophic famine within weeks, aid workers have warned, amid security restrictions and armed violence as the war between the Sudanese Armed Forces and its former security partners the Rapid Support Forces continues. The UN's World Food Programme says this threatens to trigger "the world's largest hunger crisis," with more than 25 million people scattered across Sudan, South Sudan and Chad "trapped in a spiral" of food insecurity. The conflict has also uprooted more than 8 million people. With 2 million forced from their homes before the fighting broke out, Sudan already hosts the world's largest displacement crisis.

There is growing concern in Europe about the possibility of a new migration crisis if the numerous conflicts in the Middle East and Africa spill over into neighboring countries. This is in a context where multiple European governments are still dealing with the impact of the 2015 migration crisis, which saw about 1 million Syrian refugees cross from Turkey into Greece alone, according to UN estimates.

One of the other big concerns for European leaders is that the growing proliferation of foreign challenges will distract or undermine the political focus of the West from what many see as the overwhelming international priority: Ukraine. In recent

weeks, there have been growing Russian advances on the battlefield and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said last week that Kyiv is running out of ammunition and that its allies are not doing enough to help. This comes as a bill in the US Congress to send further aid to Ukraine continues to stall amid deep partisan divisions ahead of elections there in November.

In this context, there is a huge body of work for the EU still to undertake to become a more fit-for-purpose, progressive force in the world today. In the 1990s, then-Belgian Foreign Minister Mark Eyskens said that the bloc is "an economic giant, a political dwarf and a military worm." Therefore, it is no coincidence that EU leaders will this week discuss security and defense as a pressing priority. There is unanimity within the bloc that Europe needs to increase its defense readiness, so there will be talks on exactly how to build the EU's strength, resilience and competitiveness.

European Commission President Charles Michel said this week that, if Europe wants to exist in peace, it must shift to a "war economy" mode. He said that this requires significantly bolstering defense capabilities in the face of the threat posed by Russia. Michel added that US support can no longer be taken for granted and that EU countries need to take much more responsibility for their own security as they grapple with the biggest secu-

rity challenge since 1945. He also condemned a decades-long lack of funding and investment in European militaries and, despite military manufacturing capacity increasing by 50 percent since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion, much more needs to be done.

Beyond these hugely important security and defense questions, it is also clear that the bloc will need a clearer, wider grand strategy in the years ahead. In many plausible scenarios, it is highly likely that Europe will be facing a more challenging geopolitical context.

Several states in particular will be crucial to shaping how this plays out in a fast-changing multipolar world. With respect to the US, a long-standing ally of Europe, greater stability has been infused into the bilateral relationship following Joe Biden's arrival in the White House. However, Donald Trump, who has called for the EU's further dismemberment, could well win again in November.

However, no matter which of Trump or Biden wins, the overall geopolitical context for Europe may worsen significantly in the next half-decade. This is not just because of Russia, but also wider problems, including instability in key countries in neighboring regions. The bloc therefore faces huge international challenges that may only grow. While it is on a trajectory to become a stronger, more progressive force in world affairs, it still has a long way to travel in this direction to fulfill its ambitions.

# West doesn't have monopoly over democracy

Georgios Katrougkalos

**M**ANY in the West think that democracy is a value of the West; it's a flag that we can wave as opposed to other parts of the world. Some would like to see the narrative, "democracy" versus "autocracy", become the new Berlin Wall of a new Cold War, of a new bipolarity and of a new confrontationist position that will make all international cooperation difficult.

We Western people are proud of the democracy we have won and established in our countries, particularly in Europe. It is the fruit of a long historical process that began with the French Revolution, and whose main protagonist was the workers' movement, which was aimed at winning effective, popular sovereignty against the politically narrow oligarchies that had long dominated Western societies.

But this legitimate pride should not prevent us from seeing that our model of democracy, because it is the result of a long, peculiar historical process, cannot be exported to and imposed on other parts of the world, as the failed experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq and other Middle East countries have again shown in recent years. It is also evident that today's world cannot be reduced to a binary contest between two democracy models. Those who believe, as I do, in the values of democracy should also realize that the logic of the Cold War and ideological chal-

lenges are not conducive to the circulation of ideas in which different civilizations and cultures can influence one another. On the contrary, acting on this logic, we could give rise to rigidity, which again is not conducive to the affirmation of human rights and democratic principles.

The ways to achieve sovereignty may be different, but the honor is on those who pursue an alternative model to the West to show in practice the compatibility between the absence of political pluralism and the effective exercise of freedom of expression and dissent, and the control on political power.

It's time for different civilizations and cultures to openly come together on the significant issue of human freedom and find ways to safeguard it, rather than merely engaging in ideological or propaganda confrontations. While every country's political system is autonomously determined, there must be a transition toward a multipolar order in an interconnected world. This is the real global dimen-

sion of democracy, not to return to bipolarity, not to accept a unipolar world, but a world to govern together, a multipolar reality.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 not only started the end of the Cold War, but also the decade following the historic event perhaps marked the high tide of global democracy. At that time, there were high expectations that liberal democracy would spread across the world.

Three decades on, we realize that those expectations never really materialized. Instead, people are now lamenting the fact that democracy appears to be in regression. Issues that are relevant include poor governance undermining trust and credibility in many democratic institutions around the world, and economic inequality creating fertile ground for populist, ultra-nationalist and extremist leaders. With the advancement of technology, the new challenges that democracy faces now include the fact that artificial intelligence and big data can be used as tools by those engaged in divisive information campaigns and polarizing societies.

But my focus is on a different aspect. Over the past three decades, we have also been unable to reform international organizations that make up the global governance system. Indeed, our inability to do so contributed to the failure of the global governance system to keep pace with economic globalization. This means we don't have an effective or democratic global governance system.

An OECD survey shows that the majority of people in Western countries believe their governments are not taking measures to promote the general people's interests; instead, they are promoting the interests of the wealthy and the powerful. This also reflects the feeling that globally Marxism is versus capitalism. A recent survey also shows that more than 52 percent of the respondents see capitalism as a negative force which does more harm to the world than good, with the majority of the respondents saying they believe capitalism is failing them.

We are living in a multipolar world, where countries including developing ones should adjust and consider policies based on their real socioeconomic conditions. The global approval for China is higher than that of the United States, at 62 percent, in the developing world. And yet Western propaganda claims the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative has created debt traps for other countries, which is not the view held by Belt and Road countries. I hope in the future the East and the West, the North and the South will hold regular consultations and avoid confrontations, while trying to promote the common interest of all humankind.

# The South China Sea could boil over

Brahma Chellaney

**F**OR over a decade now, China has been working stealthily to alter the territorial and maritime status quo in the Indo-Pacific - an effort that has increasingly stoked tensions with regional neighbors like Australia, India, Japan, Taiwan and several Southeast Asian countries, as well as the United States.

And with US attention and resources focused on conflicts in Europe and the Middle East, China has lately become even more aggressive in its expansionism. Chinese regional hegemony is closer than ever. Almost daily, China finds a new way to bully Taiwan, which Chinese President Xi Jinping has repeatedly pledged to "reunify" with the mainland (though that objective has no basis in international law or history). As China takes steps like encroaching on Taiwan's air-defense zone and encircling the island with warships, it raises the risk of a war that would transform global geopolitics.

There are war clouds also gathering over the Himalayas, where a military standoff triggered by China's repeated furtive encroachments on India's borders has dragged on for nearly four years. And in the East China Sea, China's intrusions into the territorial waters and airspace of the Japanese-controlled Senkaku Islands, which China claims as its own, are fueling Japan's drive toward rearmament.

But the biggest risks of escalation may well lie in the South China Sea, where China's aggressive efforts to entrench its dominance have regularly led to dangerous near-confrontations, including with US warships and aircraft. For years, China has been working relentlessly to cement its dominance over the South China Sea and exploit that region's vast resources and strategic position as a critical corridor

through which one-third of global shipping passes.

To this end, China has constructed artificial islands atop remote reefs and atolls and transformed them into forward military bases. Though these activities constitute a blatant violation of international law, including a 2016 ruling by an arbitration tribunal at The Hague that invalidated Chinese claims in the South China Sea, there has been little pushback from three successive US administrations.

As a result, China has managed to expand its maritime borders unilaterally without firing a single shot. Now, China's navy and air force routinely patrol its neighbors' exclusive economic zones (EEZs) and its coast guard - the world's largest and most militarized - has conducted "intrusive patrols" of others' offshore oil and gas fields. Chinese coast-guard vessels, including megaships, wantonly employ "nonlethal" weapons like high-pressure water cannons and long-range acoustic devices.

Moreover, China has been sending its navy and coast guard to shadow, hound and harass vessels belonging to the US, as well as to smaller neighbors, such as the Philippines and Vietnam, with territorial claims in the area. Even fishing boats have been targeted and destroyed. With Chinese ships now being deliberately designed for "ramming" and "shoulder-riding" other vessels, it seems clear that China will become more aggressive in asserting its territorial claims - and the associated fishing and energy-exploration rights - in the South China Sea. China's militarization of the South China Sea poses the greatest threat to the Philippines and Vietnam. But whereas Vietnam pur-

sues an independent foreign policy, which its prime minister calls a historical imperative, the Philippines is a longstanding US ally, with a mutual defense treaty in place since 1951.

And yet, when it comes to China's expansionism in the South China Sea, the US has largely left the Philippines to fend for itself. In 2012, when China occupied the Scarborough Shoal, a traditional Philippine fishing ground located within the country's EEZ, US President Barack Obama's administration stayed silent. Since then, China has steadily eroded the Philippines' control of other areas within its EEZ, but the US has offered its ally little beyond statements of support. This is unlikely to change any time soon. With the wars in Ukraine and Gaza stretching American military resources thin, a direct confrontation with China is the last thing the US needs. But refusing to stand up to China may well make a clash more likely - and more destructive.

And, as the recent increase in provocations in the South China Sea indicate, Xi is bolder than ever, despite the rising risk of escalation, accidental or otherwise. In the meantime, America's failure to rein in China's aggressive expansionism is undermining its own security and trade interests.

US President Joe Biden insists that the US wants "competition with China, not conflict." But China wants strategic dominance - beginning with the South China Sea - and it is willing to risk conflict to get it. The South China Sea has become a test of American resolve, which Xi is expecting Biden to fail. The world, especially the countries on the frontlines of Chinese expansionism, can only hope that Xi is wrong and that the US finds ways to rein in China without armed conflict.

The Japan Times

# The national trust must return to democracy

Sir William Proby

**A**S a former chairman of the National Trust, I have been reluctant to criticise my successors - but I do believe that governance changes in recent years are taking this great institution in the wrong direction. A new report by the Legatum Institute highlights serious flaws.

I have a personal interest in this because, as chairman, it was my responsibility to introduce the radical reforms recommended by the Blakenham governance review. Lord Blakenham took a whole year to complete this review, and interviewed a large number of people from every part of the Trust. Its conclusion was that it was no longer practical to run an organisation as large as the Trust with a 52 member-strong council.

The review therefore recommended that a new board of trustees of about 12 should be set up as the controlling body. It was, however, recognised that, by doing this, there was a danger of concentrating too much power in the board. So the report recommended that the council should be retained as an advisory body and, most importantly, that it would retain powers of appointment to the board. Given these important powers, it was vital that elections to the council by

the Trust's members should be as democratic as possible. Since the trustees are mainly appointed from the council, being elected to the council is the only way for most ordinary members to be appointed to the board of trustees.

It was recommended by Blakenham's review that the practice of using the chairman's proxy vote for elections should be abolished. The chairman's proxy for members' resolutions was retained on the basis that chairmen would have the ability to listen to the debate at the AGM before casting their vote. It was quite normal for members critical of the Trust's policy to be elected to the council. It took two years to introduce the reforms and, during my time, there were at least seven members of the council who were very critical. I welcomed their presence as it allowed a frank debate where all views could be aired, a vote could be taken and the organisation could move on.

The Legatum report shows that, in more recent years, there has been a steady erosion of the safeguards that Blakenham introduced. In particular, the introduction of the "quick vote" - an extreme form of proxy voting - goes against the whole spirit of the

Blakenham review by making the election process undemocratic. In addition, it seems that the chairman's discretionary vote on resolutions is actually cast before the AGM. In the past two years since it was introduced, all the candidates who have been elected to the council were proposed by the board of trustees. All the others were defeated by the "quick vote". This is not credible, especially when one of the candidates was of the calibre of Lord Sumption. It is tantamount to the board of trustees appointing the people responsible for appointing them.

Unfortunately, the "quick vote" is not the only problem with the governance of the Trust. For many years, it used advisory panels and regional committees to provide advice and oversight to the staff. The members of these committees and panels were all volunteers. Importantly, they were sub-committees of the board, appointed by the board of trustees and the chairman. They were strongly endorsed by Blakenham as part of the checks and balances. In 2015, however, the Trust demoted the status of the panels and regional committees on the basis that they were there to advise the staff and presumably by

implication not the chairman and board of trustees.

I think this was a mistake. I relied heavily on the advice of the panels and committees, and met regularly with their chairmen. I believe the director-general of the time felt that they slowed down decision-making, but they served to give external oversight and endorsement to what the Trust was doing. A slower decision is better than a wrong decision. Any organisation of the size and importance of the National Trust needs some form of external oversight. The National Trust has always attracted controversy. This is because of its importance in our national life and the passion that so many people feel for what it does. This is healthy and should be welcomed by the management and board of trustees.

A truly democratic structure allows these issues to be debated, voted on, and the organisation can move on. Stifling dissent will only lead to a running sore of disaffected members outside the organisation, which inevitably will damage this great institution. I hope the Legatum report will encourage the National Trust and the Charity Commission to look again at its governance and restore it to the democratic principles set out by Blakenham.

# What world is Jared Kushner living in?

Peter Bergen

**I**S Jared Kushner clueless? Kushner's newly disclosed musings last month that Gaza has a lot of "very valuable" waterfront property reminds one of Marie Antoinette's purported observation, "Let them eat cake." The former Trump White House senior adviser talked up the possible worth of Gaza's waterfront real estate at an event at Harvard in February when already more than half the buildings in Gaza had been damaged or destroyed, according to multiple news reports. And this week, the UN warned of impending famine in northern Gaza.

At the Harvard event, Kushner also suggested that the 1.4 million people sheltering in southern Gaza in Rafah might be moved into Egypt or to the Negev desert in southern Israel to shield them from a potential Israeli attack. Kushner's thoughts appeared to be in sync with those of his old family friend, Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, who has approved a plan to invade Rafah. Kushner's notions are fantasies, of course, since the Egyptians are not going to accept substantial numbers of Palestinian refugees, let alone the more than one million sheltering in Rafah, something they have made clear repeatedly. Nor is Israel going to accommodate them.

The October 7th attacks by Hamas on Israel were inexcusable, and Israel had every right to avenge them. Still, Palestinian rage has been building for years, and Kushner, as then-President Donald Trump's shadow secretary of state, helped contribute to this, something Kushner seems to be blissfully unaware of.

The pace of new West Bank settlements built by the Israelis accelerated during Kushner's tour of duty as the self-appointed Middle East peace czar, according to analyses by The Associated Press, and the Trump administration publicly took the position that these new settlements were not illegal, reversing decades of US policy on the issue. The Trump administration also moved the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, something previous administrations had avoided doing because Palestinians also regard Jerusalem as their capital, and Muslims look upon it as a sacred city because the al-Aqsa mosque in East Jerusalem is the third holiest site in Islam.

When the US embassy opened in Jerusalem, Kushner declared, "Peace is within reach." Meanwhile, in a telling split screen, Israeli forces in Gaza were simultaneously killing dozens of Palestinians protesting the

opening of the embassy. Kushner's "Abraham Accords" were supposed to bring peace to the region because, in Kushner's fantasy, if some Arab states recognized Israel, they would invest in Gaza and the West Bank and help set the conditions for a two-state solution, which he characterized in the Wall Street Journal as a mere "real estate dispute."

It appears that in Kushner's mind, he is a modern-day President Jimmy Carter bringing peace to the Mideast as Carter did by brokering the Camp David Accords between Israel and Egypt, mortal enemies that had fought four wars against each other, and a peace agreement that still holds nearly half a century later. In his modestly titled memoir "Breaking History," Kushner wrote: "Humbled by the complexity of the task, I orchestrated some of the most significant breakthroughs in diplomacy in the last fifty years." Wow!

The Abraham Accords resulted in two small Gulf monarchies, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, signing deals recognizing the state of Israel for the first time, and Kosovo, Morocco and Sudan following suit. The agreements had helped ease tensions and promote economic ties in the region before the Hamas attack

on October 7, but they did nothing to resolve the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian dispute. As a corollary to the Abraham Accords, Kushner planned to drum up \$50 billion for Palestinian projects, but this never happened because the Palestinians boycotted an investment conference that Kushner hosted in Bahrain in 2019.

At the conference, Trump's Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin claimed that investments in the West Bank and Gaza were "going to be like a hot IPO," the phrase for an initial public offering of stock, which may have been the dumbest thing that anyone in the Trump administration said publicly during their four years in office. The "hot IPO" is now a smoking ruin that evokes Dresden after World War II. Yet, six months out of office Kushner kept failing upward with a nice investment from the Saudis of \$2 billion for his investment fund, which had all the appearances of a reward for the work he did aiding the Saudis when he was the Middle East czar during the Trump administration. Perhaps Kushner's fund will lead the charge to build the first Trump Tower in Gaza with some really fantastic waterfront views, but somehow, I doubt it. Even Jared Kushner can't be that clueless.

CNN

# At the frontline of climate action

Chen Zhenlin

**M**ARCH 23 this year marks the 64th World Meteorological Day, with the theme of "At the Frontline of Climate Action". It calls for urgent actions and closer cooperation in climate mitigation and adaptation, to rise to the grave challenges posed by a warming planet to human survival and development.

We have just experienced the hottest year on record, with the global average temperature and sea surface temperature shattering the historical records. Extreme weather and climate events have become more severe and frequent globally. As the global warming is intensifying, climate change has become one of the most pressing challenges around the world. United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres calls on the international community to take action to break the deadly cycle of global warming before a "deadly tipping point" is reached.

China has made firm commitments and taken vigorous actions to tackle climate change. In 2020, Chinese President Xi Jinping

announced that China will scale up its Intended Nationally Determined Contributions by adopting more vigorous policies and measures, aiming to have CO2 emissions peak before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060.

The China Meteorological Administration actively engages in global climate governance. It stands at the frontline of climate action with an open mind, innovative ideas and pragmatic measures, provides scientific support for building a modernization where humanity and nature coexist in harmony, and contributes Chinese wisdom and solutions to global response to climate change. First, building a firm line of defense against extreme weather. As the global warming is intensifying, China is confronted with more extreme weather and climate events. The CMA gives full play to the role of meteorology as the first line of defense against disasters, constantly enhances the capabilities of sophisticated monitoring, precise forecasting,

and tailored services, further improves the coordination mechanism for meteorological disaster prevention and mitigation, raises the public awareness of disaster prevention and mitigation, and promotes the efforts of the whole society to effectively guard against disaster risks.

Second, exploring climate resources to support the development of new quality productive forces. The CMA has conducted the survey and assessment on national wind and solar power resources, and charted a detailed solar power resource map to support new energy development. Meanwhile, the CMA has developed climate and ecological brands like Natural Oxygen Park of China, a summer tourist destination, China Climate Livable City (County), to promote the transformation of ecological value into economic value at the local level. Third, keeping a global vision in climate governance. The CMA is deeply involved in the scientific assessment of global climate change. The CMA, as the leading

department of China, has long organized Chinese experts to participate in the assessment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and provided services to 129 countries through Fengyun satellites, demonstrating China's efforts to implement the UN Early Warnings for All Initiative and build a community with a shared future for mankind.

Looking ahead, the CMA will stand at the frontline of climate action, shoulder the responsibility of scientific innovation, enhance the meteorological science and technology, improve public services, consolidate the climate change research, vigorously promote the application of artificial intelligence, and strengthen climate risk management and early warning, in a bid to strongly support the growth of new quality productive forces, and advance the green and low-carbon economic and social development. The CMA will join hands with relevant counterparts to enhance international cooperation, and deeply engage in global climate governance for a clean and beautiful world.



# Pakistan’s power, housing sectors: Qatar Fund keen to increase footprint

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Executive Officer, Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), Khalifa bin Jasssem Al-Kuwari here on Saturday showed his interest in increasing the footprint of the fund in Pakistan’s power generation and housing sectors.

Both countries would further enhance bilateral cooperation by initiating technical level discussions, said a press statement issued by the Economic Affairs Division.

A QFFD delegation, led by Al-Kuwari is on a two-day visit to Pakistan (from 23-24 March 2024), the statement added. The delegation, along with the Ambassador of the State of Qatar to Pakistan Ali Mubarak Ali Essa Al-

Khater called on Minister for Economic Affairs, Ahad Khan Cheema.

On the occasion, the Minister for Economic Affairs highlighted the priority of his government to further strengthen bilateral cooperation between the two countries in the development of mega projects in the water sector.

He welcomed the CEO, QFFD, and appreciated the role of the State of Qatar and QFFD in the development of the country and the longstanding relationship between the two countries.

The minister congratulated Al-Kuwari on receiving the Civil Award conferred upon him by the President of Pakistan in recognition of his services to Pakistan.

Cheema expressed his gratitude to the State of Qatar for galvanizing international support for the floods 2022 affectees by pledging US\$ 25.00 million. He also appreciated the role and support of QFFD to Pakistan at a very challenging time and assured to further strengthen the relations with QFFD in the future.

On the occasion, Al-Kuwari congratulated the Minister for Economic Affairs on Pakistan Day and thanked the government of Pakistan for conferment of the Civil Award.

Al-Kuwari stated that QFFD remains committed to supporting Pakistan in its journey towards recovery and prosperity through climate-resilient infrastructure.

## China rolls out cross-border trade in services negative lists

BEIJING (APP): China has rolled out national and pilot free trade zone (FTZ) versions of negative lists for cross-border trade in services to boost opening up, the Ministry of Commerce announced.

It is the first time that China has formulated a negative list for cross-border trade in services at the national level, according to the ministry. The national-level list consists of 71 items.

The pilot FTZ version of negative list for cross-border trade in services contains 68 items in total, and covers fields including occupational qualifications of natural person, professional services, finance and culture, the ministry said.

Such moves are deemed as China’s major measures to align itself with high-standard international economic and trade rules and boost institutional opening up. China released its first negative list in services trade at the Hainan Free Trade Port in July 2021, specifying that domestic and overseas service providers should enjoy equal access in sectors not on this list, said ministry spokesperson He Yadong at a press conference in November last year.

**China’s ship exports soar in first two months**

China’s exports of ships jumped during the first two months of 2024, both in terms of volume and value, official data has shown.

China exported a total of 937 ships from January to February, up 59.9 percent year on year, according to the General Administration of Customs.

The export value soared 180.6 percent from a year ago to 48.25 billion yuan (about 6.8 billion US dollars) during the two months.



ISLAMABAD: Families shopping for upcoming Eid al-Fitr celebrations in Karachi Company Market G-9 Markaz.

# Pakistan needs a fresh loan from IMF: Mian Zahid

## F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said on Saturday that taking a new long-term loan from the IMF is very important for the country’s survival.

At the same time, economic reforms are significant so that the country can become self-reliant, and he said there is no need for further borrowing.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that borrowing should be stopped as soon as possible; otherwise, the entire debt servicing burden will continue to be shifted to industry and the public.

Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that the IMF is the only option to save the country from default. He added that due to our continuous breach of promises, the attitude of the IMF has become inflexible, while the attitude of the friendly countries has also become cold.

The IMF not only wants the continuation of strict policies but also wants to see further increases in electricity and gas prices and prolong interest rates in double digits, he said.

The IMF wants to increase the tax base, sell failed enterprises, and bring non-tax-paying sectors into the tax net. However, in Pakistan, governments generally cannot do anything other than increase taxes on

certain items, resulting in inflation.

Increasing the burden on the powerful and influential classes has always been avoided, he said, adding that at present, the IMF is somewhat satisfied, due to which other creditors are also ready to trust Pakistan, but getting billions of dollars every year to repay old debts and interest is not sustainable.

At the moment, both the government and the IMF are giving the good news of a slight reduction in inflation. Still, when electricity and gas become more expensive, the cost of production will also increase, which will not reduce inflation.

There is a clear possibility of a decrease in Pakistan’s exports, and the rich will be hardly affected

by the austerity policy of the international organization.

Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif has indicated that the burden of reforms will now be shifted to the elite instead of people with low incomes, which is welcome, IMF and the people’s misery are linked because the economy does not flourish under its conditions, it shrinks.

Therefore, we need to stand on our feet through structural reforms as soon as possible so that we do not need loans and some relief can be given to the people.

He said that an increase in exports and import substitution is needed, and concrete steps should be taken instead of relying on statements.

# FRIA: IMF’s directions to now carry forward fiscal discipline of country

## F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Ferozepur Road Industrial Association (FRIA) senior vice chairman Shahbaz Aslam has said that the economic and fiscal discipline of the country will be driven under the direction of IMF now, leaving little room for the government to make its way, which has not come up with any plan to fix the economy and provide relief to the trade and industry.

Higher inflation, rising utility tariffs, growing unemployment and, above all, the malaise and despondency among the masses are likely to continue unabated.

Economic vulnerability now looms with political uncertainty at its core. The Moody’s Investors Service has recently given a ‘credit negative’ signal to Pakistan in the face of prolonged political ambiguity and social tensions over election results, which will make it tough to approach the IMF for a new program, weaken external economy and make liquidity management more challenging.

Shahbaz Aslam said that the privatization commission of Pakistan is struggling since months to effectively put in place the privatization of loss-making public sector enterprises; notably, the Pakistan Steel

Mills and Pakistan Airlines despite the urgency and concern expressed, time and again, by the IMF.

The election held on Feb 8th in Pakistan threw up a number of surprises with a significant shift in the country’s political landscape.

The decision-making processes and any constitutional amendment are likely to be driven and influenced more by conflicting self-interests of the coalition partners, watering down the key objectives. This is not what the country needs in these unprecedented times of political and economic challenges confronting the nation.

Pakistan’s government liquidity and external vulnerability risks will remain very high until there is clarity on a credible longer-term financing plan.

It said Pakistan’s foreign exchange reserves remained ‘very low’ at \$8 billion as of Feb 2, 2024, sufficient to cover only about six weeks of imports and well below what was required to meet external financing needs for the next three to four years.

Based on the IMF’s report published in January, Moody’s said Pakistan’s external financing needs were about \$22 billion in the next fiscal year (Jul-

Jun) 2024-25 and about \$25 billion annually in fiscal 2026 and 2027. The country will need a longer-term financing plan to meet its very large financing needs for the next few years, after its current IMF program ends in April 2024.

At present, Pakistan has been assigned a stable rating of “Caa3” by Moody’s. It said prolonged delays in the formation of a government would increase policy and political uncertainty at a time when it faced very challenging macroeconomic conditions.

Hopefully, the new coalition government will be sensitive to the social, economic and fiscal issues of the state, which in the meantime have exacerbated further.

Pakistan’s debt-to-GDP ratio is already above 70% and the IMF and credit rating agencies estimate that interest payments on its debt will soak up 50% to 60% of the government’s revenues this year. Debt exceeds legal limit by Rs14.5tr.

That is the worst ratio of any sizable economy in the world. Every macro fundamental is flashing red; notably, growth, debt, revenue mobilization and investment. Some strong and immediate decisions have to be taken by the new government.

# GDP growth rate below potential due to poor efforts to boost growth, says APBF

## F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) has said that country’s GDP growth rate has always remained below its potential despite efforts to boost economic growth, as the development of important sectors and investment prospects was hampered by inadequate revenue collection, structural problems, and governance issues.

The APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood asked the government to give priority to the economic recovery, emphasizing the necessity of joint efforts to tackle Pakistan’s economic difficulties. Since it has been causing serious governance and economic issues for years, the cost of goods, food, petrol, and other necessities has increased, and inflation has almost reached 45 percent, which is not bearable for the common man.

On the other hand, there has been an increase in dissatisfaction among the public that no state institution is performing well and to save them from the haughtiness and bad administration pervasive in the system. The only way for this to go from a failure to a success story, as in other countries, is if the federal and provincial governments defy them and pursue fundamental changes in governance, fairness, openness, accountability, and the consistent economic policies minimum for 15 years.

The APBF Chairman Ibrahim Qureshi expressed confidence in the country’s ability to overcome these

challenges and highlighted the new government should fulfill the commitment to eradicating poverty and unemployment. He said that the government should remain steadfast in its commitment to guide Pakistan through its current economic and political challenges, with a focus on unity, effective governance, and public welfare.

Ibrahim Qureshi said that the country has had trouble raising enough money to cover its expenses. Due to the low tax-to-GDP ratio, borrowing and outside help are heavily relied upon to close the fiscal imbalance. In Pakistan, there is a recurring budget deficit because the government spends more than it takes in. The national debt burden has risen, as a result, needing substantial financial resources for debt repayment. Both internal and external debt in Pakistan have been constantly rising.

The APBF President said that budget is largely consumed by debt servicing; leaving little money for social welfare and development initiatives. Circular debt, which is the accumulation of unpaid invoices and

pending payments among power generation firms, distribution companies, and the government, is a problem in Pakistan’s energy sector.

Syed Maaz Mahmood said that this problem has a significant negative impact on the power sector’s finances and hinders its ability to meet the rising energy demand.

Other troubling issues also exist, posing obstacles to our economy’s expansion. Pakistan is ranked 173rd internationally for tax payments. According to a World Bank analysis, Pakistani businesspeople pay 47 taxes yearly. A single business that conducts business in four different Pakistani provinces annually disburse five corporate income taxes, twelve employer-paid pension contributions, twelve Social Security payments, one property tax, one professional tax, one vehicle tax, one stamp duty payment, one fuel tax payment, and twelve payments of goods and sales tax. An exporter needs 75 hours to complete border compliance and document compliance. Additionally, Pakistan dropped 23 spots

on the indicator for corporate loan availability.

He said that the government will have its work sharply cut out as far as the economic challenges are concerned. Coming at the back of fast-unfolding climate change crisis and recent COVID pandemic that pushed millions into poverty with little fiscal capacity of government to provide anywhere near close to what was needed in stimulus spending.

He said that even though Pakistan’s economic crisis in 2022-2023 is a recurring factor in the country’s political unrest, it has a history of ignoring the nation’s true issues, which include poor governance, a broken judicial system, outdated laws, complicated tax system, lack of transparency, duplication in the government system, ineffective bureaucracy, improper use of our human, natural and water resources, lack of efficient local government, inadequate/unreliable data for country’s planning, and the consistent flaws in policies in execution by the government departments.

# Stock listing offers windfall for Trump as bond deadline looms

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): Shareholders approved a merger Friday to list Donald Trump’s social media venture on the US stock market, providing a potential financial lifeline to the former president as he faces possible seizure of his properties.

After many previous delays, investors voted to approve the merger of Digital World Acquisition and Trump Media & Technology Group (TMTG) -- owner of the Truth Social platform, company officials said on a webcast of the vote.

The action could potentially provide Trump some

\$3 billion, as he faces a \$454 million court payment for his New York fraud case, although he may not be able to access the funds for several months.

The ex-president, who is running once-again for the White House, started Truth Social after he was booted from Facebook and Twitter in January 2021.

The social media sites took the unprecedented step of banning a sitting president after a mob of Trump’s supporters attacked the US Capitol, following Trump’s repeated calls for his 2020 election loss to Joe Biden to be overturned. His accounts have since been restored.

Trump’s expected boun-

ty stems from millions of shares he owns in Trump Media that are now worth billions with Friday’s vote to combine with Digital World, a shell company created specifically to combine with an operating business. However, such deals require principal shareholders such as Trump to hold the equity for six months before selling.

Shares of Digital World -- which is expected to be renamed in Trump’s name -- ended Friday’s session sharply lower at \$36.94, down 13.7 percent.

DWAC was set up as a special purpose acquisition company, or SPAC, a shell company that goes public with the aim of merging with an operating entity.

DWAC’s investors prior to the deal included a rela-

tively small share of institutional investors, according to public filings that suggest most holders are individual investors.

The transaction drew criticism Friday from the watchdog CREW, which pointed out that the largest holder in DWAC with about two percent was Susquchanna International Group, which is led by Republican donor Jeff Yass.

# Saudi deals prompt Pakistani IT firms to eye \$3.5 billion in exports

KARACHI (Arab News): Major deals with Saudi firms have left Pakistan’s information technology exporters hopeful of hitting the \$3.5 billion trade milestone in 2024.

The South Asian nation recorded monthly IT exports of \$257 million in February, 32 percent more than in the same month last year.

Monthly IT exports in the second month of 2024 were higher than the previous 12-month average of \$233 million, according to central bank data released this week.

Pakistani exporters attribute the surge to supportive policies that encouraged local companies to bring proceeds back home and the formation of the Special Investment Facilitation Council, a civil-military hybrid forum, aimed at boosting foreign investment in the country.

Alongside this is also the securing of greater

trade with Saudi Arabia, thanks to dozens of Pakistani IT firms presenting their innovative ideas and products at the LEAP tech exhibition held in Riyadh from March 4 to 7.

Zohaib Khan, chairman of the Pakistan Software Houses Association, also known as P@SHA, told Arab News: “Projects ranging from \$8 to \$10 million have been spot-closed, and a pipeline for projects worth \$70 to \$80 million has been generated.”

LEAP 2023 generated \$9 billion in IT business and Pakistani companies developed leads worth upwards of \$100 million on the sidelines in business-to-business matchmaking, according to P@SHA.

Khan estimated that there had been an increase of up to \$100 million IT exports to Saudi Arabia in the last two years.

He added that Pakistanis who recently attended tech events in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Dubai were

registering their companies there.

Pakistan’s IT exports in the first eight months of the current fiscal year, which began in July 2023, increased by 15 percent to \$2 billion on an annual basis, compared to \$1.7 billion recorded during the same period of the previous financial year.

“This year, we will hit an export target of \$3.15 billion to \$3.5 billion and next year, we will take it up to \$5 billion because of the convenience of cross-border payments, the money of our companies that is lying abroad will come to Pakistan,” Khan said.

The jump in IT exports has occurred due to a relaxation in the permissible retention limit by the State Bank of Pakistan, which increased it from 35 percent to 50 percent in the Exporters’ Specialized Foreign Accounts, and stable currency which encouraged IT

companies to repatriate their foreign income and deposit it in local accounts, according to a report by Karachi-based Topline Securities brokerage house.

Khan said the central bank was facilitating exporters with measures that would yield further results in the coming years.

“The central bank has introduced corporate debit cards, these products have now started coming out,” he said. “These products will allow exporters to bring in the money they have parked in foreign accounts because it will ensure cross-border payments.”

Currently, the P@SHA chief said, exporters were unable to make direct payments from Pakistan to companies or individuals abroad, but if the central bank allowed cross-border payments there would be no reason to keep export proceeds abroad.

Pakistani authorities are also focusing on harnessing

the potential of IT exports and Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb in a recent interview expressed hope that the country’s IT exports would likely increase to \$3.5 billion this year.

Pakistan’s market for computer software has also seen steady growth for the past several years, with the total size of the software sector at approximately \$3.2 billion.

The US is Pakistan’s largest market for IT, accounting for 54.5 percent in the 2023 financial year, according to the International Trade Administration.

Pakistan’s IT sector consists primarily of software development and IT-enabled services for data centers, technical service/call centers, and telecom services, with 60 percent of ITes serving international customers. Much of the growth is driven by the work of freelancers and tech start-ups.

## Court Notice

In the Court of Saima Ehsan Civil Judge II/Allaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Case No. 57/1 Institution. 3/3/2023 date of hearing 28/3/2024. Roidad Khan Vs. Derabad Khan. Notice to No. 9, Naseb Khan s/o Rahem Khan. 11. Shafiur Rehman s/o Sakhi Lal. 12. Abdur Rehman s/o Sahibzada. 15/1. Pervez s/o Mohamad Sheren. 21/1. Shamsur Rehman s/o Derabad Khan. 22. Mohamad Shoaib s/o Sakhidad Lal resident of Hisar Tehsil Daggar District Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 9 a.m. dated 28/3/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

## Public Notice

It is published through this Notice that I Murtaza Khan S/o Mustaqim Khan R/o Merri Banda District Kohat is the owner of plot No. 116 Sector B-4 size one kanal Phase (II) KDA Kohat has appointed has Mr. Hameed Khan S/o Bahader Khan R/o House No. 9 Sector. 9. KDA District Kohat through (special) deed No. 38 Bahi (No. 04 Volume No. 290 dated 12/03/2024 which is registered in the office Kohat of Tehsildar/Sub Registrar. The Attorney holder now wants to transfer the above said plot if any bank/institution/firm/person has any objection about the transfer he should contact the Housing Officer UADA within 15 days in writing with proofs otherwise plot will be transfer and no objection will be accepted (Director Urban Area KDA Kohat).

## Court Notice

In the Court of Irum Bashir Civil Judge V, Swabi, Suit No. 5/1 Institution 25-03-2023 next hearing date 29-04-2024 Feroze Din Vs. Arshad Muhammad (Suit for Isteqrari) Notice to Sarir Khan S/o Sarzamen Khan R/o Pabney Tehsil & District Swabi. In the above case titled the service of above defendant(s) is not possible through ordinary means, therefore, you defendant(s) is/are informed through this publication that on 29-04-2024 at 8.30 AM. You has/have to appear before this court either personally or through attorney or through counsel to pursue the suit noted above, otherwise, ex-parte proceeding will be initiated against you. Seal of Court.





## In brief

**Sabalenka wins in Miami**

MIAMI (Agencies): World number two Aryna Sabalenka started her Miami Open campaign after an emotional week with a 6-4 6-3 win over close friend Paula Badosa. Two-time Australian Open champion Sabalenka, 25, played her second-round match four days after the death of former partner Konstantin Koltsov. Koltsov, an ex-ice hockey player, died in Miami aged 42 in what police described as an "apparent suicide". Belarusian Sabalenka plays Ukraine's Anhelina Kalinina on Saturday. On Wednesday Sabalenka said her "heart is broken" after Koltsov's death and described it as "an unthinkable tragedy". Wearing an all-black kit and a cap pulled down low, she looked up to the sky before the pre-match coin toss. Sabalenka and Spaniard Badosa, who have described themselves as "best friends" on the WTA Tour, shared a long and warm hug at the net after the match. Their match was one of the first to be completed on Friday after heavy rain disrupted the schedule. US Open champion Coco Gauff beat Argentine qualifier Nadia Podoroska 6-1 6-2. Murray match suspended With play not starting until after 17:00 local time in Florida, many matches were pushed back and later suspended because of the weather. British former world number one Andy Murray's second-round match against Argentine 30th seed Tomas Martin Etcheverry was paused at 3-3 in the first set. Australian Open champion Jannik Sinner was leading 3-2 in the first set against fellow Italian Andrea Vavassori when play was suspended, while Britons Cameron Norrie and Jack Draper did not make it on to court. The suspended ties and Norrie and Draper's matches - against Italy's Flavio Cobolli and Chilean 22nd seed Nicolas Jarry respectively - have been rescheduled for Saturday.

**Man City beat Man United**

LONDON (Agencies): Jess Park produced an outstanding display as Manchester City beat rivals Manchester United to keep up their Women's Super League title chase. England forward Park, 22, scored twice and assisted one for Khadija Shaw as City brushed aside their neighbours at Etihad Stadium to move three points clear of Chelsea at the top of the table for at least a day. United's hopes of qualifying for next season's Champions League have all but evaporated with the defeat as they trail third-placed Arsenal by six points, with the Gunners still to play Aston Villa on Sunday. It was a damaging afternoon for United not just in terms of the result but also for their pride as rivals City, though not at their best, were ruthless in front of goal and left the Etihad as comfortable winners. Park's opener should have been ruled out for offside by Shaw in the build-up but it was allowed to stand in the absence of a video assistant referee, as the midfielder volleyed home Leila Ouahabi's cross. She doubled City's lead eight minutes later - celebrating in front of United's away fans in the corner on both occasions - and within seconds of the restart slid a pass through for Shaw to place her effort past goalkeeper Mary Earps. Shaw's goal saw her overtake England midfielder Georgia Stanway as City's all-time record scorer in the WSL era with 68 goals.

## Ex-Secretary, PCB chairman Shaharyar Khan passes away

ISLAMABAD (APP): Former Foreign Secretary and Chairman of Pakistan Cricket Board Shaharyar Khan passed away on Saturday in Lahore after protracted illness. He was 89.

Born in 1934, late Shaharyar Khan had joined the Foreign Service in 1957 and served till his retirement as foreign secretary in 1994.

Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, in a statement condoled over Khan's death who "served Pakistan with great distinction both as a diplomat and Chairman PCB."

"He will be greatly missed," Dar said and prayed to Allah to grant him a higher place in Jannah and solace to his family and friends.

Foreign Office paid tribute to the ex-ambassador and

high commissioner and honoured his "monumental services in protecting Pakistan's diplomatic interests".

In a post on X, Foreign Secretary Muhammad Syrus Qazi said he was deeply saddened by Khan's passing and lauded him as "one of Pakistan's finest diplomats."

Qazi said Khan left behind a "rich legacy of accomplishment and protecting and promoting Pakistan's interests".

He had earlier served as Ambassador to Jordan and France as well as High Commissioner to London.

From 1994 to 1996, he served in Rwanda as special representative to the UN Secretary General overseeing peacekeeping operations.

A passionate cricketer, Shaharyar Khan had two

stints as chairman, between 2003 and 2006 and then 2014 to 2017.

Federal Interior Minister and Chairman of PCB Mohsin Naqvi, expressing grief on passing of Khan and remembered him as "a fine administrator" who served Pakistan Cricket with "utmost dedication."

"Pakistan Cricket will stay indebted to the late Shaharyar Khan for his commendable role as head of the board and for his services in the growth and development of the game in the country," Naqvi added.

Born in Bhopal, India, late Shaharyar Khan was the author of "The Begums of Bhopal", "The Shallow Graves of Rwanda", "Cricket: A Bridge of Peace" and "Bhopal Connections".

## Huetter denies Gut-Behrami in WC downhill finale



SAALBACH (AFP): Cornelia Huetter won the final women's World Cup downhill race of the season at home on Saturday, sealing her first crystal globe to deny Lara Gut-Behrami a fourth title this season.

In front of her home crowd on the windy slopes of Saalbach, Huetter pushed Gut-Behrami off the top of the World Cup downhill rankings which the Swiss had looked poised to win.

Gut-Behrami crossed in 17th, missing out on a fourth winter globe after winning the overall, super-G and giant slalom.

US ski star Mikaela Shiffrin won the slalom title for the eighth time earlier this month after returning from a six-week injury lay-off -- her 96th World Cup win. After several delays, Huetter blitzed down the slope to finish 0.17sec ahead of Slovenian Ilka Stuhec

with Italy's Nicol Delago third at 0.49sec.

It was the sixth World Cup victory for the 31-year-old Austrian and her first globe after 12 years competing. "I'm really speechless," said Huetter, who last won a downhill in Lake Louise, Canada in December 2017 but had already managed three top-four finishes this season.

"It's amazing to have a home race with this ending. I could never have imagined it. "This morning I woke up and I slept so bad, and I woke up and I thought, 'Give your best, it's the last chance today for this season,' and I did it."

Gut-Behrami led by 72 points going into the downhill. But she was almost two seconds off the pace and needed someone to beat Huetter's time to take the globe.

Mowinckel bows out. Gut-Behrami had difficulty hiding her disappoint-

ment. The 32-year-old suffered her worst result of the season in downhill.

But the skier who had expressed her doubts last summer about her career had an exceptional winter with eight victories and 16 podium finish. "Of course when you are in the start you just want to try to give your best and try to win everything you can win," said the Swiss star.

"But in the end I'm really happy about the season -- altogether. I can't really complain." Huetter finished with 397 points in the downhill standings with Gut-Behrami second on 369, and Italy's Sofia Goggia third with 350.

The last race of the season also marked the farewell of Norwegian Ragnhild Mowinckel, retiring at the age of 31 and after 248 World Cup starts - four victories, the last on the Cortina downhill in Italy last January -- two Olympic silver medals and two world third places.

If the weather permits with snowfall forecast, the World Cup concludes on Sunday with the men's downhill and the duel between Swiss legend Marco Odermatt and French sensation Cyprien Sarrazin. Odermatt is currently 42 points ahead of Sarrazin, with 100 points on offer for victory.

## Verstappen takes pole position for F1 GP

MELBOURNE (AP): Max Verstappen not surprisingly clinched pole position for Sunday's Australian Grand Prix. More surprising was record eight-time Australian pole winner Lewis Hamilton not making it into the final round of qualifying on Saturday.

Verstappen, who has won both races to start the season in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, with his Red Bull teammate Sergio Perez second both times, will start in the front row for Sunday's 58-lap race on the temporary Albert Park street circuit.

It was the 35th pole of Verstappen's F1 career.

Carlos Sainz, returning from appendix surgery ahead of the last race in Saudi Arabia, was second-fastest, followed by Perez in third.

"It was a bit unexpected but I'm very happy," Verstappen said. "It's been a bit of a tricky weekend so far. (Ferrari) seem very quick, so it's a bit of a question mark for tomorrow."

"Even throughout qualifying, Q1, Q2, I didn't really feel like (I was) fighting for pole. Then we made some little tickles on the car and that seemed to help me in Q3 to really push it to the limit; both of my laps I was quite happy with it."

The biggest surprise of the day was Mercedes driver Hamilton. He failed to advance from the second qualifying session, finishing 11th. It was his worst qualifying position at the Australian Grand Prix since 2010.

"The inconsistency within the car -- it really

messes with the mind," the seven-time world champion said, citing the afternoon wind as a problem.

"Our car is on a bit of a knife edge. When the wind picks up the car becomes a lot more unstable. But the others seem to (be able to) pick their pace up in qualifying, I'm not sure why. It's not a great feeling for everyone in the team, but we'll just keep working away."

Ferrari's performance here could have been compromised after Sainz declared he was ready to return to the cockpit, but not feeling 100 percent after surgery for appendicitis ahead of the last race in Saudi Arabia.

But the Spanish driver, who is out of contract at the end of the season, rebounded from a hospital bed a few weeks ago to the front row of the grid in Australia this weekend.

"It's been a tough couple of weeks, so to make it to this weekend I'm very happy," Sainz said. "I was a bit rusty at the beginning but I got up to speed and I'm feeling good in the car."

Sainz said he was still feeling the effects of the surgery.

"I am not going to lie, I am not in my most comfortable state, but I can get it done," he said. "Obviously, a lot of discomfort and weird feelings, but no pain, so it allows me to push."

Australian Daniel Ricciardo was eliminated in the first qualifying session for the first time at Albert Park after his fastest lap was deleted by

stewards. Ricciardo surged into the top-10 near the end of the session and seemed certain to continue his impressive record of never qualifying lower than 15th in Melbourne.

But the 34-year-old Ricciardo was deemed to have exceeded track limits and was pushed back to start from 18th place in his first GP on home soil since 2022.

Alex Albon qualified 12th, repaying some of the faith shown from Williams after the British-born Thai driver sat in teammate Logan Sargeant's car. Albon's vehicle sustained extensive damage after he crashed into a wall during practice on Friday, with American driver Sargeant stepping aside for the rest of the weekend.

It was already an eventful week ahead of Saturday's qualifying. FIA's Ethics Committee had cleared its president, Mohammed Ben Sulayem, from "interference of any kind" at two F1 events last year was followed quickly by a social media post from Susie Wolff, who is director of the all-female series F1 Academy and also married to Mercedes F1 boss Toto Wolff, announcing that she had filed a criminal complaint in the French courts against the sport's governing body for statements made about her in December.

It was all against the backdrop of ongoing furor surrounding Red Bull Racing and its team principal Christian Horner.



SYLHET: Shoriful Islam got Dimuth Karunaratne for 52 late in the day.

## Imad Wasim takes back retirement from T20Is

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Star Pakistan all-rounder Imad Wasim on Saturday, came out of international retirement and declared his availability for the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup, scheduled to run from June 2 in the USA and the West Indies.

Taking to X, formerly Twitter, Imad shared that he reconsidered his retirement after meeting PCB officials and will now be available to serve Pakistan in the T20i format.

"I am happy to announce that pursuant to meeting PCB officials, I have reconsidered my retirement and am delighted to declare my availability for Pakistan cricket in T20i format leading up to ICC T20i World Cup 2024," stated Imad.

"I would like to thank the PCB for reposing trust in me and I would give my very best to bring laurels to my country. Pakistan comes first!"

Imad Wasim, who announced his retirement in November 2023, was pushed by cricket pundits and fans to reconsider the decision, citing his remarkable form in the recently-concluded Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9. The all-rounder played a pivotal role in leading Islamabad United to their third PSL title, emerging as their standout player in the knockout matches.

He played a match-winning cameo against Multan Sultans in Islamabad United's last group-stage fixture, propelling the two-time champions into the PSL 9 Playoffs. Imad then bamboozled Quetta Gladiators in the Eliminator with magnificent bowling figures of 3/12 before playing a match-winning 59-run knock in the second Eliminator against Peshawar Zalmi.

Imad Wasim then etched his name into the PSL history books when he became the first bowler to claim a five-wicket haul in the tournament's final. He followed up his fivefer with an unbeaten 19 off 17 deliveries. For the unversed, Imad Wasim represented Pakistan in 66 T20Is and scored 486 runs. He also has 65 wickets to his name in the shortest format.

## Naqvi meets Wahab at Gaddafi Stadium

LAHORE (PPI) Chairman Pakistan Cricket Board (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.

The meeting was also attended by the PCB COO Salman Naseer and Director International Usman Wahla, according to a report on Saturday.

The core agenda of the high-profile meeting was to strictly follow the merit in the selection process for the national men's team.

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.

PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi 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."

Earlier this week, Chief Selector Wahab Riaz and

COO Salman Naseer visited Faisalabad's Iqbal Stadium to analyze the situation and facilities at the venue.

According to the details, the delegation made a visit to the Iqbal Stadium as per the instruction of the newly-appointed PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi.

The delegation was instructed by the PCB head to analyze the condition of the stadium and the facilities there which may pave the way for its upgradation.

For the unversed, Faisalabad's Iqbal Stadium has not hosted a single international, domestic or franchise league match since the return of international cricket to Pakistan.

## World Open Judd Trump beats Jackson Page to reach final in China



SHEFFIELD (Agencies): Judd Trump is into the final of the World Open in China thanks to a 6-2 win over Jackson Page in Yushan.

Trump and world number 52 Page exchanged frames early on, but at 2-2 Trump took control, winning the final four frames.

World number two Trump has now reached back-to-back World Open finals, having won the most recent edition in 2019.

The winner of the other semi-final between Neil Robertson and Ding Junhui will face Trump in Sunday's final.

Trump produced a break of 122 to take an early lead but Wales' Page, playing in his first ever semi-final at a ranking event, showed he was capable of providing a test for the Englishman.

Having won the second frame to make it 1-1, 22-year-old Page was again forced to come from

behind at 2-1, doing so with a break of 72 to level the match for a second time.

From there, Trump showed why he has been the form player on tour this season, winning each of the next four frames, including a break of 67 in the penultimate frame.

Trump will be aiming for his fifth title of the season in Sunday's final before the World Championships start next month in Sheffield.

## Karunaratne half-ton keeps Sri Lanka in control against BD

SYLHET (AFP): Dimuth Karunaratne scored a patient half-century to guide Sri Lanka to 119-5 in the second innings Saturday, building a 211-run lead against Bangladesh at stumps on the second day of the first Test.

Bangladesh finished the first innings 92 runs behind in Sylhet but made some early strikes to keep the match alive.

Karunaratne held firm to score 52 off 101 balls before his dismissal off Shoriful Islam in the day's final session.

Skipper Dhananajaya de Silva, who scored 102 runs in the first innings, was batting on 23 alongside Vishwa Fernando on two.

Debutant Nahid Rana

dismissed Nishan Madushka (10) and Kusal Mendis (three).

Spinners Taijul Islam and Mehidy Hasan Miraz removed Angelo Mathews (22) and Dinesh Chandimal (0) respectively to give Bangladesh some hope, with the tourists teetering on 64-4 before Karunaratne's rally.

Vishwa claimed four wickets in Bangladesh's first innings of 188 while Lahiru Kumara and Kasun Rajitha each took three.

Nightwatchman Taijul Islam top-scored with a career-best 47 for hosts who resumed on 32-3.

Kumara struck with his first ball of the innings when he forced overnight

batsman Mahmudul Hasan (12) to edge to de Silva at second slip.

Shahadat Hossain played a few attacking shots before he fell to Kumara in the same manner for 18.

Taijul and Liton Das added 41 runs for the sixth wicket before Kumara struck again.

A late swinger knocked back Liton's middle stump, sending him to the pavilion for 25 after a brief spell at the crease punctuated by four boundaries.

Rajitha was out off Rajitha after nicking the ball behind the stumps to wicketkeeper Kusal Mendis.

Rajitha also removed the last recognised batsman Mehidy Hasan for 11,

leaving the bottom order to cut the deficit as much as possible.

Khaled Ahmed and Shoriful Islam obliged, hitting four sixes between them.

Fernando ended their 40-run partnership when he removed Shoriful for 15 and wrapped up the innings in his next over by sending back Khaled for 22.

Sri Lanka made 280 runs in their first innings on the first day thanks to centuries from de Silva and Kamindu Mendis, who both scored 102.

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.





## In brief

### Tree falls on bike, one killed

RAWALPINDI (APP): A man died after a tree fell on a motorcycle he was riding, near Octri No 22 on Saturday. Rescue 1122 spokesman informed that a motorcycle was passing by a road when a tree suddenly fell on it. As a result the rider identified as 60 years old Nauman died. The rescue personnel shifted the victim's body to the hospital after necessary action.

### Rain likely at isolated places

ISLAMABAD (APP): Dry weather is expected in most parts of the country while partly cloudy in upper areas during the next 24 hours according to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD). However, light rain-wind/thunderstorm is likely at isolated places in Gilgit Baltistan, Kashmir and surrounding hilly areas. According to the synoptic situation, a shallow westerly wave was affecting western and upper parts of the country and likely to persist till tomorrow. During the last 24 hours, dry weather prevailed in most parts of the country. The maximum temperatures recorded were Shaheed Benazirabad 39 C, Chhor, Mithi, Sakrand 38, Lasbela and Hyderabad 37C.

### 18 outlaws arrested

RAWALPINDI (INP): The police arrested 18 outlaws including two accused of murder, recovered arms, ammunition, drugs and liquor during separate actions here on Saturday. According to details, Waris Khan police utilizing the latest technology and human intelligence arrested Usman and Luqman involved in murder of a man. During crackdowns against drug peddlers in Gujar Khan, Saddar Wah, Waris Khan Civil Lines, Pirwadhai and City police station jurisdictions, the police arrested eight drug peddlers including Saqlain Haider, Tahir Mehmood, Danish Junaid, Abdul Qayyum, Hamza Ullah, Ikram, Muneeb, Noman, Umer and Abdul Sattar besides recovering over 8 kilogram hashish from their possession. During separate actions in Ratta Amral, Airport, Sadiqabad, Nasirabad and Taxil police station jurisdictions, the police arrested Hamza, Zahfran, Waseem, Fasih Abbasi, Saim Abbasi, Waqar and Hashmat Ali with 20 litres liquor, four 30 bore pistols and ammunition. Separate cases against detainees were registered at respective police stations and investigations were underway.

### Man tortures sister-in-law

RAWALPINDI (INP): A man tortured the widow sister-in-law and her daughters along with other accomplices, with shovels in Sher Zaman Colony of Rawalpindi. According to the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Kamran Asghar, the accused Riaz Shah is the brother-in-law of the victim widow and there is a house dispute between the family. The accused is asking for share with his other brother while the house has been registered in the name of the late husband of the victim widow. Police officials said that the accused Riaz Shah has been arrested and a case has been registered and investigation into the incident has been started. Taking notice of the incident, Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz has directed immediate action against the accused and while seeking a report from the police authorities, she said that violence against women is not

# Pakistan Day bright chapter of freedom movement, says Mohsin Naqvi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control Mohsin Naqvi in his message on Pakistan Day said on Saturday that Pakistan Day is a bright chapter of freedom movement.

On March 23, 1940, the foundation was laid to realize the dream of an independent country, said Mohsin Naqvi adding that Today we are free, but this freedom is the result of many sacrifices, efforts and hard work.

He wrote in his message that as a nation, we pay homage to Quaid-e-Azam and the leaders of the Muslim League who passed the Pakistan Resolution under his

leadership.

The resolution passed in the historic Minto Park meeting became the basis for the establishment of Pakistan, he said.

March 23 is the day of building passions and realizing dreams, the minister further said adding that the journey to freedom is never easy, to reach the destination of Pakistan, one had to go through rivers of fire and blood.

Under the enthusiastic leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the struggle for a separate homeland was successful by making numerous sacrifices, he added.

He further said that If the different races, different

tribes and different sects living in the subcontinent had not decided to become one nation, then the miracle of Pakistan would never have appeared.

The journey from creation of Pakistan to construction of Pakistan continues gradually, he said adding that at this stage, every member of the nation has to go ahead and play his role.

"As a nation we have to show responsibility by understanding the current challenges of Pakistan" Mohsin Naqvi said. By adopting the passion, determination and solidarity of March 23, 1940, we will take the country forward, Mohsin Naqvi said.

## Pak Day celebrations for national strength, unity

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar on Saturday said, as we commemorate Pakistan Day, we celebrate the strength, unity and unwavering spirit that define our great nation.

In his message with regard to 'Pakistan Day', the minister said that today, we honor the vision and sacrifices of our forefathers who envisioned a

homeland where justice, equality, and prosperity reign supreme.

Pakistan Day, he said, serves as a reminder of our collective journey towards progress and prosperity. It is a testament to the indomitable spirit of our people, who continue to strive for excellence in every sphere of life, he maintained.

The law minister said that let's reaffirm our com-

mitment to upholding the principles of democracy, justice, and rule of law. On this auspicious occasion, let us renew our pledge to build a prosperous and inclusive Pakistan where every citizen can contribute to the nation's progress, he said, adding that together, let us strive towards a brighter future guided by the principles of justice, equality and respect for all.

## Teachers perturbed as notifications delayed

ISLAMABAD (APP): The delay in releasing the notification of higher time scale (HTS) has left more than 500 teachers in a state of uncertainty, complicating their career advancement with hurdles.

Since the Departmental Promotion Committee meeting on January 5, 2024, where the cases of 509 time scale cases were deliberated, these teachers have been experiencing distress and anxiety due to prolonged delay.

An anonymous teacher while talking to APP highlighted the 2011 government initiative to address slow promotion structures of teachers, introducing the

HTS policy, which pegged promotions to specific timeframes in their respective grades.

This policy was meant to be a beacon of hope for teachers facing prolonged waits for their regular promotion. However, this policy has become entangled in administrative complexities and bureaucratic hurdles.

Another teacher, speaking anonymously, lamented the situation, highlighting how the promise of timely HTS has transformed into a nightmare.

Meanwhile a teacher expressing disappointment in the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) for failing to champion their

cause effectively said, "Since there is no regular Director General at FDE, there is a lack of effective pursuit of teachers' promotion cases and insufficient pressure on the education ministry for the timely issuance of HTS notifications."

Amidst this chaos, the teachers urged the education minister to intervene and untangle the bureaucratic knots strangling their careers. Their hopes now rest on the shoulders of minister in power to bring about the resolution they so desperately seek, before more careers are needlessly blocked by administrative lethargy.

## CNIC delivery to PWDs at doorsteps started

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) has established a helpline to provide computerised national identity card issuance service at the doorstep, aiming to improve accessibility and convenience for people with disabilities, an official announced on Friday.

Talking to APP, he said that the initiative has streamlined the process of acquiring a computerised national identity card (CNIC), making it effortless and convenient for individuals with disabilities.

The CNIC issuance service, provided at home, is designed to assist individuals with disabilities who face challenges visiting NADRA registration centers due to mobility or other physical limitations.

NADRA officials will personally visit their residences to gather required documents, record biometric data, and issue CNICs, ensuring equitable access to this vital identity document for all, he explained.

He said that the Special Helpline 1777 functions as a centralized support hub

for individuals with disabilities, offering thorough assistance and guidance on NADRA's services, including the home-based CNIC issuance procedure. This endeavor underscores NADRA's pledge to inclusivity and its unwavering commitment to empowering individuals with disabilities, he added.

By offering identity card services directly to their homes, NADRA is eliminating obstacles and guaranteeing that everyone can fully engage in society with ease, he concluded.

## World Meteorological Day marked

ISLAMABAD (APP): World Meteorological Day was marked across the globe including Pakistan on March 23 (Saturday) to emphasize addressing the undeniable threats of climate change to our entire civilization.

The day was marked under the theme "At the Frontline of Climate Action" highlighting the urgent need to combat climate change and its impacts through featuring various events including conferences, symposia and exhibitions for meteorological professionals, community leaders and the general public.

World Meteorological Day takes place every year on March 23 and commemorates the coming into force

on March 23, 1950 of the Convention establishing the World Meteorological Organization.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) plays a crucial role in contributing to people's safety and welfare and without the data collected by the World Meteorological Organization, it would be impossible to get accurate daily weather forecasts.

Sustainable Goal 13 commits us to "take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts." Progress in this goal underpins progress in all the other Sustainable Development Goals.

Weather and climate predictions help boost food production and move closer

to zero hunger. Integrating epidemiology and climate information helps understand and manage diseases sensitive to climate. Early warning systems help to reduce poverty by giving people the chance to prepare and limit the impact of extreme weather.

WMO, its Members, and its partners drive the full value cycle, from science to services to action for the good of society. It advances knowledge of our Earth system, monitors the state of the climate and water resources, provides scientific information to inform greenhouse gas emissions reductions and delivers climate services and early warnings to support climate adaptation.



ISLAMABAD: The float of Punjab Province showcases the culture of the province participates in Pakistan Day 2024 parade ceremony, at Shakarparian Parade Ground. —APP Photo

## World Rights Day observes today

ISLAMABAD (INP): International Day for the Right to the truth concerning gross human rights violations and for the dignity of victims will be celebrated tomorrow March 24.

Today, on Sunday, March 24, the world observes World Rights Day to commemorate the gross violations of human rights and pay homage to the victims worldwide.

This annual event, embraced globally including Pakistan, serves as a solemn remembrance of Monsignor Oscar Arnulfo Romero, who tragically lost his life on March 24, 1980. Monsignor Romero's unwavering activism against human rights abuses, particularly towards the most vulnerable populations in El Salvador, remains an enduring symbol of courage and advocacy.

The significance of this day extends beyond mere remembrance. It underscores the imperative of championing the rights of all individuals, irrespective of their background or circumstances. World Rights Day stands as a tribute to those who have dedicated their lives to the noble cause of promoting and safeguarding human rights for everyone.

Designated as the International Day for the Right to Dignity, this occasion serves as a stark reminder of the grave consequences of disregarding human rights and dignity. It urges nations and communities to reaffirm their commitment to upholding fundamental freedoms and justice for all.

As the world commemorates World Rights Day, it is a poignant moment to reflect on the sacrifices made by countless individuals in the pursuit of a more just and equitable society. Let us honor their legacy by standing in solidarity with the victims of human rights violations and working tirelessly to build a world where dignity and rights are upheld for every person.

## AIOU to setup campus in Mardan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) will establish a state of the art campus in Mardan.

In this regard, Vice Chancellor AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood held a meeting with Mayor of Mardan, Hamayatullah Mayar and Additional Deputy Commissioner, Naik Mohammad Khan on Saturday, said a press release.

While giving a detailed briefing on the educational services of the University, Dr. Nasir said that if AIOU could get land at a suitable place in Mardan, the University will build a state-of-the-art campus of the university, which will provide a lot of convenience to the students of Mardan. All the facilities will be available to them at their doorstep.

Hamayatullah Mayar and Naik Muhammad Khan assured to lease suitable land to the University in Mardan for the construction of the campus. In these meetings, Director General Regional Services, AIOU, Dr. Malik Tauqeer Ahmed Khan accompanied the Vice Chancellor. The delegation of Allama Iqbal Open University led by the Vice Chancellor also participated in a seminar organized in Abdul Wali Khan University regarding Pakistan Day.

## Parliament-to-Parliament: Contacts vital for regional prosperity, says NA Speaker

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Speaker of the National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, on Saturday, said that the ties between Pakistan and Türkiye are based on shared values of religion and culture.

During a meeting with the Ambassador of Türkiye to Pakistan, Dr. Mehmet Pacaci, Ayaz Sadiq underscored the importance of reviving parliament-to-parliament contacts for regional

prosperity and development, said a news release.

Highlighting his initiative of the first Speaker's Conference in 2017, he said that the parliaments of both nations have vast opportunities for collaboration under the auspices of multiple parliamentary forums.

Ayaz Sadiq also extended an invitation to the Speaker of the Turkish Parliament to visit Pakistan. Furthermore, the

Speaker informed the ambassador that Pakistan offers vast opportunities in trade and business. "Pakistan is blessed with a diverse natural landscape, making it a wonderful tourist destination similar to Türkiye," he added.

Dr. Mehmet Pacaci congratulated Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on his successful election as Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan.

## Oppressed Kashmiris draw inspiration from resolution of 1940

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The historic Pakistan Resolution passed on March 23, 1940 laid the foundation for creation of a separate homeland for Muslims of the sub-continent as envisioned by the great poet and philosopher, Allama Muhammad Iqbal.

A report released by Kashmir Media Service, today, said the All India Muslim League Resolution of March 23, 1940 was undoubtedly the most important event in the history of modern South Asia.

It said that the March 23, 1940 resolution not only changed the course of Indian history but also left deep marks on the world history. It was on March 23, 1940 that Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, for the first time formally made the demand for a separate country based on the concept of the Muslim nationhood.

From March 23, 1940 onward, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah always negated the idea of united India. The Resolution also rejected the idea of a united India. The resolution gave new strength to the Muslims who gathered around Muhammad Ali Jinnah on the platform of All India Muslim League to struggle for their freedom.

The report said, those trying to undermine the Idea of Pakistan should put a cursory look at the condi-

tion of Indian Muslims and attitude of Hindu majority towards them.

It said that the resolution passed on 23 March 1940 in Lahore is the main driving force behind the Kashmir freedom struggle and the Kashmiris consider Pakistan and its defence forces as their saviours & protectors.

The founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah had rightly termed Kashmir the "Jugular Vein" of Pakistan. The Kashmiris and Pakistanis are bound together through strong religious, cultural and historical bonds and that Kashmir is the unfinished agenda of the partition of the sub-continent.

The report said Pakistan and Kashmir are incomplete without each other and pro-Pakistan slogans raised in IIOJK show oneness of Pakistan and Kashmir. "Right from 1947, the IIOJK people celebrate Pakistan's national days under shadows of guns and unfurl Pakistani flags to show their attachment and love for the country. 'Kashmir Baney Ga Pakistan' slogan is the voice of every Kashmiri Muslim," the report said, adding Pakistanis are two sides of the same coin and no power on earth can separate them as Kashmiris' freedom struggle is an inseparable part of the Pakistan Movement.

It said, struggling Kashmiris draw inspiration from the historic resolution of March 23, 1940 and that a strong and stable Pakistan is very important for resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

The report said, the idea of Pakistan is more relevant today than ever before as Narendra Modi-led Hindutva BJP/RSS Indian regime's anti-Muslim agenda is reaffirmation of the Resolution passed on March 23, 1940. The persecution and oppression of Muslims across India and IIOJK have once again reinforced the relevance of the Two Nation Theory, it maintained. The report pointed out that the actions taken by Narendra Modi-led fascist Indian government on and post August 05, 2019 once again proved that Muslims needed a separate homeland in sub-continent.

The report mentioned that from 1947 till now, over 3.5 million Kashmiris have been forced to live as migrants in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, UK, US, Canada and other countries in pursuit of the struggle for making Jammu and Kashmir as a part of Pakistan. Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir is destined to become part of Pakistan, it added.

## CDA introduces a slew of new taxes

ISLAMABAD (PPI): ISLAMABAD Capital Development Authority (CDA) has introduced a slew of new taxes on real estate properties in Islamabad, burdening landowners with significant financial obligations, according to a notification issued by the authority.

Under the new tax regime, owners of 140 square yards plots in various sectors and housing societies, including Shehzad Town, Margala Town, and Rawal Town, are now obligated to pay Rs24,000 in taxes. This measure is poised to impact numerous small-scale property owners in the federal capital.

The gravity of the taxation becomes even more apparent with the imposi-

tion of staggering taxes on farmhouses. Owners of farmhouses spreading over eight kanals are mandated to pay Rs180,000 in property tax, while those with larger properties ranging from 90 to 120 kanals face an even heavier tax bill of Rs442,000. These tax rates are set to reshape the financial landscape for farmhouse owners across Islamabad.

In the heart of the commercial district, the blue area, commercial properties are now subjected to substantial taxes. Ground floor establishments will face a tax of Rs32 per square foot, while basement spaces will be taxed at Rs22 per square foot.

Additionally, residential apartments in this area will be levied at Rs26 per

square foot, further increasing financial obligations for property owners.

The notification further outlines taxation rates for various other commercial entities. Private hospitals will be taxed at Rs22 per square foot, while petrol pumps and CNG stations will face a tax of Rs180 per square yard. Marquees and marriage halls are not exempt either, with a tax of Rs13 per square foot.

The implementation of these taxes is expected to generate substantial revenue for the CDA but has sparked concerns among property owners, particularly smaller stakeholders and farmhouse owners, who fear the financial strain it will impose.



3 members of a family killed

JALALABAD (Ariana News): A man shot and killed three members of his family in Jalalabad, capital of Nangarhar province, police said. Abdul Basir Zabali, the spokesperson of the Nangarhar police, said that the incident happened on Friday evening in the Azim Abad area in the 8th Police District of Jalalabad city. The victims of the accident are the killer's wife, son and daughter-in-law, who died of severe injuries in the hospital.

Afghan group evacuated

ATLANTA (Pajhwok): Another group of Afghans has been evacuated to Germany from Islamabad. The German Foreign Ministry said that the Afghans were sent from Islamabad on a special plane. The ministry said the lives of the group sent to Germany were in danger in Afghanistan. However, the German Foreign Ministry did not say how many men and women were in the group. About 33,000 Afghans have been sent to Germany under various programs.

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

Ministry rejects claims of aid embezzlement

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Economy has rejected the statements made by John F. Sopko, Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, regarding the caretaker government's embezzlement of humanitarian aid.

Abdul Latif Nazari, Deputy Minister of Economy, told TOLONews that the aim of monitoring the provision of humanitarian aid is to ensure transparency.

According to Nazari, these statements have been made in an unprofessional manner.

Abdul Latif Nazari said, "The statements of the Special Inspector are unprofessional, and we reject them. The Islamic Emirate cooperates with the institutions and bodies of the international community and donor countries. Our goal is to monitor and create more transparency, and we have no kind of seizure or interference in the process of distributing these aids."

The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, in an interview with the ProPublica news outlet, said that US aid to Afghanistan ends up in the hands of the Islamic Emirate.

Sopko has provided data indicating that after the Islamic Emirate took control over Afghanistan, the United Nations has provided \$2.9 billion in aid to Afghanistan, which often does not reach the needy.

Sopko said: "Most of the money that's going in cash through the U.N. is ultimately coming from US taxpayers."

Meanwhile, some analysts consider the international community's aid to the Afghan people important and emphasized the

World reacts to suicide attack

KANDAHAR CITY (TOLONews): The explosion on Thursday morning in Kandahar sparked reactions both domestically and abroad.

A suicide, which happened near a bank, resulted in the death of three civilians and injured 12 others.

Former Afghan president Hamid Karzai and former chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation Abdullah Abdullah, condemned the attack, with Karzai calling it a "crime against humanity."

Abdullah said that such attacks, which result in the death and injury of civilians during the holy month of Ramadan, are crimes contrary to all laws and principles.

Meanwhile, the German Foreign Office, the US Special Representative for Afghanistan, Thomas West, The Dutch Embassy for Afghanistan, the United Arab Emirates' foreign ministry, the foreign ministry of Saudi Arabia, and the chargé d'affaires of the US embassy for Afghanistan, Karen Decker have condemned the attack.

Decker emphasized that the citizens of Afghanistan should observe Ramadan peacefully and without fear. Thomas West said that the US condemns the "senseless terrorist attack" in Kandahar.

The United Arab Emirates' foreign ministry in a statement condemned yesterday's suicide attack in Kandahar, calling it a "criminal act."

The statement said that the United Arab Emirates rejects all forms of violence and terrorism aimed at undermining security and stability in contravention of international law.

The foreign ministry of Saudi Arabia condemned the suicide attack in Kandahar, calling it a "terrorist attack."

The Foreign Ministry of Saudi Arabia in a statement also announced its continued support for the Afghan people against any form of "violence, terrorism, and extremism."

IEA condemns attack at Moscow concert hall

KABUL (Ariana News): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) has strongly condemned the recent "terrorist attack" at a concert hall in Russian capital Moscow, calling it a "blatant violation of all human standards."

At least 60 people were killed and 145 others were injured after gunmen opened fire at concertgoers in Moscow on Friday. Daesh claimed responsibility for the attack.

"Daesh, which has targeted civilians in Afghanistan & other regions of the world as well, again clearly demonstrated through this incident that it is a group in the hands of intelligence agencies aimed at defaming Islam & posing a threat to the entire region," Abdul Qahar Balkhi, spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said on X.

"The regional countries must take a coordinated, clear & resolute position against such incidents directed at regional destabilization," he added.



Afghan migrants complain on harassment and arrest in Iran

KABUL (TOLONews): A number of Afghan migrants in Iran have complained that they are continuously harassed and arrested by the police of that country.

Afghan citizens living in Iran said that they visit less in the city and entertainment places for fear of being arrested by the police.

"The Iranian police treat us very badly. If they catch any Afghan in the park or on the road, they take away his phone and money, everything he has, and if he has nothing on him, they transfer him to a camp," Akbar Sultani, one of the Afghan migrants in Iran, told TOLONews.

"We demand the Islamic Emirate to have a meeting with the Iranian authorities, especially the UN office, as soon as possible to find a proper solution for preventing the deportation of Afghan migrants," said Ali Reza Karimi, a migrant rights activist.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations, criticizing the arrest of Afghan migrants in Iran, said that efforts are being made to release Afghan migrants who are imprisoned in Iran.

According to the statistics of the Ministry of Refugees, about 7,000

Afghan migrants are imprisoned in Iran.

"We estimate that we have about 7,000 imprisoned migrants in Iran, of which a thousand migrants who have been reported to us have been released. We have diplomatic contacts that other prisoners will also be released," Abdul Rahman Rashed, the Deputy Minister of Refugees and Repatriations, told TOLONews.

In the meantime, some migrant rights activists said that the Islamic Emirate should pay serious attention to Afghan migrants in distant and nearby countries.

"The Iranian government has started deporting undocumented migrants and is vigorously implementing this plan, which has caused a series of problems for migrants," Mohammad Khan Talibi Mohammadzai, an activist in the field of migrant rights, told TOLONews.

A number of Iranian media have recently reported that Iran has started the plan of "collecting and returning illegal citizens" in the early days of the new year in the country. According to reports, this plan will be implemented until the end of the Nowruz holidays in recreational and other areas.

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KABUL (Khaama Press): At least four women lost their lives in the past week as a result of domestic violence in several provinces of Afghanistan.



In the latest incident, the security commander of Nangarhar province announced that a man had fatally shot his wife and daughter in Jalalabad city, the capital of this province. The motive behind this act has not yet been clarified.

Meanwhile, rumors surrounding the murder of a woman on March 19 last year in Nangarhar province have led to the killing of another woman.

Abdul Basir Zabuli, the spokesman for the Nangarhar security command, had stated that these two women were "exchanged." After the rumor of one of them being murdered spread, the father and brothers of the murdered woman killed the other woman by stabbing, who was going to be their bride.

He further stated that the second woman and two others have been arrested in this case.

Additionally, a man has murdered his wife in Paktika province.

Sources say that on March 21, a man murdered his wife during Ifar in the city of Sharana, the capital of this province, following verbal disputes between the husband and wife.

Although officials from the Taliban in Paktika have not commented on this incident, it is worth mentioning that Pakistani attacks in the past week in the provinces of Khost and Paktika have resulted in the deaths of five women.

Domestic violence is one of the most prevalent and widespread forms of violence in Afghanistan, primarily targeting women.

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Afghan woman's jam and pickle workshop employs 50 women

KABUL (Khaama Press): People's tables in Afghanistan are almost always decorated with containers of jam and pickles. There is a high demand for these two foods. Najia Sultani, a 43-year-old woman, has established a workshop for producing these two foods with an initial cost of 500 Afghanis, and now about 50 women are working in this workshop.

Najia, who is about 43 years old, says it has been about four years since the establishment of this production workshop. She is pleased with this initiative because, as she says, she has set up this workshop using her children's "lunch money."

She told Khaama Press, "I didn't know how to support my husband financially because his income was low, and he couldn't cover expenses alone. I opened my children's lunch money, took five hundred Afghanis from it, and bought materials to prepare pickles."

While Najia learned pickle making from her mother-in-law, she sells the prepared pickles in plastic bottles for five Afghanis each. Eventually, she earns more money and expands her business using the money she earns.

Najia Sultani, who was forced to marry at the age of 15, says that this marriage was a definite obstacle to her education. In addition to home education for pickle making, she has also participated in formal education at various times to prepare pickles. Now, she uses all her skills to produce jam and pickles.

Although she had no choice in marriage, she is happy with her husband's support in the field of work she does today. She says, "No woman can work without her husband's support. I am currently benefiting from my husband's support in my work."

Najia's eldest son, about 20 years old, accompanies his mother in the



marketing section and works shoulder to shoulder with Najia to expand and prosper the jam and pickle Production Company.

Najia's production company operates under the name "Sumbul Production Company." She says she named this jam production company after her daughter and only women work in this company. This production company is a source of income for dozens of widowed and single mothers.

Many women work at the Sumbul Production Company. Many of these women have come to this company for learning and apprenticeship and are making jams and pickles.

Women who are apprentices at this production company have started various small businesses using Najia's training and make jams and pickles half a day from their homes. They see the establishment of this production company as a good opportunity.

According to Najia, the Sumbul Production Company prepares various pickles and jams.

Najia Sultani, who started her work with 500 Afghanis and now has achieved a satisfactory income, says that every woman can start a small or large business using her abilities. She said, "While women have a lot of power, creativity, and ability, why not use it?"

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Murdered doctor's family in Khost calls for justice

KHOST (TOLONews): The family of a young doctor who was murdered a few days ago due to disputes between two families in Khost province demanded justice and punishment for the killers.

This family asked the Islamic Emirate to arrest some individuals involved in this case who are still free. The doctor was named Shaizullah and was murdered ten days ago in the Lakno area in the center of Khost. Six other members of Shaizullah's family were injured in this murder.

Shaizullah had recently graduated from medical college.

"A great injustice has been done to us, and we thank the Ministry of Interior or anyone who has shown sympathy to us, but at the same time, we want the criminals and those involved in this murder to be punished according to Islamic law," said Faizullah Faizi, a member of his family.

"These criminals must be punished in such a way that it serves as a lesson to all people," said Tuti Khan, another member of his family. Khost security officials said that the killer has been arrested and those involved in this case will be punished.

"On behalf of the security forces, we assure the people that anyone causing insecurity in the area due to personal enmities or under any name, the security forces will take swift and serious action against them," said Taher Ahrar, the spokesperson for Khost's security command.

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According to information from Khost's security command, ninety murder incidents occurred in various parts of this province during the year 1402, in connection with which, 55 people have been arrested and their cases have been submitted to court.

79% of population without adequate access to water

KABUL (Ariana News): Afghanistan is fighting with a dire water crisis that leaves approximately 79% of its population without adequate access to this essential resource, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) said on World Water Day.

UNDP said that the water crisis is not an individual issue but the culmination of several interlinked factors.

"Severe drought conditions, economic instability, and the devastating effects of prolonged conflicts have significantly impaired the country's water infrastructure," it said in a report.

"The situation is further aggravated by the impacts of climate change and extreme weather events, which have led to the destruction of vital water sources and facilities," it added. UNDP said that the crisis disproportionately affects female-headed households, which face additional barriers in accessing public water facilities, thereby exacerbating their vulnerability.

67 percent of households in Afghanistan are affected by drought-related hardships, and an additional 16 percent impacted by floods.

Meanwhile, UK Embassy for Afghanistan said on X that rising water stress threatens the food security and health of millions of Afghans.

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Nowruz from Asia to Europe: Celebration of Solar New Year in France



KABUL (Khaama Press): In celebration of the arrival of spring and the Persian New Year, a festival was held in Clermont, France.

In addition to Afghans, Iranians, and Tajiks, some French citizens also participated in this event to promote cultural interaction and introduce Nowruz to the host community.

The celebration occurred on Friday night, March 22, at the "Shankhtal" Cultural Center, where participants were treated to local dishes from Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Iran.

Iranians, and Tajiks, some French citizens also participated in this event to promote cultural interaction and introduce Nowruz to the host community.

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An exhibition featuring the works of painters Samia Sadat from Afghanistan and Sara Tabib from Iran was also showcased.

During the New Year celebration of 1403, explanations about the history of Nowruz were presented, and images depicting the various customs of celebrating this event in the Eastern lands were displayed.

More than 100 people participated in this program, with one-third being French participants.

Chantal Charot, one of the participants in this program, said: "Today I learned that the celebration of Nowruz signifies a new beginning that can bring people closer together."

Some participants also emphasized the role of cultural ceremonies and celebrations in preventing separation and war in Europe.

Tawana Sadraddinov, one of the participants in this program from Tajikistan, migrated to France two years ago. He had lived in Ukraine for eight years and emigrated to France after the start of the war in that country.

He said: "Today, we were able to introduce Nowruz very well to the French. They had never tasted Tajik food before, and today they did."

Haft Mewa, also called the seven types of fruits, one of the special foods for Nowruz in Afghanistan, was also present at this event.

Some participants in this celebration from Iran, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan learned more about the different customs of their countries of origin.

Nikan Forutan, one of the participants in this program from Iran, said: "Nowruz, just as it has brought the people of Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and many countries in the Nowruz region closer together, can also attract the people of Europe to our rich culture and bring humans closer together."

Céline Tardieu, Clermont's deputy mayor, also attended and welcomed the event. She said: "Such ceremonies contribute to the cultural enrichment of our city and should be increased and expanded in the future."

**Opening of the cultural showcase**

The deputy mayor also announced the opening of a cultural association by Afghan migrants in the city.

Arash Baraz, a renowned Afghan artist, founded this association under "Cultural Showcase."

He spoke about the objectives of this cultural institution: "The Nowruz celebration, which was the first event of this institution, showed that we are striving to enhance the cultural identity of various communities, especially the people of Afghanistan. We aim to bring cultures closer together and assist in social integration."

This institution is expected to organize more cultural programs in the future.

The Nowruz celebration took place for the first time in the city of Clermont, France, which, for the third consecutive year, following the establishment of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, this occasion has been overlooked and not officially commemorated.

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# President confers civil awards on Pakistanis, foreign nationals

## F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Saturday conferred Pakistan's highest civil awards upon numerous Pakistani citizens and foreign nationals, acknowledging their distinction, excellence, contributions and valour across various fields.

The awards were presented during an investiture ceremony held at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, attended by ministers, members of the diplomatic corps, and family members of the recipients.

Recipients of Nishan-i-Imtiaz include Late Muhammad Hafeez Qureshi for Nuclear Science, Ifitikhar Hussain Arif for Literature and Poetry, Islahuddin Siddiqui in Hockey, Syed Qaim Ali Shah for Public Service, Raja Muhammad Zafarul Haq in Public Service, Dr Shamshad Akhtar for Public Service, and Air Marshal (r) Najib Akhtar for Public Service.

Recipients of Hilal-i-Imtiaz include Late Brig Syed Sarfraz Ali for Strategic Planning & Development, Prof Dr Shahid Mahmood Baig in Science, Prof Dr Mukhtar Ahmed in Education, Prof Dr Iqar Ahmad Khan in Education, Prof Dr Muhammad Umar for Education and Medical Sciences, Rahat Ali Khan for Arts (Qawwali/Singing), Mohammad Ahmed Shah for Arts (Culture), Mehmood Ahmed Tahir Bhatti for Film Direction & Fashion Designing, Muhammad Anwar Masood for Literature and Poetry, Late Zahid Malik for Journalism, Dr Muhammad Amjad Saqib for Social Services, Ahmad Irfan Aslam for Public Service, Raja Naeem Akbar for

Public Service, Lt Gen (r) Muhammad Akram Khan for Public Service, Brig Atif Rafique for Public Service, Dr Muhammad Jehanzeb Khan for Public Service, Syed Tariq Fatemi for Public Service, Tariq Bajwa for Public Service, Tariq Mahmood Pasha for Public Service, Shahid Khan for Public Service, Sibtain Fazal Haleem for Public Service, Capt (r) Zahid Saeed for Public Service, Zahid Akhtar Zaman for Public Service, Late Mufti Abdul Shakoor for Public Service, Nasir Mahmood Khosa for Public Service, Javaid Aslam for Public Service, Fawad Hasan Fawad for Public Service, Dr Usman Anwar for Public Service, and Prof Dr Adil Najam in Education, Bilal Siddique Kamyana and Tanweer Ahmed.

Recipients of Hilal-i-Quaid-e-Azam include Sultan Bin Abdul Rehman, Khalifa bin Jassim Al-Kuwari, Yong Ye, Knut Ostby, Philippe Steinmetz, Dr Sebastian Paut, Michal Rossman and Samantha Power.

Recipients of Sitara-i-Shujaat include Tariq Mahmood for Gallantry, Muhammad Aamir Naseem for Gallantry, Majid Saleem Malik for Gallantry, Akhtar Hayat Khan for Gallantry, Lt Cdr (r) Muqaddas Haider for Gallantry, Muhammad Younas (Shaheed), Nizamullah (Shaheed), Rahat Saleem (Shaheed), Ghulam Abbas Laghari (Shaheed), Abdul Latif Nok (Shaheed), Muhammad Saeed Ahmed (Shaheed), Late Ajmal Masih, Muhammad Ramzan (Shaheed), Shams Ullah (Shaheed), Muhammad Sohrab (Shaheed), Asad Ullah Khan (Shaheed), Issar Muhammad, Zia Ullah Khan, Mir

Zubair Mahmood, and Muhammad Adnan.

Recipients of Hilal-i-Shujaat include Mushtaq Ahmed Sukehra for Gallantry. Recipients of Sitara-i-Imtiaz include Shama Hafeez, Qari Hafiz Buzurg Shah Al Azhari, Prof Dr Zulfiqar Ahmed Bhutta, Faakhir Mehmood, Jharna Basak Shabnam, Naila Kiani, Shoaib Anwar Malik, Fahad Haroon, Muhammad Sarwar Gondal, Dr Kazim Niaz, Muhammad Sulaeh Ahmed Foruqui, Farhan Faruqui, Dr Muhammad Farooque Hassan, Duraid Qureshi, Yasir Malik and Abdul Quddus Bizenjo.

Recipients of President Pride of Performance include Farrah Mahmood Rana, Suhail Sarwar Sultan Warraich, Lt Gen Ahsan Gulrez and Lt Col Junaid Ali Zulfiqar. Recipients of Sitara-i-Quaid-e-Azam include Husein EF Kavazovich and Salma Salman Zahid.

Recipients of Tamgha-i-Shujaat include Muhammad Usman, Syed Amer Akhtar, and Muhammad Bilal Riaz Burki. Recipients of Tamgha-i-Imtiaz include Dr Muhammad Usman Akram, Pro Dr Rizwan Taj, Waqar Maqsood Satti, Fahad Saleem Malik, Prof Dr Mushtaq Ahmed, Syed Feroz Alam Shah, Dr Farooq Adil, Rashid Mahmood, Aisha Khan, Muhammad Tanvir Butt, Faisal Siddique Khan, Dr Rizwan Taj, Prof Dr Riazwana Chaudhri, Muhammad Zubair Shaheen, Murlidhar Dawani, Sarah Ahmed, Dr Khalid Bin Shaheen, Ali Tauqeer Sheikh, Late Dr Manzoor Ahmed, Late Allah Ditta Abbasi and Late Shamim Ashraf Khawaja. Recipients of Sitara-i-Pakistan include Abdullah Al Matahari.



PESHAWAR: KP Governor Haji Ghulam Ali pinning Presidential Civil Award 'Tamgha-e-Imtiaz' to Mayor Haji Zubair Ali at a special ceremony.

## American hunts highest-rated Markhor in Astore

### F.P. Report

GILGIT: An American hunter has made headlines after successfully hunting the highest-rated Markhor in the Astore district of Gilgit-Baltistan, it emerged Saturday.

The hunt, which took place in the Doyan Community Controlled Hunting Area, was sanctioned to Brian Douglas Williams through a hunting permit obtained at a staggering cost of \$181,000. The horn size of the trophy is said to be 40 inches. This year, a total of four permits were issued for Markhor hunting in Astore, making it a rare and exclusive opportunity for hunters. The Astore Markhor, known for its majestic horns and endangered status, is a coveted trophy for big game hunters.

This was said to be the fourth highest-rated Astore Markhor hunt during the current trophy hunting programme. On February 13, after paying \$171,000, American Colglazier John Michael hunted an Astore Markhor in Sai Damote CCHA in Gilgit. Later, after paying the GB Wildlife Department \$186,000, American citizen Joseph Bradford Coors was able to hunt the highest-rated Astore Markhor on January 27, in the SKB community control hunting area in the Roundu area of Skardu. After paying \$177,000, Jan Jacob T. Dams from Belgium hunted an Astore Markhor on Dec 2, 2023, in the Astore DMT hunting area.

## PTI to challenge reserved seats in Apex court

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) central leader Sher Afzal Marwat has challenged the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governor's authority to convene the assembly meeting and raised concerns about the recent allocation of seats in the provincial assembly.

Marwat questioned the legality of the governor's action, claiming it violates the constitution. He further expressed suspicion regarding the ongoing recount process, alleging attempts to reduce PTI's representation in the assembly through the re-count of results in 20 constituencies. In what could be seen as a commentary on potential conflicts of interest, Marwat argued that lawyers cannot be separated from party politics.

Marwat specifically contested the allocation of reserved seats for women and minorities, highlighting that no court has yet ruled on PTI's request for specific seats in these categories. He further questioned why PTI was denied these seats while other parties like PML-N, PPP, and JUI apparently received them. He emphasized that the constitution doesn't allow such reallocation and that these seats should either be granted to PTI based on their performance or remain unallocated.

Marwat revealed that PTI has challenged the reserved seat allocation in the Supreme Court after facing rejection from the Peshawar High Court. He also announced PTI's plan to form a coalition with Sunni Ittehad Council and independent candidates to nominate an opposition leader, similar to how PDM nominated Shehbaz Sharif.

# Israel seizes 800 hectares of Palestinian land

WEST BANK: Israel's Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich has declared 800 hectares (1,977 acres) in the occupied West Bank as state land, in a move that will facilitate the use of the ground for settlement building. The announcement came as United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Israel for talks with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Smotrich underlined the government's determination to press ahead with settlement building in the West Bank, despite growing international opposition. "While there are those in Israel and in the world who seek to undermine our right to Judea and Samaria and the country in general, we promote settlement through hard work and in a strategic manner all over the country," Smotrich said, using Biblical names for the area of the West Bank that are commonly employed in Israel.

The denomination of the land in the Jordan Valley as state land follows a similar designation of 300 hectares (740 acres) in the Maale Adumim area of the West Bank, which the Palestinians want as the core of a future independent state. The US said last month that Israel's expansion of settlements in the West Bank was inconsistent with international law, signalling a return to longstanding US policy that had been reversed by the previous administration of Donald Trump.

The change brought the US back into line with most of the world, which considers the settlements built on Palestinian territory Israel captured in the 1967 Middle East war to be illegal. Israel itself disputes this view, citing the Jewish people's historical and Biblical ties to the land. Earlier this month, UN Human Rights Chief

Volker Turk said, "The establishment and continuing expansion of settlements amount to ... a war crime under international law."

Palestinian authorities condemned the land seizure and expansion of settlements. The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs called the latest move a "crime" that is part of an "official policy racing against time to annex the West Bank and eliminate the possibility of creating a Palestinian state". "There are no morals, values, principles or international resolutions that can stop the extremist right," the ministry said in a statement. "The international failure to protect our people is complicity and cover for Israel's ongoing evasion of punishment," it added.

Smotrich, the influential leader of one of the hard-right pro-settler parties in Netanyahu's coalition, himself lives in a settlement and has consistently backed settlement building. Israeli settlement watchdog Peace Now said the announced seizure is the single largest since the 1993 Oslo Accords, and "2024 marks a peak in the extent of declarations of state land". Peace Now called the timing of the announcement a "provocation" as it came during the visit by Blinken, who has been critical of settlement expansion by Netanyahu's government.

International pressure for a resumption of efforts to reach a two-state solution, with an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel, has grown amid efforts to end the nearly six-month war in Gaza. Little progress has been made in achieving Palestinian statehood since the signing of the Oslo Accords. Among the obstacles impeding it are expanding Israeli settlements. — Aljazeera

# US Senate passes \$1.2 trillion budget

WASHINGTON : Lawmakers in the United States Senate have passed a \$1.2 trillion spending bill, narrowly averting a partial government shutdown.

The lower house on Saturday approved the measure by a 74-24 vote after funding had expired for three-quarters of the government at midnight.

But the White House sent out a notice shortly after the deadline announcing that the Office of Management and Budget had ceased shutdown preparations because there was a high degree of confidence that Congress would pass the legislation and the president would sign it on Saturday.

Key federal agencies including the departments of Homeland Security, Justice, State and Treasury, which houses the Internal Revenue Service, will remain funded through September 30 after the bill was passed in the Democratic-majority Senate. But the measure did not include funding for mostly military aid to Ukraine, Taiwan or Israel, which are included in a different Senate-passed bill that the Republican-led House of Representatives has ignored.

The bill also eliminates US funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) — which provides vital services on the ground to

Palestinians in Gaza and across the Middle East — until March 2025. The agency lost millions of dollars in international support, led by the US, following allegations by Israel that some of its staff in the Gaza Strip were involved in the October 7 Hamas-led attacks.

The House on Friday voted 286-134, narrowly gaining the two-thirds majority needed for approval of the six-bill package which represents the largest and most contentious section of federal funding. More than 70 percent of the money is set for defence spending, with the bills also covering the military, homeland security, healthcare and other services. Funding for those programmes was set to expire on March 22. Top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer said it was "a very long and difficult day, but we have just reached an agreement to complete the job of funding the government".

"It is good for the country that we have reached this bipartisan deal. It wasn't easy, but tonight our persistence has been worth it," he added. It took legislators six months into the current fiscal year to get near the finish line on government funding, the process slowed by conservatives who pushed for more policy mandates and steeper spending cuts than the Democratic-led Senate or White House would con-

sider. The impasse required several short-term, stopgap spending bills to keep agencies funded.

The first package of full-year spending bills, which funded the departments of Veterans Affairs, Agriculture and the Interior, among others, cleared Congress two weeks ago with just hours to spare before funding expired for those agencies. The vote tally in the House reflected anger among Republicans over the content of the package and the speed with which it was brought to a vote. House Speaker Mike Johnson brought the measure to the floor even though a majority of Republicans ended up voting against it. To win over support from Republicans, Johnson touted some of the spending increases secured for about 8,000 more detention beds for migrants awaiting their immigration proceedings or removal from the country — or about a 24 percent increase from current levels. Republican leadership highlighted more money to hire about 2,000 border patrol agents.

Democrats, meanwhile, boasted of a \$1bn increase for Head Start, an early childhood development programme, and new childcare centres for military families. They also played up a \$120m increase in funding for cancer research and a \$100m increase for Alzheimer's research. — Arab News

# CJCSC greets nation on March 23

## F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: The Armed Forces of Pakistan, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC) and Services Chiefs, congratulate the nation on 84th anniversary of "Pakistan Day".

This promising day is reminiscent of great efforts of the Muslims of sub-continent when they determined our destiny in line with vision of

our great leaders for a separate homeland for Muslims. This historic day also reminds us of the greatest sacrifices and contributions of our forefathers which they made in the struggle for creation of Pakistan.

Today, plight of Muslims in India in general and IIOJK in particular, who are facing worst form of brutalities at the hands of the fascist regime, remind us of the

importance and value of the Independence where we cherish and respect our freedom every day, Alhumdillillah.

On this day, Armed Forces of Pakistan renew their resolve to defend the motherland and protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity at all times and at any cost; and uphold the national flag In Sha Allah. Pakistan Armed Forces Zindabad, Pakistan Paindabad.

## Hong Kong's new security law comes into force

HONG KONG: A new national security law has come into force in Hong Kong despite growing international criticism that it could erode freedoms in the China-ruled city and damage its international financial hub credentials. The law, also known as Article 23, came into effect at midnight on Saturday, days after Hong Kong's pro-Beijing lawmakers passed it unanimously, fast-tracking legislation to plug what authorities called national security loopholes.

Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee said the law "accomplished a historic mission, living up to the trust placed in us by the Central [Chinese] Authorities". He has often cited Hong Kong's "constitutional responsibility" to create the new legislation as required by the Basic Law, the city's mini-constitution since its handover from the United Kingdom to China in 1997.

Lee also said the law was necessary to "prevent black-clad violence", a reference to Hong Kong's massive and at times violent pro-democracy protests in 2019, which brought hundreds of thousands to the streets demanding greater autonomy from Beijing's grip. A previous attempt to pass Article 23 was scrapped in 2003 after 500,000 people protested. This time around, public criticism has been muted amid the security crackdown. Hong Kong, a former British colony, returned to Chinese rule in 1997 with the guarantee that its high degree of autonomy and freedoms would be protected under a "one country, two systems" formula.

Currently, the new Article 23 law has expanded the British colonial-era offence of "sedition" to include inciting hatred against China's Communist Party leadership, with an aggravated sentence of up to 10 years in jail. Under the security law, penalties can run up to life in prison for sabotage endangering national security, treason and insurrection; 20 years for espionage and sabotage; and 14 years for external interference. City leader Lee is also now empowered to create new offences carrying jail terms of up to seven years through subsidiary legislation, while the security minister can impose punitive measures on activists who are overseas, including cancelling their passports.

Moreover, police powers have also been expanded to permit detaining people for up to 16 days without charge — a jump from the current 48 hours — and to restrict a suspect from meeting lawyers and communicating with others. — Aljazeera

# UNSC vote on new Gaza ceasefire text postponed

UNITED NATIONS (AFP): A vote at the UN Security Council on a new text calling for an "immediate" ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war was postponed to Monday, diplomatic sources said, after a separate, US-led draft resolution was vetoed.

The United States, Israel's main ally and military backer, had put forward a resolution mentioning "the imperative of an immediate and sustained ceasefire" and condemning the October 7 attack by Hamas. Russia and China on Friday vetoed that resolution, which was also opposed by Arab states for stopping short of explicitly demanding Israel immediately end its campaign in Gaza.

The new ceasefire text was meant to go to a vote on Saturday, but was pushed back to allow further discussions, the diplomatic sources said. The new, tougher draft resolution, seen by AFP, "demands an immediate ceasefire" for the ongoing Muslim holy month of

Ramadan that leads "to a permanent sustainable ceasefire" respected by all sides.

Eight of the council's 10 non-permanent members have been working on the draft, which also calls for the "immediate and unconditional" release of hostages seized by Hamas and the lifting of "all barriers" to humanitarian aid flowing into the besieged Gaza Strip. "We as (the) Arab Group unanimously endorse and support the draft resolution," said Palestinian ambassador to the UN Riyad Mansour, who had denounced the US-led text as biased.

But US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield indicated opposition, saying the resolution would jeopardize ongoing diplomatic efforts to secure the release of hostages — the same reason the United States gave before vetoing previous ceasefire resolutions. "In its current form, that text fails to support sensitive diplomacy in the region. Worse, it could actually give Hamas an

excuse to walk away from the deal on the table," she said.

Friday's text did not explicitly use the word "call," but simply stated that a ceasefire was imperative, and linked to ongoing talks, led by Qatar with support from the United States and Egypt, to halt fighting in return for Hamas releasing hostages. "If the US is serious about a ceasefire, then please vote in favor of the other draft resolution, clearly calling for a ceasefire," China's representative, Zhang Jun, said.

More than 1,160 people, mostly civilians, died on October 7 when Hamas militants infiltrated Israel in the country's deadliest attack, according to Israeli official figures. Israel has vowed to eradicate Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip. More than 32,000 people, mostly civilians, have died in the retaliatory campaign, according to the Gaza health ministry, and the United Nations has warned of imminent famine in the territory.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Air Force jets demonstrating aerobic formation in Pakistan Day parade flypast ceremony.

# UN secretary-general 'deeply troubled' by situation in Rafah

RAFAH: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres visited Egypt's border with the Gaza city of Rafah on Saturday to reiterate pleas for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. His visit comes after the UN Security Council's failure to pass a resolution to halt the Israeli offensive on Gaza, which is now entering its sixth month with a death toll nearing 32,000.

Speaking at the border, he urged the world to remind Gazans they are not alone. "I am deeply troubled to know during this holy month of Ramadan that there are those who will not be able to have

a proper iftar," Guterres said. He added that it is "a moral outrage" that there are thousands of aid trucks parked on the Egyptian side of the border awaiting access, while people in Gaza are facing starvation.

"While nothing justifies the actions of October 7, nothing justifies the collective punishment of the Palestinian people," Guterres said. "There are hardships, houses demolished, entire families and generations wiped out, while hunger stalks the population." He urged people to "stand on the right side of history," adding, "It is time

to silence the guns. We need a ceasefire. I will not give up. We should not give up for the sake of humanity."

Guterres also called for funding and support of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Prior to his press conference at the crossing, the secretary-general was received by Sinai governor Mohamad Shusha at El-Arish airport. Shusha said that some 7,000 trucks are currently waiting in North Sinai to deliver aid to Gaza, but that inspection procedures demanded by Israel have held up the flow of aid. — Arab News