

Court summons Elahi

LAHORE (PPI): An anti-corruption Friday summoned the former Punjab chief minister Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi and other accused for indictment in the illegal recruitment in the Punjab Assembly case. Lahore's anti-corruption court's Judge Arshad Hussain Bhutta has issued the written judgment of the previous hearing. The court has called Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi and the other accused for indictment on April 4.



@thefrontierpost

First national English daily published from Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Karachi and Washington D.C

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIXI

No. 68

Regd. No. 241

RAMAZAN 19 1445 – SATURDAY, MARCH 30 2024

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

PRICE. 30

# PM vows zero tolerance against smuggling, graft

## F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday said the government will not allow any political or bureaucratic interference in its move to curb smuggling, corruption, power theft and tax evasion in the country.

"No political and bureaucratic influence will be allowed to interfere in this major surgery which we have to undertake collectively for the good of Pakistan and its 250 million people," the prime minister said while chairing a meeting on anti-smuggling. He said it was very important to understand the real challenges of the country and then immediately fix them to revive and stabilize the economy.

For this, he said all stakeholders including the provinces, institutions, and armed forces will have to collaborate with the federal government to tackle one of the most important challenge of revival of economy. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said illegal trade and smuggling were the biggest challenges that had badly dented the country's economy.

He recalled that in 2022, the coalition government allowed export of 250,000 tons of sugar, but it had to withdraw its decision "because we were told that the surplus target was not up to that level". However, he said the same amount of sugar was later exported to Afghanistan. Similarly, the prime minister pointed out that the country had to face loss of around Rs 400 to 500 billion annually in term of power theft, whereas leakages, transmission losses and line

losses of electricity were other than that. As regards tax revenues, he said the government's target this year was Rs 9 trillion. But it has the potential of collecting Rs 4 trillion extra revenues by streamlining the tax system and by curbing corruption and tax evasion. He said a tax amount of Rs 2.7 trillion was still under litigation either in tribunals or in appellant courts. The government, he said would try its best to recover this amount.

Appreciating the efforts of Chief of Army Staff in curbing smuggling and power theft, the prime minister said during the nine months of interim government, an amount of Rs 58 billion was saved in power sector. Similarly, a significant improvement was witnessed in smuggling in the country due to the commitment, will to do, and cooperation of all provinces, and the personal commitment and interest of the Chief of Army Staff, the prime minister added.

Besides initiating reforms in certain sectors, he said the government was also committed to promote industry and agriculture sector in the country. He informed that the government had chalked out a plan to fully digitize the system of Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to boost the tax revenues in the country.

He said the well reputed and honest officers will be encouraged while the corrupt element will be discouraged. As regards law and order situation, the prime minister said the government was determined to foil the evil designs of the enemy.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chaired a meeting on

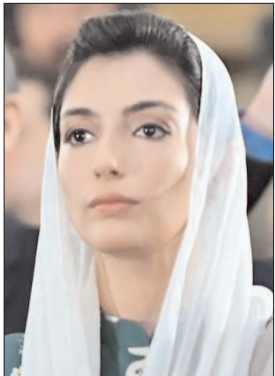
measures against spectrum of Illegal activities here. Members of the Federal Cabinet, Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Provincial Chief Ministers and high-level government officials were present in the meeting.

The agenda of the meeting was "Measures against Spectrum of illegal activities & Criminal Mafias". The participants were briefed in detail on steps taken against the criminal mafias, smuggling, hoarding, money laundering, power theft and repatriation of illegal foreigners etc. The participants acknowledged the importance of such actions and their positive impact on the economy and well being of the people of Pakistan.

The meeting showed firm resolve to take action against smugglers, hoarders and market manipulators, who have impacted the economic trajectory and to provide immediate relief to common citizens. The meeting gave approval of agreements among Federal and Provincial governments on Anti-Power Theft policy, restructuring of Power Distribution Companies on modern lines, installation of Smart meters for full eradication of Power Theft and ordered strict action against the corrupt officers.

Chief of the Army Staff assured unwavering resolve of Pakistan Army to support government's initiatives aimed at economic recovery of the country. At the end, the prime minister directed all the stakeholders to vigorously pursue various initiatives against spectrum of illegal activities & criminal mafias to ensure their accomplishment within stipulated timeframe.

## Aseefa elected unopposed in NA-207



## F.P. Report

NAWABSHAH: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) candidate and President Asif Ali Zardari's youngest daughter Aseefa Bhutto has been elected unopposed on the NA-207 Shaheed Benazirabad (former Nawabshah) 1 constituency.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has notified the election of Aseefa as National Assembly lawmaker without any contest. It is noteworthy to mention here that 11 candidates, including Aseefa, had filed their nomination papers to contest the by-poll on the aforementioned seat vacated by Zardari who became president of Pakistan after being jointly nominated by the ruling coalition.

Three candidates withdrew their nomination papers, whereas, seven nominations were rejected, as per the top electoral authority. Earlier, Aseefa has been declared the country's First Lady after Zardari sworn in as country's 14th head of state a day after he swept the presidential election after obtaining 411 electoral votes on March 9. The decision was taken by the PPP co-chairman after consulting the party leaders on recognising the scion of Bhutto family as the first lady.

A first lady is the president's wife, however, in this case, President Zardari is a widower after his wife, former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, was martyred in 2007. Since then, the president did not remarry and the position of the first lady also remained vacant during his first tenure as the country's president — from 2008 to 2013. However, back then time it was different, as Aseefa was a teenager during her father's first tenure as the head of state, and currently, she is 31 years old.

## ‘Culprits of Bisham attack to be brought to justice’

## F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Briefing an special investigation team of China, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi Friday expressed the government's resolve to bring culprits of Besham terrorist attack to justice at all costs

The development comes after a terror attack in Shangla's Besham city claimed the lives of at least six people, including five Chinese engineers, working on the Dasu Dam, earlier this week. The victims were killed when an explosive-laden vehicle hit the bus carrying them on the Karakoram Highway in the Bisham area on Tuesday.

During his interaction with the Beijing's probe team at Chinese Embassy in Islamabad, the security czar informed them about the progress made so far in the investigations into the tragic incident. Measures pertaining to protection of Chinese nationals and overall security were also discussed on the occasion. The federal minister also met the Chinese ambassador and updated him on the probe into Besham incident.

In the meantime, civil

work at the sites of the Dasu and Diamer-Bhasha Dams has been temporarily suspended by the Chinese companies overseeing operations due to security concerns. Approximately 991 Chinese engineers were working on both projects, while the local staff has been told to stay at home till further instructions, an official working on the project confirmed to the publication. Similarly, GM Diamer-Bhasha Dam (DBD) Nazakat Hussain also confirmed that the Chinese company had suspended work on the dam. He said around 500 Chinese nationals were engaged in DBD but the FWO staff continues to work. Around 6,000 locals are busy in dam construction.

He hoped that the situation would normalise in a few days, leading to the return of Chinese employees. The Diamer-Bhasha Dam would produce 4,800 MW of electricity through hydropower generation. However, the GM of Mohmand Dam Asim Rauf told The News that 250 Chinese continue to work on the Mohmand Dam and they have not stopped

work. "Chinese have shown satisfaction over the security situation in the project area and they are working on the site," the official said.

Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lin Jian had said that attempt to sabotage China-Pakistan cooperation would ever succeed, and "Beijing remains firm in its commitment to working with Islamabad in various fields". Jian made the statement while addressing a regular press conference that day after a fierce terrorist attack in Shangla district targeting the Chinese nationals.

China and Pakistan have the resolve and capability to make the terrorists pay the price, the official said, adding: "Our two countries are all-weather strategic cooperative partners. Our iron-clad friendship is deeply rooted in the two peoples." "We strongly condemn this act of terrorism. We express deep condolences over the lives lost and extend sincere sympathies to the bereaved families. We have previously stated our position on this incident," Jian reacted to the Shangla attack.

## Ramazan package enhanced to Rs12.5b

## F.P. Report

KARACHI: Federal Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb on Friday said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had enhanced Ramazan Package amount from Rs. 7.5 billion to 12.5 billion rupees so that people belonging to vulnerable segment of the society could be provided essential items on subsidized rates as compared to the open market.

He said this, while talking to media persons during his visit to a Utility Store here in the Defence area. Finance Minister said under the Ramazan package, apart from Utility stores, 1200 mobile points were also set up to provide essential items to the people at their respective areas. He said there will be no compromise on the quality of

the food items being sold through the Utility Stores.

Responding to a suggestion regarding donations from philanthropists to Utility Stores Corporation, the Minister termed it a good proposal and said as philanthropists of this city always generously helped the poor people and they must donate money to Utility Stores for the purpose.

Aurangzeb said there was a wrong impression that IMF was against the subsidies but the fact is that International Monetary Fund is against un-targeted subsidies while it wants the targeted subsidies be enhanced. Finance Minister said exports has to be our total focus because through it country can earn foreign exchange reserves. He said Pakistan is an agriculture country and it must not import agricul-

ture related commodities.

Citing the wheat yield target, he said now our country was producing 26 m tons of wheat and if country enhances its yield target to over 40 m tons annually, it would become self sufficient. In reply to question, Finance Minister said the IMF program is actually Pakistan's program as its objective was to get country out of the economic mess.

"We have to enhance taxes to the GDP, decrease circular debts, end losses of the State owned Enterprises and IMF was also asking for these reforms which are in the best interest of our country", he said. Muhammad Aurangzeb said more steps are needed for the improvement of the economy and the government was taking measures in that regard.

# The Frontier Post

## Quake shakes KP areas

MINGORA (PPI): An earthquake measuring 4.9 on the Richter scale jolted Swat and its adjoining areas in KP. People came out of their homes in panic and started reciting verses from the Holy Quran. No loss of life and property was reported from any part of Swat due to earthquake. According to National Seismic Monitoring Centre, Islamabad, the epicenter of the earthquake was located in the Pakistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan border region.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing a meeting on measures against the spectrum of illegal activities.

## US to stand with Pakistan, says Biden

## F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President of the United States Joe Biden, in his first communication with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif after assumption of his office, conveyed his heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to the newly elected government of Pakistan.

In his letter to the prime minister, President Biden reiterated the US' unwavering commitment to standing alongside Pakistan in confronting the most pressing challenges facing the world and the region. He also emphasized the shared vision of prioritizing public health protection, economic development, and education, affirming the commitment to advancing these goals in tandem, a press release of Prime Minister Office said on Friday.

Highlighting the significance of the enduring partnership between the peoples of the United States and Pakistan, President Biden said the partnership was critical to ensuring the security of the world and the people. Moreover, President Biden emphasized the continued collaboration between the two nations under the US-Pakistan Green Alliance Framework, aiming to bolster environmental improvements and sustainable development initiatives.

He also assured to continue support for Pakistan's endeavors in sustainable agriculture, water management, and recovery efforts following the devastating 2022 floods. President Biden reaffirmed the joint commitment to upholding human rights and promoting inclusive development, signaling a strengthened partnership between the United States and Pakistan. "The close relations established between the people of the two countries will further strengthen," the president added.

## Dar replaces finance minister in CCI

## F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif approved reconstitution of the Council of Common Interests (CCI) on Friday, replacing the finance minister with the foreign minister. President Asif Ali Zardari, on the advice of PM Shehbaz, constituted the eight-member CCI under Article 153 of the Constitution, said a notification.

The CCI is being headed by PM Shehbaz and all four chief ministers are among the council's members. The notification read that Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif, and Safran Minister Amir Muqam are also included in the CCI. The CCI is the largest decision-making forum of the country which decides all those matters, including distribution of natural resources, upon which there is a disagreement between the centre and provinces.

This is not the first instance that PM Shehbaz has snubbed the finance minister and given a task to Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar. Last week, PM Shehbaz constituted six separate cabinet committees on economic coordination, energy, Chinese investment projects, privatisation, State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and disposal of legislative cases.

## KP cabinet okays Eid package for martyrs

## F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cabinet constituted a committee to look into the grievances of the officers of the attached departments and the directives of the Peshawar High Court concerning reducing disparities in the salaries of the officers of attached departments and other cadres. The cabinet committee comprised of Advisor to Chief Ministers on Finance, Minister/Secretaries P&D, Establishment, and Population Welfare.

The High Court had on a writ petition filed by over 973 officers of different attached departments directed the government to redress the grievances of the petitioners concerning granting them allowances allowed to officers of other cadres @ 1.5 of the basic pay in light of article 38(e) of the Constitution and the Principle of policy as provided in Article 29(2) and to remove disparity/discrimination among the civil servants.

The Finance Department has opposed the demand on the grounds of resource crunch and financial crises of the province. Its financial implications have been estimated to be over Rs.971/- million per year.

The Provincial cabinet which met Wednesday evening under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Mr. Ali Amin Khan Gandapur was actively participated by Chief Secretary, Ministers, advisers and administrative secretaries. It took several decisions about the affairs of the province.

The cabinet approved the release of Rs.1.15 billion funds as Eid Package for distribution among the 115000 poor individuals of the province at the rate of Rs.10,000/- per head/family. The package will also include the families of police martyrs to whom the Police Department, already having their details, will directly disburse these amounts.

The cabinet approved the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Right of Digital Way Policy providing a frame work to facilitate the deployment of fiber connectivity through prompt resolution of public and private right-of-way issues commonly faced by telecom operators thereby leading to an increase in fiber connectivity. With this, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa becomes the first province to have a Right of Digital Way policy as aligned with the Federal Public and Private Right of (digital) Way Policy Directive 2021.

A Committee comprising Ministers/Secretaries C&W, Irrigation and Local Government Departments was also

constituted to adopt this policy in a unified manner throughout the province. Another Committee was constituted to categorize within 15 days the posts recruitment to which should be done through ETEA or the technical Departments/organizations themselves.

The cabinet also directed that all Provincial departments/organizations must get NOC from ETEA before conducting screening tests for recruitment through private organizations (other than ETEA).

The Provincial cabinet approved Zone Development Agreement for the Pakistan Digital City Haripur project. The Pakistan digital City Haripur is the first purpose-built Special Technology Zones (STZ) in Pakistan being developed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Technology Board under the administration of the Science and Technology & Information Technology Department.

The project has already secured a license from Special Technology Zones Authority (STZA). With the approval of the agreement by the Cabinet different incentives to the zone developers can be extended bringing considerable growth in their economy through improvement in their IT exports. The cabinet also directed that the civil work over the main offices and basic infrastructure must be completed urgently.

The Provincial cabinet also approved the "Draft Rules for the post of PEDO Chief Executive Officer and Members of the Executive Committee (terms and conditions) Rules, 2024", borrowing loan amounting US\$ 30,000 million from Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) to participate in financing of reconstruction of infrastructure of Malakand region; the retention of 100 BS-17 head nurses in MTT's Hospitals of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; and purchase of different gadgets and equipment for police in the Newly merged districts. It also endorsed the earlier decision of the caretaker cabinet increasing the rate of infrastructure development Cess under section -3 of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Infrastructure Development Cess Act, 2022. The Provincial cabinet also decided to realign its stance with the rest of the provinces, in respect of its share of repaying the previously secured loan amounting to US\$ 88.673 million (from the total secured previous loan of US\$ 487 million) and take it up with Council of Common Interest (CCI) in line with the agreement shown by the rest of the provinces.

## Pakistan, Afghanistan make progress in Kabul talks

KABUL: Pakistan and Afghanistan reached certain agreements during trade talks in Kabul, including beginning negotiations on a revised transit trade agreement and implementing a temporary admission document (TAD) for trade vehicle drivers, officials said on Friday.

Talks were held amid tensions following Pakistan's March 18 airstrikes in Afghanistan's Patika and Khost provinces in "intelligence-based anti-terrorist operations", which Afghan authorities said killed eight people. The Foreign Office had confirmed the strikes, saying they were aimed at the Hafiz Gul Bahadur group, which was responsible for multiple terrorist attacks inside Pakistan, including one on security forces in North Waziristan that martyred seven soldiers.

On Thursday, Foreign Office (FO) spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said in a weekly press briefing that Commerce Secretary Mohammad Khurram Agha visited Afghanistan from March 24-27 to discuss bilateral trade and transit with his Afghan counterpart Nooruddin Azizi. The two sides discussed a bilateral Preferential Trade Agreement, implementing a TAD for trade vehicle drivers, multimodal air transit and issues related to

transit trade.

"We are encouraged by the progress made on these issues and remain committed to promoting trade and people-to-people ties with Afghanistan," the FO had said. Pakistan embassy officials in Kabul said today that progress was achieved on multiple issues — including a bilateral preferential trade agreement, air transit, the operation of border crossings 24/7 for trade purposes, addressing the issues in transit trade through Afghanistan and Afghan Transit Trade that passes through Pakistan.

Afghan charge d'affaires Sardar Shakib Ahmad rushed to Kabul to brief officials about his meetings in Islamabad. He met acting Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi and briefed him regarding recent developments in the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, deputy foreign ministry spokesman Hafiz Zia Ahmad Takkal said. Pakistan's head of mission in Kabul Ubaidur Rehman Nizamani said the visit of the commerce ministry delegation was part of Pakistan's efforts to build strong ties with Afghanistan in transit, trade and all other mutually beneficial areas.

"I am happy to report that this was a successful

visit and both sides have agreed to work together for mutual benefit in a number of areas," Nizamani said in a video statement. He said Pakistan and Afghanistan will facilitate transit and bilateral trade and take all possible measures to create an environment conducive to continuous and productive trade and economic relations between the two countries.

Secretary Commerce Mohammad Khurram Agha led the Pakistani delegation in the two-day talks with Acting Minister of Industry and Commerce Azizi. Afghan government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said both sides agreed to discuss the Afghan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) and decided that a revised agreement should be finalised within two months.

The revised 2010 APTTA expired before the Taliban took control of Kabul in August 2021. Both sides had failed to agree on a new draft during the tenure of former President Ashraf Ghani. Mujahid said it was also agreed that Pakistan would facilitate the transfer of goods from international containers to regional containers (cross-stuffing) in the ports of Karachi in the next six months. — Agencies



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# Delegation of Haripur chamber calls on KP Governor



### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A delegation of Haripur Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HCCI) led by Safdar Zaman Shah called on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali here on Friday.

The delegation informed KP Governor about the problems and issued faced by business community of

Haripur. Delegation members also urged governor to play role for facilitation of businessmen and resolve their problems.

Speaking on the occasion, Haji Ghulam Ali highlighted the significance of businessmen and traders for strengthening country's economy and assured cooperation to them. He said that federal authorities have been informed about the

concerns of business community regarding prices electricity and gas. He said that government desires to solve issues of businessmen and to facilitate them. He said that all the facilities and help would be provided to businessmen and traders. Mayor Peshawar, Haji Zubair Ali and leading businessmen of Haripur were also present on the occasion.

## Traffic not be halted for decorating bazaar: Elahi

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: President of the Markezi Tazmeen e Tajran Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Malik Mehr Elahi, President of Peshawar Traders Chamber Gulam Bilal Javid, and other members stated that last night heavy machinery provided by the district administration was used for decorating and embellishing.

The closure of traffic from both sides of the Qissa Khawani market for this purpose was strongly opposed. Traders from related markets and other associated areas were filled with waves of sorrow and frustration, feeling that the administration has become their enemy during these blessed days.

If traffic is halted for work, it will not only affect the Qissa Khawani market but also the livelihoods of traders in related markets. The district administration must ensure the protection of traders in the Qissa Khawani market and other related areas so that this decoration and embellishment project can be completed peacefully and in stages.

Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali had assured that traders' businesses would not suffer, and this work would be completed through mutual agreement. Construction work will take place after Eid ul-Fitr. However, the district administration has disregarded even Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali's assurance. We appeal to the higher authorities of our provincial government and district administration to complete this project while addressing the concerns of traders regarding decoration and embellishment. Otherwise, traders will be forced to protest to protect their rights, and the responsibility for all circumstances will lie with the district administration.

## 75 farmers trained

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A training held for 75 farmers including 25 women of various tribes about farming and social responsibilities with the elimination of sectarianism and put them back on their feet in Tirah valley of the Khyber tribal district.

In this regard, the Community resilience Activity (CRA-north) held a closing ceremony at Tirah Maidan Jirga Hall in which the trainees and local elders were also in attendance. On this occasion, the CRA officials appreciated the efficiency and emphasized to them that the purpose of the farming toolkits and other farming equipment provided to them is not to be sold but to be used economically in the area.

"Economically strengthening the economically vulnerable victims but CRA North has always provided assistance in their rehabilitation and will continue to do so as our objective is to provide economic stability to the people affected by the unrest and To rise again and stand on your feet and strengthen," the official said. He said that 25 women were also trained in sewing and embroidery by female trainers in this program and provided job opportunities to them.



PESHAWAR: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur, chairing the second meeting of provincial cabinet.

# Harrassment damages personality, productivity

### Zia ur Rehman Tajik Advocate

**H**ARRASSMENT is abusing, insulting or otherwise harming someone regularly which makes that person scared and threatened. Harassment also includes anti-social behaviour, abusive text messages, unwanted phone calls, unwanted gifts and visits.

Anyone can be made the victim of harassment. It affects mental health and leads to depression and anxiety. In harassment, the harasser abuses his position of power believing that the system around him will protect him from any adverse consequences. The misuse of power, holding key positions, age, seniority, gender inequality, power imbalance and money are root causes of harassment.

Harassment is unwanted, and unwelcomed, and causes annoyance and substantial emotional distress without a legitimate purpose. Harassment is a significant legal issue and is violative of male or female rights to work and encourages both men and women to raise their voices against every harassment.

Article 23(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights also protects everyone from harassment in the workplace which reads as follow (Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and protection against unemployment). Harassment can be stopped by confronting the harasser that his comments, conduct, activities and actions are not welcome and must be reported to the concerned authorities.

Harassment is committed by an employer, employee, agent, supervisor, teacher, trainer or any other person who has authority and influence over another in a workplace. Reaction to harassment is different and depends upon the boldness, mental capacity and awareness about the rights of the harassed. Some people look the harasser in the eyes and denounce their behaviour with a strong clear voice and some people stop the harasser by the use of force. Low-ranking, subordinates and oppressed employees in an organization and workplace are more likely to become victims of harassment.

Under section 509 of the Pakistan penal code insulting the modesty of

women or sexually harassing them is a crime and is punished with 3 years imprisonment and a 5 lacs fine. Harassment is of different kinds, some of its kinds are as under.

Racial harassment: In it, a person is victimized based on his skin, color, race and country of origin. Sexual harassment: Unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favour and other physical conduct of a sexual nature. It violates a person's dignity, and privacy and creates degrading, humiliating and offensive behaviour.

Power harassment: In such kind of harassment, there is a power imbalance between the harasser and harassed and the harasser is higher in power and position in the office or department in the hierarchy. Quid PRO quo harassment. It is a type of exchange-based sexual harassment. Quid pro quo is a Latin term which means something for something or this for that. When an employee is asked directly or indirectly to submit to a sexual advance in exchange for some benefit at work.

Physical harassment: It is a form of workplace violence and in it, a person is abused physically by being pushed, slapped or punched by other employees. Criminal harassment. In it, the harasser's history of crime is taken into consideration.

Harassment is also violative of articles 3 and 14 of the constitution. Article 3 also casts an obligation on the state to ensure the elimination of all kinds of exploitation. Exploitation in all its form is a sin and condemnable, and is forbidden also in Islam, and the principle, from each according to his ability," is not Marxian specific, it is a principle of universal application and is applicable even in capitalism.

The dignity of man is inviolable under Article 14 of the Constitution and the said article protect dignity of everyone. The Govt of Pakistan legislated the Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010 with the object of providing equal opportunity of work to men and women to earn their livelihoods and contribute towards the economy of the country without any fear of harassment, abuse and discrimination. The said Act also provided speedy and inexpensive justice to the victims and the decision of the ombudsperson also has been immune from the interference of ordinary

courts.

The Govt of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa also for protecting the inviolability of the dignity of man and elimination of exploitation promulgated Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2020 and under section 2(e) of said Act complaint of harassment can be filed both by man and women to the ombudsperson or inquiry committee. The inquiry committee is constituted under section 3(1) of the Act and consists of 3 members. Under section 4 of the said Act, the inquiry committee inquires into the complaint within 3 days of the receipt of the written complaint and serves on the accused the charge sheet and statement of allegation which are replied to by the accused within 7 days. The committee thereafter thoroughly examined the oral and documentary evidence and defence plea of the accused and then submitted its recommendation to the competent authority and the competent authority in light of the recommendation of the inquiry committee imposed a major or minor penalty. Appeal against the said decision lies before the ombudsperson within 30 days under section 6 of the Act.

Under section 8 of the said Act direct complaint can also be filed to the ombudsperson who after fulfilling all codal formalities of the Harassment Act decides the case within 30 days and announces the judgement. An appeal from his judgement lies before the Governor under section 9 of the said Act.

Any harassment be it based on gender, age or sexual orientation must be handled carefully by the management with strict action against the responsible. Every complaint should be taken seriously and should be investigated with a zero-tolerance policy. The workplace should be declared no place for harassment of any kind. Measures should be taken to prevent all kinds of harassment. The employers must inform employees that harassment is prohibited and punishable in the organization and institution etc and the employee or head of the department should be declared liable for harassment of his employee, manager, customer and suppliers.

The writer Advocate Supreme Court of Pakistan based at Peshawar and can be reached at: Ziaurrahmantajik123@gmail.com

# KP's forests cutting lacked in conservation plan

### Nusrat Bibi

**B**EFORE cutting down a forest, a conservation plan is prepared to safeguard and revitalize endangered and near to extinct species of biodiversity and wildlife. This plan implements specific measures to protect the habitats of biodiversity and wildlife, safeguards their breeding programs and creates a safe environment for these species to multiply months or years before logging is started.

These measures include conducting Environmental

Impact Assessments, identifying and protecting endangered species by conducting surveys, assessments and consultation with the experts as well as implementing sustainable logging practices, and promoting reforestation efforts to ensure the health and biodiversity of the ecosystem.

Moreover, the sustainable practices of logging include selective trees cutting instead of clearing the entire area of forest. It also includes adopting measures about minimizing impact on soil erosion and protecting the watershed.

However, the current logging in KPK neither follow these sustainable harvesting practices of trees nor follows a plan on protecting wildlife and biodiversity, instead the deforestation is started with the interim Government in the whole province at once and is continued till this date on the name of Scientific management of forest. An enquiry is needed though to conduct Assessment studies about the loss of biodiversity, wildlife, soil erosion, watershed damages and about the ecosystem as a whole for enacting future policy and Forest Protection Act.

# CM's Advisor displeased

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Zahid Chanezh, Adviser to Chief Minister KP on Tourism and Culture, has expressed his displeasure and anger to know that the transferred secretaries and other officials did not return the govt vehicles and other equipment owned by the Dept of Tourism, Culture and Archeology despite his strict instructions in this regard.

He summoned the competent authorities and inquired about it. He regretted to know that instead of implementing the written instructions of the department regarding the return of vehicles, the concerned authorities kept lull on the letter.

# Farewell in honour of PEDO Chief Executive held

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The former senior bureaucrat and ex-Secretary Energy & Power, Engineer Naeem Khan retired from his post as the Chief Executive Officer of Pakhtunkhwa Energy Development Organization (PEDO) after completion of job tenure. In this regard, a ceremony was held in his honor by the PEDO's Management and the PEDO's Officers Association.

Speaking at the ceremony, Secretary Energy & Power Nisar Ahmad Khan and the President of PEDO's Officers Association, Engineer Habibullah Shah, paid tribute

to Engr. Naeem Khan for his valuable services to the organization and said that PEDO has become a developed institution of the province during his tenure as well as earning billions of rupees to the province annually.

Furthermore, thousands of megawatts of cheap hydropower and solar energy projects have been launched too, they added. They also declared Engineer Naeem Khan as an important asset of the province and reiterated his determination to benefit from his consultation in the future. In the ceremony, a tribute also paid to the retired Assistant Director, Qazi Maqbool

Khan. Former CEO PEDO Naeem Khan thanked the officers and employees of PEDO for their cooperation and said that they have fought sincerely at every forum to solve the problems of the employees while working with the federal institutions related to energy projects to solve the problems. He feels proud that PEDO has become the highest annual revenue generating institution of the province. At the end of the ceremony, Secretary Power, Nisar Ahmad Khan and Director Admin Idrees Khattak awarded shield and other gifts to Engineer Naeem Khan and Qazi Maqbool.



PESHAWAR: Chairman Haji Rehmat Shah and other presenting flowers to Mayor Haji Zubair Ali for receiving Tamgha-e-Imtiaz.

### Ghazala Anbreen

**A** targeted explosive attack claimed the lives of six people with five Chinese nationals and their Pakistani driver in Besham in the northwest Pakistan on 26th March, 2024 while they were travelling from Islamabad to Dasu. It would be important to mention here that Dasu hosts significant dam projects and has been subject to terror attacks earlier too. In 2021 a bus explosion resulted in the casualty of 12 people including 9 Chinese nationals.

At present Pakistan is facing difficulties on economic and political fronts. It is facing two main insurgencies, one from Islamists and the other from ethnic militant separatist groups. Last year almost 700 people were killed in different terror related incidents. Most of the attacks targeted regions on Pakistan borders along Afghanistan. Though Afghan leadership has repeatedly denied for any involvement, there can be a possibility that the militant groups based in Afghanistan are responsible for this.

A renowned Pakistani journalist Zahid Hussain in his book on Islamic extremism, "The struggle with militant Islam" says that large areas of northwest province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have a heavy presence of Pakistan Taliban and have become a centre of Islamic extremist groups".

In response Pakistan retaliates by either shutting the borders between the two countries or may also resort to air strikes. The question arises why the militants are attacking Pakistan? Suicide bombers support the ideology which is allied with Afghan Taliban like the implementation for shariah law and Islamic Caliphate. They are made to believe that the Pakistani government is propagating the cause of the western world.

Development projects and the people associated with them have been the target of terrorism, especially in South Western Balochistan. Ethnic militant separatist groups are active there. Important strategic projects are targeted through these iniquitous

# Impeding suicide bombings

activities. Basic purpose of such acts is to destabilize the internal security of Pakistan.

They believe that there is discrimination in distribution of resources. China has invested over 65 billion US dollars as infrastructure projects as part of the CPEC in its ambitious BRI projects. Most of the projects are in Baluchistan. The militants equate it as a way of Chinese colonialism. They see it as snatching of their resources. The locals are poisoned by the anti-state agents that their resources are usurped by Punjab and the locals are being deprived. During my stay at Balochistan a local told me they had the mountains of gold and the Pakistan government has sold many of them to the Chinese.

The recent incidence and others similar to this are a big setback for the country. Need is to take practical measures to curb them and ensure safety of the Chinese nationals through special fool proof arrange-

ments. The attacks come a week ago as the PM Pakistan is expected to fly to Beijing, his first foreign visit after taking office. This also leaves us perplexed and question whether the Chinese government will allow and still will rely on Pakistan security forces for its interests?

All the individuals should play their important part as we are passing through a challenging stage at present. Teachers, media, intelligentsia and religious scholars should create awareness among masses especially the youth and kids studying at Islamic seminaries. They should be acquainted with the Islamic message of peace and tolerance. Islam teaches respect for human life and condemns violence, fighting and bloodshed. Quran says that saving one's life is equivalent to saving whole humanity and vice versa. Islam is a very forward looking, liberal and peace-loving religion. The clauses of Madinah charter are a part of the UN charter for

Human Rights. On 20th Ramadan, on the eve of conquest of Makkah, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) had declared, "Whoever enters Abu Sufyan's house will be safe. Whoever leaves his weapons will be safe. Whoever enters his house and closes his door will be safe". The Prophet (PBUH) summoned all the commanders of the army and said to them, "It is my earnest desire that Makkah should be conquered without any bloodshed".

This essence of peace is basic with Islam which should be inculcated in the heart and mind of every young Muslim. Social media handles can be used to propagate the real message of Islam and show to the world its true picture which denies cruelty and bloodshed in all their forms. It should be modernized. In Egypt and Libya uniform syllabus is adopted for all sects in the schools. On same principles we can model our syllabi to foster harmony among different sects and avoid extremism.

Pakistan Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif has called for joint investigation by military and civilian officials to be carried out into this suicide bombing attack. Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Atta Ullah Tarar also said that protection of Chinese interests and nationals will be ensured and Chinese interests and nationals will be protected.

Pakistan needs a holistic policy to counter extremism. The attacks are an attempt to undermine the China-Pakistan cooperation. To curb such unfortunate incidences the security arrangement need to be reviewed. Operations should be carried out to eliminate the sanctuaries of extremists and terrorists using religion card to promote their untoward cause. Religious clergies can spread the message that Islam does not favour at all such acts of barbarism and is against all such heinous acts. On state level Pakistan can engage with Taliban leadership in a meaningful dialogue as a way to counter the dangerous threat of terrorism and promote a soft image of Pakistan in the world.





## In brief

## Posting of TMO rejected F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Tehsil Chairman, Landi Kotal Haji Khalid has said that the posting of Tehsil Municipal Officer (TMO) has been made without taking them onboard, which is interference in the business of Tehsil Council therefore they reject the posting. In a press statement, the City Mayor said that they had experienced that the recently posted TMO, Shahbaz Khan who had previously twice worked on the position, functioned the office on his own will rather than follow rules of business. In violation of rules and regulations, he had been earlier transferred but ironically, the incumbent provincial government re-imposed him on them through a conspiracy, he opined. The irresponsible attitude of TMO, Shahbaz Khan has inflicted financial loss to the TMA, Landi Kotal he added and said posting him for the third time as TMO is step mother behavior towards them. Chairman went on that the Tehsil Council would oppose every unlawful and prohibited initiative and would withdraw their support in that concern. He demanded of the Secretary Local Council Board, Secretary Local Government and Provincial Minister Arshad Ayub to revise the posting in the best interest of the Tehsil Council and the people of Landi Kotal.

## Restoration of X-ray services F.P. Report

KHAR: The X-ray machine at the district headquarters in Khar has remained non-operational for the past three months, significantly impacting the local community's access to essential healthcare services. With soaring poverty rates, many residents are unable to afford private X-ray services, exacerbating the healthcare challenges faced by the populace. Renowned Human Rights activist, Member of the Human Rights Commission Habibul Hassan Yad has voiced a strong demand for urgent intervention by the health department to promptly rectify and restore the functionality of the X-ray machine at the district hospital. Emphasizing that health is a basic human right, Habibul Hassan stressed the government's responsibility to enhance the capacity of all hospitals within the district. The non-functional state of the X-ray machine not only hinders timely diagnosis and treatment but also highlights broader systemic issues affecting healthcare access in the region. Mr. Habibul Hassan Yad's advocacy reflects the urgent need for sustainable healthcare infrastructure and services to meet the needs of the local populace.

## Law &amp; order top priority F.P. Report

BUNER: A crime meeting of the Circle Daggar police officers was held under the chairmanship of the newly posted sub-divisional police officer Amjad Ali Khan. In the meeting, the vision of the DIG Malakand Muhammad Ali Khan and District Police Officer Shah Hassan shared about the stability of peace, prevention of crimes. According to the vision, while issuing strict orders to the SHOs and investigating officers regarding the defense, maintaining the continuity of law and order, crime rate and prevention and suppression of criminal activities, he said that keeping the supremacy of law and justice top priority.

# Declamation competitions among students held in Dir

## F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The district administration in collaboration with the youth affairs department on Thursday arranged a declamation competition (Qirat, Naat and Quiz competition) at the Govt College of Management Sciences Talash.

The college principal Dr Muhammad Rafiq and assistant professor Dr Muhammad Nawaz were invited as chief guests. More than 20 students for each category of different departments participated in the competition.

Abid khan was declared winner in the Qirat while Adnan got second and Tehseen ullah third position. Similarly Ms Nimra Bibi got 1st position, Muhammad Haroon second and Ms Sheeba Bibi got 3rd position in Naat competition. Mr Irshad was declared the winner in quiz while Rahat Ullah second and Ms Romissa Bibi was declared 3rd. Gifts, shields and certificates were distributed among the position holder students while the guests were awarded with honour shields on the occasion.

Iftar dinner: The

Aghosh Al-Khidmat Gulabad centre, an orphanage in Lower Dir arranged a colourful function and an iftar dinner to mark the Islamic Orphan Day here the other day. Social and political activists, orphans and their relatives attended the function.

The function was addressed by the AKF central leader Fazal Mahmood, Colonel Sajjad Kiani of the Dir Scouts, Syed Sultanat Yar Bukhari and others. The speakers lauded the services of AKF for caring for the marginalised communities in the country. They said the Day was always observed on the 15th of Ramadan in the Islamic world to remind the world that orphans needed their support. The speakers said that orphans and their families should be helped.

**Chairman election:** Syed Ali Jan was elected as Rahimabad village council chairman by obtaining three votes during an in-house election held at Munda here the other day. The tehsil municipal officer Munda supervised the election. The Jamaat-i-Islami backed candidate got two votes. The seat had been vacant as the elected chairman had gone abroad a few

months ago. The Munda tehsil chairman Haji Inayatullah administered the oath to the newly elected village council chairman who is also a member of the tehsil council.

**Vegetables' market:** The office bearers of the Amn Union Timergara Sabzi Mandi including Daud Shah, Irfanullah, Hussain ahmad and others on Friday told local journalists that construction work on the new sabzi mandi at Khungi area had entered the final stage and the Timergara vegetables and fruit markets would soon be shifted to there.

They said the new sabzi mandi was being established at a suitable place that would reduce traffic rush on Timergara road. They said the site was accessible to the dealers of Samarbagh, Munda, Mayar, Talash, Chakdara, Khall and Maidan. They said the former deputy commissioner Muhammad Zubair Khan Niazi had given approval for the construction of the new market work on which was in the final stage. They said the Timergara dealers would be provided with all facilities at the new sabzi mandi and none of them would be made jobless.

## Reconstruction of Ghucharkoh road sought

## F.P. Report

CHITRAL: Reconstruction of Ghocharkoh road is dire need of the era to promote tourism in Kalash valleys. Since Kalash Valley and Shikhananda is a rich forest area, the forest department had built Ghocharkoh road in 1963 to bring Deodar timber from Kalash valley to Chitral, this road passes through KushkanTek village at the foot of the mountain. There are dense forests, open fields and very beautiful tourist spots on this route.

When a road was made on the river bank to the Kalash Valley, the traffic on the upper road was stopped, but motorcyclists and some tourists still traveled by foot because its a best trekking way. Now, due to the expansion and construction work on the Kalash road and due to blasting in the mountain, the road is often close for traffic several hours due to which the traffic is jammed and the travelers and tourists are facing a lot of

difficulties.

Major Retired Shahzada Sirajul Malik, a well-known social worker and tour operator of Chitral, as well as a local person, Abdul Akbar, say that routes like Ghocharkoh are very attractive for domestic and especially for foreign tourists.

They will not travel beneath on main road, but they will prefer to pass through scenic road, because, there are very wide fields and some tourist spots on this route. According to them, if the Ghochar mountain route is made, the tourists will never go to the other route. Going ahead on the same road, there are more than two hundred people living in Kush Kan Tek village who are facing a lot of difficulties in commuting. Abdul Akbar and other local people also demand that traffic should be restored on this road so that they do not face difficulties in bringing the necessary goods.

According to local experts, traffic can be restored within a week with a nominal fund on the road of Ghochar Koh, which will not only provide an alternative way for tourists to travel on it, but also facilitate 230 people living here.

It is worth to mention here that by reconstruction of this road can also be restore the irrigation stream that was brought from Sheikhananda to Ghochar village during the era of President Ayub, which will also be able to irrigate thousands of acres barren land.

This alternate road of Ghochar Koh starts from Ayun and descends in the village of Sultanabad in Bomburit Valley and joins the main road. By reconstructing of Ghocharkoh road, tourism will also be boosted and by promoting tourism, poverty and unemployment can also be eradicated from this backward area as well.



MARDAN: Commissioner Shaukat Ali Yousafzai meeting with businessmen.

## Appointment Pro VC demanded as per Act

## F.P. Report

MARDAN: A cloud of controversy has descended upon the prestigious institution as the appointment file for the Pro Vice Chancellor position sparks concerns for the future of employees and students alike.

The file, allegedly circulated clandestinely between various departments within the secretariat and even unprecedentedly reaching Advocate General's office for opinion, raises eyebrows over potential favoritism and malpractice. Questions arise as to why the Advocate General's opinion was sought when the Act clearly stipulates that priority for the Pro Vice Chancellor position should be given to the senior-most Dean.

Moreover, discrepancies in the summary preparation reveal unsettling practices, with one senior faculty member flagged for inquiry while others, under investigation by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), receive a clean chit.

The appointment of the former Vice Chancellor as Pro VC will result in the victimization of employees and faculty. In response, employees and faculty are urging the Honourable Chief Minister and Minister for Higher Education to intervene and ensure that the appointment of the Pro Vice Chancellor aligns with the KP Universities Act in the best interest of the university.

**Residents appreciated ASP Resham:** The second largest city of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, today the people of Mardan have a brave daughter ASP Resham Jahangir whose examples and services will be written in golden words in history.

According to the details Resham Jahangir, a brave daughter of the nation in the Mardan Police, who had earned a special place in the hearts of the people of Mardan in a very short time was transferred from Mardan today after a successful period on which every citizen

expressed extreme displeasure and today the people of Mardan have lost a good police officer.

Transferred ASP Resham Jahangir said that transfer postings are inseparable from employment and during her posting in Mardan she tried her best to uphold the rule of law and provide justice to the people on merit. She said that the brave police force of Mardan district fought hard against the anti-social elements and maintained the establishment of law and order. The district police, including the security forces, have played a key role in restoring law and order and they are a source of pride for me which will be remembered.

The transferred ASP Resham Jahangir further said that today is my last day in Mardan district, the people of Mardan and police officers and youths have given practical proof of their love for me for which I feel indescribable joy and pride, on the other hand, the people of Mardan have expressed their grief and depres-

sion over the transfer of the new female ASP Resham Jahangir who has been appointed for the first time in Mardan as a female police officer and who has been very successful between the people and the police for a long time. Today's transfer of an honest ASP for bridging the gap and ending crime in Sheikh Maltoon Circle is extremely unfair to the citizens and people of Mardan.

The people of Mardan will always remember your services. In the end, every mother, daughter, and father of this fertile soil of Mardan, whom you provided all kinds of legal support salute and pay tribute to. Her tenure in Sheikh Maltoon Circle has set a record. People from all walks of life in Mardan especially the business community, media representatives and DRC members, termed the converted female ASP Resham Jahangir as a very cheerful, people-friendly police officer. People in the district will never forget her service, sincerity and love and her efforts in the prevention of drugs and crime

will always be remembered.

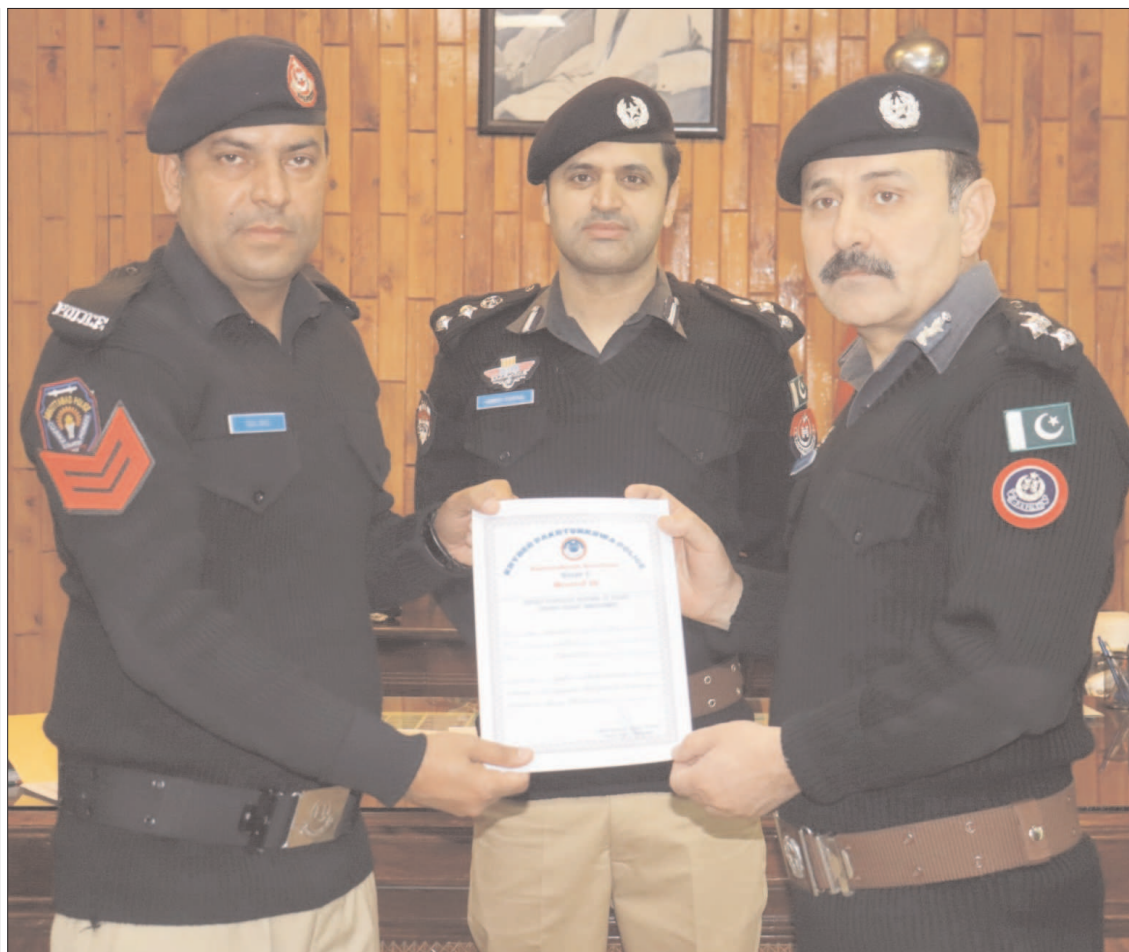
**DPO held crime control meeting:** In order to review the law and order situation, in the DPO office an introductory and crime meeting was held under the chairmanship of the newly appointed District Police Officer Zahoar Babar Afridi in which SP Investigations along with Division SPs, Circle SDPOs, Besides SHOs, investigation officers and traffic staff other responsible officers participated.

DPO Zahoar Babar Afridi gave an introductory meeting to the meeting and reviewed the crime and law and order situation at the divisional level and discussed in detail various administrative matters including security while the concerned officers discussed security and safety measures while issuing instructions, he said that the law is the same for all and no one will be allowed to disturb the peace.

All resources should be used to protect the life and property of citizens, wanted criminals in serious cases, drug dealers, aeri-

al firing, display of weapons, street crime, land mafia, one-wheeling, unregistered motorcycles, illegal black glasses and Actions against the elements involved in other socio-social crimes should be accelerated while the cases under investigation should be completed as soon as possible.

Drug peddlers and criminal elements repent, Taif or District Badr otherwise strict legal action will be taken against all involved elements. Special steps should be taken to resolve public territorial disputes and family enmities with mutual cooperation with the dignitaries and leaders of the region. It should be ensured that the citizens who come to the police stations for legal assistance should be treated with courtesy and prompt legal action for the oppressed while in view of the current situation the police facilities Instructions were also issued to carry out their duties diligently while following security measures and safeguarding the youth.



ABBOTTABAD: Deputy Inspector General of Police, Hazara Division Muhammad Ijaz Khan presenting appreciation certificate to Head Constable Sardar Gulbaz.

### Crackdown against kite flying directed F.P. Report

ATTOCK: Kite-flying is completely banned in the district and police would deal violators of the ban with sternly. This was stated by District Police Officer (DPO), Dr. Sardar Ghiyas Gul Khan during an awareness walk organized to highlight the dangerous impacts of Against kite-flyers, kite-sellers and drug-dealers.

As per reported by our district representative faisal munir that The walk was attended by Dr. Jawad Elahi Medical Superintendent Isfandiyar Bukhari Hospital, Members of District Bar, Teachers, Students, Civil Society representatives, DSP Traffic, SHO City Attock and the media. The walk started from the DPO office and culminated at Kchhari Choke. The purpose of the walk was to create awareness about the slogans of the Punjab government, "Put the kite, burn the string, save everyone from the bloody game" and "Reject drug addiction, love life".

DPO Attock has installed and distributed safety wires on the motorcycles of the citizens to avoid ropes. According to the instructions of Chief Minister Punjab and IG Punjab Police, under the leadership of District Police Officer Dr. Sardar Ghiyas Gul Khan, an awareness walk was organized against kite hawkers, kite sellers and drug dealers. Addressing which DPO said that many precious human lives had been lost due to the murderous string.

During the walk, people were informed about the life-threatening risks posed by the dangerous activity of kite flying. Participants reiterated their commitment to cease kite making and flying through all possible means. In order to prevent kite flying, especially parents have to play their important role so that the future of their children is not destroyed. Police is using all resources to stop the heinous crime like drug peddling and to arrest the elements involved in the nefarious trade and will rid the land of Attock of drug peddlers he added.

## Journalist protests against injustices

## F.P. Report

LARKANA: A journalist named Rajab Ali Shinu, from Khairpur, along with his relatives, reached SSB Press Club Larkana and protested, saying that some influential people started threatening to withdraw their hands from the theft case filed by me, and apart from dismissing the case, they would also harm the family. The threats are being made by the journalist of Khairpur, the parents of the journalist and the innocent children, including the influential people, protest against the abuse, demand for protection and remedy before the media.

According to details, the young journalist Rajab Ali Shino of Khairpur and his elderly father Noor Mohammad Shino told the media that the fake police officer Khalil Ahmad Shino of Bozdar Dhara police station and the undercover suspect Muhammad Ali Shino and the famous drug dealer and trafficker of cars and vehicles are the gangs of criminals.

The accused Anwar Lind's son, Gul Muhammad Lind, has taken illegal possession of 15 acres of land belonging to our agricultural department by force of arms, and he has forcibly sold our 30 acres of land. Opponents have attacked our house and fired several times and have placed weapons on our land. And trees worth lakhs of rupees have been cut down - and they said, "Don't take your hand from the case, we will kill you and your family".

President, Prime Minister, Chief Minister of Sindh, IG Sindh Police Karachi, DIG Sukkur, SSP Appealing to Khairpur and other high-ranking officials, they have demanded that the influential Khalil Shinu and his co-accused should be arrested immediately and the occupation of the land should be ended and our lives should be protected.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Shehri Social Workers Union Ittehad (PSSWI) staged a protest in front of the press club to end the

growing unrest, kidnappings and dacoits in Sindh. Addressing the protesters on this occasion, the leaders of Pakistan Urban Social Workers Union (PSSWI) Akhtar Jamali, Hafiz Roshan Ali Jamali, Faqir Ghaffar Mir Bahr, Sultan Shah, Hameed Ali and others said that there is a culture of bandits with increasing unrest in Sindh along with kidnappings.

The people of Sindh are being oppressed, every day many helpless poor and traders and innocent children are kidnapped. And the sale of drugs in Sindh has destroyed the young generation and displaced millions of families. On the other hand, the poor people are hanging because of the growing unrest. Moreover, even in the digital age, innocent people are being kidnapped and oppressed in Sindh through bandit culture, which is a complete abuse of the people of Sindh, Chief of Army Staff, Chief Justice of Sindh, IG Sindh.

Requesting them to immediately play a role for the restoration of law and order in Sindh and Larkana. Operate in Kashmir Kundhok, Shikarpur settlements. Dacoit culture should be eradicated by eradicating drugs from Sindh, all hostages should be recovered and the people of Larkana and Sindh should be given the right to be protected and be with their relatives in this blessed month.

**Security finalizes for Ali (RA) martyrdom procession held:** A security meeting held in Larkana, Commissioner Larkana Division Ghulam Mustafa Phull urged the SSPs of Larkana Division to make fool-proof arrangements for the security of the processions and gatherings on the occasion of 21st Ramadan Mubarak, the martyrdom day of Hazrat Ali, peace be upon him, so that any kind of That no unpleasant incident occurs.

He said that we should take care of each other because Islam is a religion of peace, brotherhood and love. He expressed these

### Vaccination drive continue F.P. Report

WANA: A Six-days long routine vaccination drive is ongoing under strict security in lower Waziristan near Pak-Afghan border.

According to details, SHO Azam wasak told media persons that full proof security has been provided to routine vaccination teams in the hard areas of tehsil Birmal. SHO said that people of the area were found highly cooperative in getting their children vaccinated against all 10 dangerous diseases. He asked parents in the remote areas of tehsil Birmal to get vaccinated.





# Bus plunges off a bridge in S Africa, killing 45 people

CAPE TOWN (AP): A bus carrying worshippers on a long-distance trip from Botswana to an Easter weekend church gathering in South Africa plunged off a bridge on a mountain pass and burst into flames as it hit the rocky ground below, killing at least 45 people, authorities said. The only survivor was an 8-year-old child who was receiving medical attention for serious injuries.

The Limpopo provincial government said the bus veered off the Mmamatlakala bridge in northern South Africa and plunged 50 meters (164 feet) into a ravine before bursting into flames. Search operations were ongoing, the provincial government said, but many bodies were burned beyond recognition and trapped inside the vehicle, while others had been thrown from the bus.

The crash happened near the town of Mokopane, which is about 200 kilometers (125 miles) north of the South African capital, Pretoria. Hours after the

crash, smoke seeped from the mangled, burned wreck underneath the concrete bridge. Authorities said it appeared that the driver lost control and the bus ploughed into the barriers along the side of the bridge and then over the edge. The driver was one of the dead.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said the victims appeared to be all from Botswana and had been on their way to the town of Moria in Limpopo for a popular Easter weekend pilgrimage that attracts hundreds of thousands of worshippers from South Africa and neighboring countries who follow the Zion Christian Church. Ramaphosa had phoned Botswana President Mokgweetsi Masisi to offer his condolences and said the South African government would do all it can to help, according to a statement from Ramaphosa's office.

Provincial authorities said the bus had a Botswana license plate. South African Minister of Transport Sindisiwe

Chikunga was in Limpopo province for a road safety campaign and changed plans to visit the crash scene after hearing the "devastating news," the national Department of Transport said. She said there was an investigation underway into the cause of the crash and offered her condolences to the families of the victims.

The South African government often warns motorists to be cautious during the Easter holidays, which is a particularly busy and dangerous time for road travel. More than 200 people died in road crashes during the Easter weekend last year. Just a day before the bus crash, the South African government called on people to be extra careful and Friday because of the expected high volumes traveling by road to Moria.

The Zion Christian Church has its headquarters in Moria and this year is the first time its Easter pilgrimage is set to go ahead since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Zuma barred from running in S Africa election

JOHANNESBURG (BBC): Former President Jacob Zuma has been barred from running in South Africa's general election in May. The country's electoral commission, or IEC, has not given a reason. However, his 2021 conviction and jailing for contempt of court would appear to disqualify him.

His backing of the new uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK) party has been seen as a possible threat to the governing African National Congress (ANC), which has suspended Mr Zuma. The 81-year-old served as president from 2009 until 2018, when he had to step down because of corruption allegations. Mr Zuma's new party is named after the ANC's former military wing, and he sees himself as the true heir to the governing party's revolutionary roots. The ANC had wanted South Africa's electoral body to deregister MK, but that request was rejected.

Mr Zuma has been leading the MK party's campaign and was the first name on their candidate list, but the electoral commission received objections to him potentially becoming a member of the National Assembly. Rather than voting directly for a president, South Africans elect members of the National Assembly. The head of whichever party can muster a majority is likely to become the country's leader, though it could put forward another candidate.

"In the case of former President Zuma, yes, we did receive an objection, which has been upheld," said electoral commission head Mosotho Moepya. "The party that has nominated him has been informed." Mr Moepya told journalists. Mr Zuma has until 2 April to appeal against the decision.

MK spokesman Nhlamulo Ndhlhela told AFP news agency the party was "looking at the merit of that objection but we will of course appeal it". The former president received a 15-month prison sentence in 2021 for contempt of court and the constitution says anyone who has had a prison sentence of longer than 12 months is not eligible to run for election. Mr Zuma is also facing charges of corruption over a multi-billion-dollar arms deal from the 1990s, when he was vice-president.

The IEC said that the ruling did not prevent the MK party from taking part in the 29 May poll, News24 reports. For the first time since the start of the democratic era in 1994, the ANC's vote share could fall below 50%, according to several opinion polls. The MK party is seen as popular in Mr Zuma's home region of KwaZulu-Natal.

## Cyclone makes landfall in Madagascar, killing 18 people

ANTANANARIVO (AP): A tropical cyclone that swept across Madagascar has killed 18 people and left four missing after making landfall on the north of the Indian Ocean island nation earlier this week, authorities said on Friday.

The storm has also caused severe flooding that partly submerged entire villages, displaced or affected some 47,000 people and set off landslides that injured three people, the National Office for Disaster Management said. Cyclone Gamane hit northern Madagascar and has now weakened considerably, leaving a trail of destruction behind it.

In the Diana and Sava regions in the north, bridges and roads were washed away and houses and rice fields were submerged. Residents paddled around their villages in canoes looking to help others trapped in their homes as the water level nearly reached the roofs of some buildings. The cyclone red alert was lifted after the worst part of the storm brought wind gusts of over 210 kilometers per hour (130 miles per hour).

Madagascar has been hit by at least 10 strong tropical cyclones since the start of 2022 and is facing a hunger crisis in parts of the island, due to the damaging impact of extreme weather, according to the World Food Program.

# Russia shuts down UN watchdog tracking North Korea sanctions

MOSCOW (BBC): Russia has shut down a panel of UN experts that have for years monitored sanctions against North Korea. The panel last week said it was probing reports that Russia violated rules by buying North Korean weapons like ballistic missiles for use in Ukraine.

The UN's Security Council has imposed a series of sanctions on Pyongyang since 2006 for its nuclear weapons programme. Those restrictions are still in force - but the experts group set up to monitor violations will now be disbanded. In a Security Council vote, Russia used its veto power as a permanent member to block the renewal, while 13 of the other 14 member states present voted for it. China, Pyongyang's closest ally, abstained.

Russia's block triggered a wave of condemnation from the US, UK, South Korea and other Western allies and comes after a year of high-profile public meetings between Moscow and Pyongyang leaders. This is the first time Russia has blocked the panel - which has been renewed annually by the UN Security Council for 14 years. Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said on social media Russia's veto was tantamount to "a guilty plea" that it was using North Korean weapons in the war.

The US, UK and France all told the Council that Russia was silencing the watchdog because it had begun to report on Moscow's own violations of the rules - specifically purchasing weapons from North Korea for the battlegrounds in Ukraine. Meanwhile, South Korea's representative at the UN criticised



Russia's "blind self-centeredness" and said it had no justification "for disbanding the guardians" of the sanctions regime. "This is almost comparable to destroying a CCTV to avoid being caught red-handed," Ambassador Hwang Joon-kook said. Russia has consistently denied using North Korean weapons and its representative at the UN again dismissed the accusations. Vasily Nebenzia also argued that the panel of experts had no added value. "The panel has continued to focus on trivial matters that are not commensurate with the problems facing the peninsula," said Mr Nebenzia, who also added that sanctions had imposed a "heavy burden" on the North Korean people.

Since 2019, Russia and China have sought to persuade the Security Council to ease sanctions. The Security Council first imposed sanctions in 2006 in response to a North

Korean nuclear test, and has since passed 10 more resolutions strengthening them as Pyongyang's nuclear activity has continued. However Kim Jong Un's regime has largely ignored the sanctions - despite their impact on the economy. The North Korean leader has rapidly continued nuclear weapons development and has pursued a more aggressive and dangerous military strategy in recent years.

The UN experts say North Korea continues to flout sanctions through increased missile test launches and developing nuclear weapons. The regime launched a spy satellite this year - with technology believed to have been provided by Russia. In breach of the sanctions, it also continues to import refined petroleum products and send workers overseas, and the UN panel's most recent report detailed a campaign of cyber attacks.

## EU plans to fast-track some financial aid to Egypt

BRUSSELS (AP): The European Union intends to fast-track some of its aid money to Egypt using an urgent funding procedure that bypasses parliamentary oversight and other safeguards, according to the president of the bloc's executive branch.

The 1 billion euros (\$1.1 billion) intended for this is part of a larger package of 7.4 billion euros (\$8 billion) in financial assistance to the North African country that the EU announced on March 17. Egypt has for years relied on cash handouts, often from wealthy Gulf Arab states, as concerns mount that economic pressure and regional conflicts could drive more migrants from the region to Europe's shores.

The EU package includes three years' worth of grants and favorable loans for the Arab world's most populous country. Most of the funds — 5 billion euros (\$5.4 billion) — are known as macro-financial assistance, or MFA, and would be paid directly to Egypt's Central Bank. It's rare for the EU to sidestep safeguards, but European Parliament elections are due June 6-9 — a timeline that if the checks were implemented, would slow the delivery of that money.

With those polls in mind, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced plans for "an urgent MFA operation for up to 1 billion euros" for Egypt, noting in a letter to EU Parliament President Roberta Metsola the country's "rapidly deteriorating economic and fiscal situation." The letter, seen by The Associated Press, preceded the announcement of the deal with Egypt.

Von der Leyen blamed "a very large exposure to the economic effects of Russia's full-scale war of aggression on Ukraine, the wars in Gaza and Sudan, and the Houthis attacks in the Red Sea," and said it was "imperative to make sure that a first significant contribution" would get to Egypt by the end of 2024. To do so, the commission would employ a seldom-used part of the EU treaties, Article 213, which stipulates that the 27 member countries must endorse

the funds — but not the parliament, the bloc's only democratically elected institution.

Not even when COVID-19 spread in 2020 and the EU bailed out governments from the Balkans to the Middle East was this path taken. Nor is it used to keep Ukraine's war-shattered economy afloat, although Kyiv did benefit from it a decade ago, when Russia annexed Crimea and hiked natural gas prices. Apart from removing the need for parliamentary oversight, the urgent funding procedure also sidesteps a requirement for an impact assessment on the effects of the assistance.

Von der Leyen said the new parliament that will be formed after the EU elections would be "fully involved" in the remaining 4 billion euros (\$4.3 billion) of MFAs to Egypt, to be disbursed when Cairo agrees to implement "more comprehensive" reforms. The deal also includes a 1.8 billion euro (\$1.9 billion) investment plan and 600 million euros (\$647 million) in loans, including at least 200 million euros (\$217 million) that will go to Egypt for "migration management."

The fast-track money would inject much-needed funds into the Egyptian economy, which has been hit hard by years of government austerity, the coronavirus pandemic, the fallout from Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and most recently, the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. Usually, MFAs are meant for governments with dire economic woes and to encourage them to introduce reforms. Yet the commission acknowledges that Egypt is "sluggish" on policy revision and already has a "backlog of domestic reforms" to address.

Migration is a key factor driving the EU-Egypt deal. As in previous years, it will be an election issue in the EU and mainstream parties want to keep arrivals down to deprive the far-right of campaign fuel. The deal in Cairo came just weeks after a pact was sealed with Mauritania involving money to help the country — a major transit hub for people moving through Africa toward Europe — beef up border security.

A more substantial agreement was clinched with Tunisia last July, expanding on a model the bloc developed with Turkey in 2015 to stop migrants reaching Europe. While the Egyptian coast has not been a key launching pad for human traffickers sending overcrowded boats across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe, Egypt faces migratory pressures from the region, with the added looming threat that the Israel-Hamas war could spill across its borders.

The commission, asked by the AP what conditions Egypt should respect to receive urgent funding, said that "relevant and feasible reform priorities would need (to) be selected taking into account the corresponding time horizon." The commission's website says macro-financial assistance must be "exceptional in nature" and that "a pre-condition for granting MFA is the respect of human rights and effective democratic mechanisms."

Amnesty International has implored the EU to put rights abuses at the center of relations with Egypt — and the commission concedes that "human rights challenges in Egypt remain significant." Still, the EU's executive branch maintains that "the political leadership in Egypt has taken several steps putting greater emphasis on the importance of the respect for human rights" in recent years.

Earlier this month, Egypt floated its currency and announced a deal with the International Monetary Fund to increase its bailout loan from \$3 billion to \$8 billion, moving to shore up an economy hit by a staggering shortage of foreign currency and soaring inflation. Cairo's coffers will also be replenished with \$35 billion from a massive project involving an Emirati consortium to jointly develop the Mediterranean city of Ras el-Hekma. Since coming to power in 2013, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi has relied heavily on Gulf Arab states, from where an estimated more than \$100 billion entered Egypt via Central Bank deposits, fuel aid and other support.

# Central and Eastern European countries mark 20 years in NATO

VILNIUS (AP): Several central and Eastern European countries began marking the 20th anniversary of the largest expansion of the NATO military alliance when formerly socialist countries became members of the bloc. Military aircraft roared over the Lithuanian capital Vilnius. At the main airbase hosting Spanish and Portuguese fighter jets tasked with NATO air policing missions in the Baltic region, officials gathered to commemorate the event.

"Russia's new bloody terror in Europe is contributing to the growth of instability and threats around the world. However, we in Lithuania are calm because we know that we will never be alone again," said President Gitanas Nauseda, standing near the runway where the first NATO jets landed back in 2004. "We will always have a strong, supportive Alliance family by our side, and we will face any challenges together." Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia joined NATO on March 29 in 2004, bringing the

total membership of the Alliance to 26. The seven nations started accession negotiations soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union and eventually were invited to join at the Prague Summit in November 2002. Another group of former Soviet satellites including Poland and the Czech Republic had been admitted several years earlier.

Since joining the alliance, these countries often warned about the threat of Russia, using their national trauma of Soviet occupation as proof of credibility. While Western nations often dismissed their sometimes hawkish attitude, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine is seen as a vindication of those fears. They have given some of the most robust responses, helping Ukraine with equipment and money, and pushing for even greater sanctions on Russia. Most of the former Soviet Republics that joined NATO at the turn of the millennium spend more than the required 2% of gross domestic product on defense. When Romania's President Klaus

Iohannis announced his bid earlier this month to become the next leader of the alliance, he emphasized the threat from Russia and said the alliance needs a "renewal of perspectives" that Eastern Europe could provide.

"Russia is proving to be a serious and long-term threat to our continent, to our Euro-Atlantic security," the 65-year-old said when he announced his bid. "NATO's borders become of paramount importance, and the strengthening of the eastern flank ... will remain a long-term priority." The seven countries are marking the anniversary with solemn events and shows of force, but also some levity, with open-air concerts and exhibitions. "Twenty years ago the Bulgarian people made the right choice for our country to join NATO," the country's defense chief Adm. Emil Efthimov said. "Given today's security situation, this is the most appropriate decision we have made in our recent history." NATO was established in the aftermath of World War II.

## Six Russian journalists detained by authorities

MOSCOW (AP): Authorities in Russia have detained six journalists across the country this month, including a journalist who covered the trials of Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny for several years, media freedom organization Reporters Without Borders said.

Antonina Favorskaya was detained and accused by Russian authorities of taking part in an "extremist organization" by posting on the social media platforms of Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation, the Russian human rights group OVD-Info said. Navalny died in an Arctic penal colony in February. Favorskaya covered Navalny's court hearings for years and filmed the last video of Navalny before he died in the penal colony. She is one of several Russian journalists targeted by authorities as part of a sweeping crackdown against dissent in Russia that is aimed at opposition figures, journalists, activists and members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Two other journalists, Alexandra Astakhova and Anastasia Musatova, were also temporarily detained after they came to meet Favorskaya in the detention center where she was being held, Reporters Without Borders said, adding that their homes were searched and equipment seized. Ekaterina Anikievich, of the Russian news site SOTAvision, and Konstantin Yarov from RusNews, were also detained by police while covering the search of Favorskaya's home. Yarov was beaten by police, threatened with sexual violence and taken to a hospital, Reporters Without Borders said. Yarov is accused of "disobedience" towards police and risks 15 days of detention, the group said.

In Ufa, 1,300 kilometers (around 800 miles) east of Moscow, Russian authorities detained Olga Komleva, a reporter for RusNews. They also accused her of extremism and involvement with Navalny and his organiza-

tion, Reporters Without Borders said. OVD-Info said that Favorskaya was initially detained on March 17 after laying flowers on Navalny's grave. She spent 10 days in jail after being accused of disobedience towards the police, but when that period of detention ended, authorities charged her again and ordered her to appear Friday in Moscow's Basmanny District Court, OVD-Info said.

Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation has been designated an extremist organization by Russian authorities, which means that people associated with it potentially face prison sentences if they continue to be involved in its work. Kira Yarmysh, Navalny's spokeswoman, said that Favorskaya didn't publish anything on the Foundation's platforms and suggested that Russian authorities targeted her because she was doing her job as a journalist. "What darkness," Yarmysh wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter.

## ‘Queen of Soviet pop, a foreign agent’

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russian prosecutors have asked the justice ministry to consider labelling Alla Pugacheva, the queen of Soviet pop music, as a "foreign agent", a move that would officially designate Russia's most famous star a foe of the Kremlin.

Pugacheva, known across generations for hits such as the 1982 song "Million Scarlet Roses" and the 1978 film "The Woman who Sings", has expressed disgust with the Ukraine war. In 2022, she said the war was killing soldiers for illusory aims, burdening ordinary people and turning Russia into a pariah. Earlier this month, the 74-year-old said that no normal person would return to Russia. She is currently abroad.

Vitaly Borodin, an activist who heads an anti-corruption group and who regularly appears on state television, submitted an official request to recognise Pugacheva as a foreign agent. Then Borodin published a letter from the prosecutor general's office showing that a request had been made to the justice ministry to consider that. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said he had heard no official statements about the issue. Pugacheva, thought to be in Cyprus, did not immediately comment.

Officially labelling her a "foreign agent" would underscore the rift between the Kremlin and many - but not all - of the cultural icons of Soviet and post-Soviet Russia over Ukraine. Such a step would almost certainly need approval from the Kremlin. It has yet to opine in public on Pugacheva and could

still stop the process. The New York Times in 2000 described her as "the goddess of Russian pop, Moscow's Tina Turner for a hint of Edith Piaf, whose songs have given voice to the yearnings of millions."

Shot, a Russian media outlet with close ties to the security services, said an official announcement may be made on her 75th birthday on April 15. Being labelled as a "foreign agent" is often the first sign of serious trouble from authorities in Russia. There are 787 organisations and people listed as such. The label has negative Soviet-era connotations and its bearers have to place it prominently on all content they publish. They also face arduous financial and bureaucratic requirements.

For many opponents of President Vladimir Putin, though, the designation is considered a badge of honour - evidence they stood up to a leader they cast as a dictator and say has led Russia towards ruin. Supporters of Putin say that the pro-Western cultural elite which grew up after the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union is being cleared out and replaced by patriotic singers, writers and artists who will ensure Russia remains sovereign.

Pugacheva came to the attention of Putin supporters for taking six days from Friday's gun attack on Crocus City Hall to make a comment in public.

"Grief should be in your soul, not in Instagram," she posted on Instagram. Pugacheva was also criticised for apologising to a Tajik singer who wept over the "public torture" of the

Tajik suspects detained for the attack. Some of the suspects were shown being interrogated beside a road. One was shown in unverified footage having part of his ear cut off and stuffed into his mouth.

Pugacheva in 2022 even asked for the state to label her a foreign agent in solidarity with her husband, TV comedian Maxim Galkin, who was put on the list that year. Pugacheva has in the past been feted by both Putin and his predecessor Boris Yeltsin.

## Tunisia sentences four to death

TUNIS (BBC): A court in Tunisia has sentenced four people to death and two people to life in prison on charges of participating in the murder of the prominent political leader Chokri Belaid in 2013. He was found shot dead in his car in the capital, Tunis, prompting outrage.

The leftist politician had been a fierce critic of the then-ruling Islamist Ennahda party. He claimed it turned a blind eye to violence perpetrated by extremists against secularists. Although Tunisia hands out death sentences for the gravest crimes, no executions have gone ahead since 1990. Instead, they are usually commuted to life terms.

A total of 23 people have been charged in connection with Belaid's killing. "Justice has been done," Prosecutor Aymen Chitba said in response to the six sentences handed down.



The Frontier Post

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Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town, Peshawar.

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## Power theft, a colossal challenge

**P**RIME Minister Shehbaz Sharif Thursday chaired a high-level meeting on a single-point agenda to curb electricity theft. He directed immediate disciplinary action and stern punishment to the officers and staff involved in professional negligence and corruption causing billions of dollars in losses to the national exchequer. According to the Premier, it was the responsibility of the authorities to create a stable system by taking preventive measures and public awareness campaigns to stop electricity theft in our society. The Prime Minister stressed the formulation of a strategy to decrease line losses and the upgradation of transmission lines. He noted that power-generating companies were a burden on the national exchequer and privatization of all debt-ridden entities was a priority of the government.

Illegal electricity theft and unauthorized use of power without proper metering or payment are widespread problems in today's Pakistan. It causes billions of rupees in financial losses for the government and relevant power producers/providers companies, contributing to power shortages, overbilling, or circular debt of the government entities. The government and power companies have adopted multiple strategies including the installation of smart meters, technical monitoring, public awareness campaigns, and legal prosecution of the offenders but all those best practices could not work effectively. The issue persists and has now turned into a grave challenge for the government and utilities companies facing default and debt payment crises. Unfortunately, the volume of illegal power theft is so massive that over 57000 cases have been caught red-handed in a single five-district zone whereas the gravity of the issue could easily be assessed in 170 districts across Pakistan including four provinces, Azad Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan.

Historically, all efforts of the government and power-distributing companies have not succeeded in curbing electricity theft and preventing bulk losses to the national kitty throughout the past. Such a large-scale crime is not possible without internal complicity and malignancy of the WAPDA employees and staff of power-distributing companies which not only failed all strategies but complicated the problem many folds. Meanwhile, the criminal conduct of the power-distributing companies and power division further aggravated the problem wherein fiscal losses from power theft and no billing in certain regions particularly FATA were leveled to law-abiding electricity consumers in general areas along with the introduction of slab-based tariff plan which rendered this essential utility unaffordable for the masses.

Previously, the caretaker government in collaboration with the Pakistan military launched a nationwide crackdown against power theft and uncovered thousands of illegal connections across the country. During the campaign, 350 personnel of distribution companies were suspended for their bad performance or abatement. However, the problem was so grave that such a large-scale anti-theft campaign could not reduce the fiscal losses of the concerned departments. The incumbent government has decided to implement strict measures and harsh punishment for the culprits involved in such heinous crimes. As said, feeder monitors would be deployed at the feeders to gauge theft and the areas with less electricity theft would have less load-shedding. Task forces would be established at district and division levels to stop power theft and bonuses would be given to the team with good conduct and best performance. In addition, an amendment is being incorporated in section 462(O) of the Pakistan Penal Code through an ordinance to make electricity theft a cognizable offense. In fact, accountability of the government officials, and a stern and massive punishment of the culprits is the only way forward to curb power theft otherwise the crooks habitual of free-of-cost wine never give up bad practices for the sake of motivation or nationalism. As our nation successfully eliminates this curse, Pakistan will move toward good governance, fiscal regulation, and economic affluence in the future.

## Women's rights and gender discrimination

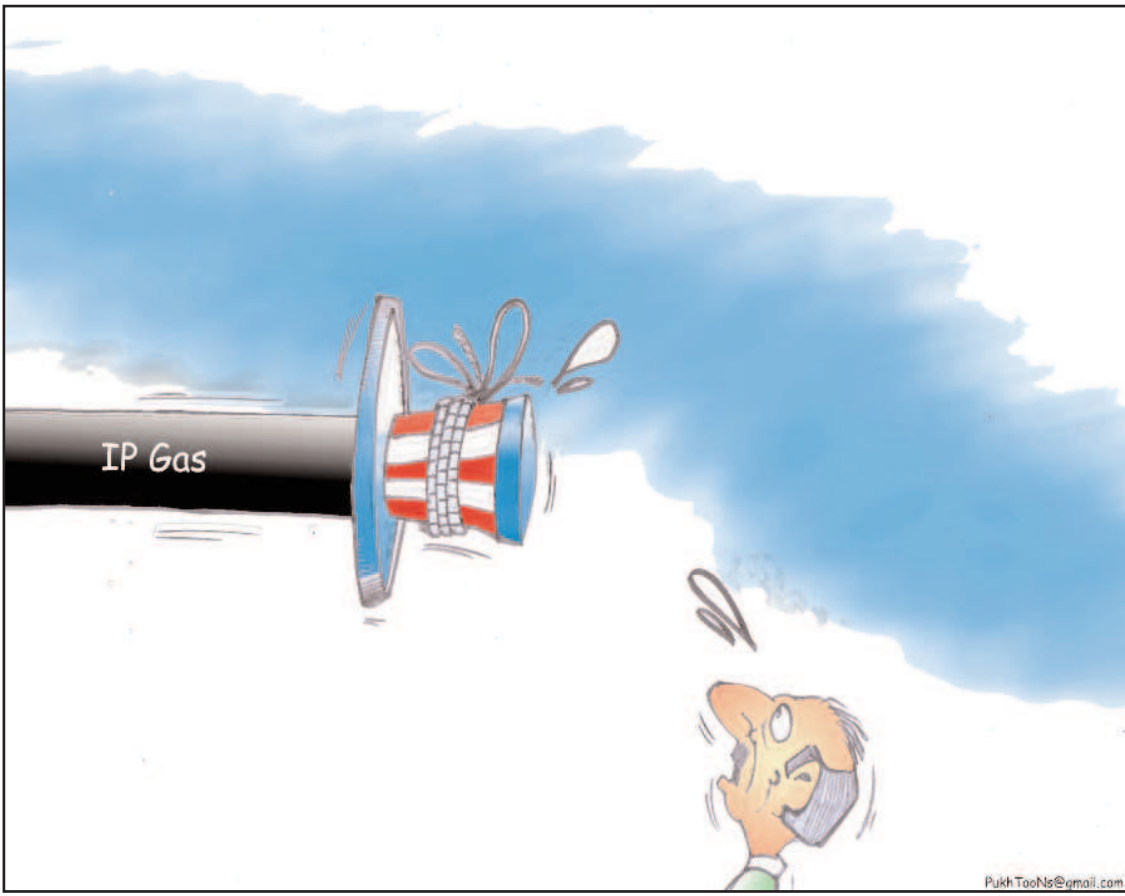
**F**EDERAL Ombudsman of Pakistan Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi has recently said that the Constitution of Pakistan upheld the principle of equality and dignity along with explicitly prohibiting gender discrimination in all spheres of national life. The Parliament adopted the Act for Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace in 2010 intending to implement the relevant provisions in the Constitution and ensure equal opportunity for men and women and the right to earn a livelihood without fear or any discrimination.

Gender discrimination and inequality with women and girls is a worldwide issue and Pakistan has no exception from it. There had been wide ranging concerns regarding the treatment of society with the women particularly with respect to women's right to education, jobs, inheritance and the way of living had significantly been marred by the local tradition and culture than national and religious obligations. Although, the constitution of Pakistan comprehensively covers all aspects of our national life and protects fundamental rights of weak segments of the society including women, minorities and the persons with disabilities (PWDs), however the implementation of those sane principles had largely been impaired due to misprioritization of the ruling elite. Unfortunately, the challenges persist despite efforts to promote equality and dignity among different segments of the society. The constitution of the the National Gender Data Portal (NGDP) by the National Commission on the Status of Women was the first step to bridge the gap between men and women.

This forum collect and consolidate gender data at the national level, which is instrumental for analyzing trends and reviewing progress, and, most importantly, formulating evidence-based policies and programmes to advance gender equality. Meanwhile, Federal Ombudsperson Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace (FOSPAH) is another endeavor which protects women from discrimination, social and workplace injustices and supports them to achieve their due share and rights in the society. Fortunately, Pakistan has the distinction in the comity of nations that the country has a dedicated Ombudsperson Institution to deal with the challenges of women empowerment and denial of rights, thereby emphasizing the need for support to over 49 percent of the population. Undoubtedly, Pakistan has made significant progress in women rights and empowerment yet the efforts to combat gender discrimination require ongoing commitment from both policymakers and society. This journey is continuing wherein, advocacy, education, and legal reforms can play vital roles in promoting gender equality and empowering women in the country.

### Important Notice

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## How will the Moscow concert hall attack affect Putin?

Leonid Ragozin

**O**N Friday, armed men stormed the Crocus Concert Hall outside Moscow, killing at least 137 people and injuring more than 100. A day later, President Vladimir Putin addressed the nation, promising to "identify and punish everyone who stands behind the terrorists who perpetrated this atrocity".

Some observers may see this moment as history coming full circle. Once again Russia is in the midst of a bloody war and facing terrorist attacks and once again Putin is in charge. The Russian president came to power in 2000 amid war in Chechnya and in the wake of bombing attacks in Moscow. His promise as a young and energetic leader was to bring stability and security to the country. And he did.

Putin managed to put an end to the Second Chechen War with a combination of brutal military force and political manoeuvring. He managed to split the Chechen forces by putting their religious leader, Akhmad Kadyrov, the father of the current ruler, Ramzan Kadyrov, in charge of the republic. As the Chechen rebellion was suppressed, terrorist activity also dwindled.

The last major terror attack in Russia took place in 2011. His success in the Russian "war on terror" has been one of the major achievements of Putin's rule and one of the main reasons for his political longevity. He is being widely credited for bringing security and a semblance of order to Russia after the turbulent decade that followed the collapse of the USSR. Today, 30 years later, the threat that Russians hoped they would never face again is back, causing anxiety and demoralising society. A much older Putin is making the same promise amid a crisis that at least some Russians blame on him. Will he be believed? The attack on the Crocus Concert Hall, which the ISIL (ISIS) affiliate Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP) has claimed responsibility for, comes against the backdrop of Russia's brutal aggression in Ukraine. Unsurprisingly, within hours of the tragedy, Putin and his security bodies were already linking it to Ukraine. Their claims

derived from the fact that four of the suspects, who had made it out of the burning venue by blending into the fleeing crowd, were detained about 140km (90 miles) from the Ukrainian border. In his address to the nation, Putin claimed that they had been offered an "open window" at the border, supposedly by

bombing destroyed a section of the bridge that connects Russia to occupied Crimea. A few pro-Kremlin commentators like the war-monitoring collective Rybar have also gone as far as pointing a finger at the US and claiming that it supports ISKP in Afghanistan to undermine the Taliban. Pro-Ukrainian commen-

through torture that Russian security services weren't shy of circulating online; suspects were electrocuted, one had his ear cut off. No matter who recruited them to carry out the attack, its aim was to demoralise the Russian population.

So will Russians blame Putin for failing to avert the tragedy? Collective psychology is notoriously unpredictable. Some may, but it is unlikely that anything would come of it. Even without this attack, it has been clear to the Russian population that the period of stability, security and economic growth that Putin has been lauded for is long over. War is literally at the door with Ukrainian forces conducting incursions into Russian territory, sending drones to strike oil refineries and destroying Russian battleships in the Black Sea. The thinking behind the idea of bringing war into Russian territory - aired by many in Ukrainian security circles since 2014 - assumes that instability and the lack of security would somehow shake Putin's regime and eventually lead to its downfall. But this idea has proved irrational and delusional over and over again.

Unlike Ukraine, which has the backing of the West behind it, Russians don't have an alternative guarantor of security they could swap Putin for, even at their own peril - the way Ukrainians did it in the last decade. No matter what they think about Putin, they are existentially dependent on him in the situation that most of them see, like it or not, as a proxy war the West is waging against Russia rather than Russia's own aggression against neighbouring countries. Their current security arrangement is a trap with no other option but to sit tight and hope that a peaceful solution to the conflict in Ukraine will be found and life will return to normal. The way things are going on the front lines in Ukraine at the moment, this hope is far more grounded in reality than a nebulous better future they could achieve by attempting to topple Putin, which in current conditions would most likely precipitate a civil war. There is doom, gloom and a firm determination to sit it out until the age of troubles is over one way or another.

tators, on the other hand, have been quick to revive a longstanding theory suggesting that Putin could have staged a bombing in Moscow in 1999 to seize power. The Crocus attack, they claimed, was another false flag operation staged by his regime. The suspects arrested by the Russian security services appear to be ordinary Tajik migrants, like the 1.3 million Tajiks working in Russia. Russian independent media have confirmed that photos of the arrested men match those in the numerous visuals of the attackers in the concert hall.

One of them said he was recruited by an aide to a Muslim preacher and offered about 5,000 euros (\$5,420) for the attack. The testimonies were obtained

Ukraine's security services. Ukraine denied any involvement in the attack. United States officials were adamant that it was carried out by ISKP and Ukraine had nothing to do with it. The US had indeed warned about the possibility of an attack in Moscow, citing its own intelligence, which it said it had shared with the Russians.

Pro-Kremlin commentators and media who have pushed the theory of the Ukrainian connection have pointed to suspected Ukrainian involvement in the bombing attacks that killed prominent pro-war blogger Maksim Fomin, better known as Vladlen Tatarsky, as well as Daria Dugin, the daughter of the far-right ideologist Aleksandr Dugin. Another

**Y**OU can't buck the market, Margaret Thatcher liked to say, and she was right. You can't buck the market, you can't buck reality, and you can't sustain prosperity by consuming and importing more than you produce and export.

Britain, like many European countries, is in a bad way. Growth is sluggish, and wages no higher than before the Great Financial Crash. Our birth rate is declining, and immigration has soared. Productivity is poor. We have a persistent trade deficit, a budget deficit and a large stock of debt. Our very viability depends on the kindness of strangers.

Globalisation, in the form we have known it, is dead. China's rise always meant international free trade, such as it ever really existed, had a short life expectancy. Prompted by Donald Trump and hastened by Covid, the US has shifted its strategic focus to the threat from

Beijing and the security of the Pacific. Geopolitical competition has prompted national and regional protectionism and a new wave of industrial strategies. Britain is over-exposed and under-prepared for the new world. Many of the theories, assumptions and policies that underpin our economy are bankrupt. Writing for the IMF recently, Sir Angus Deaton, professor of economics at Princeton, reassessed his own beliefs. Business has too much power over workers, he said, free trade had damaged the Western working and middle classes, and immigration does more harm than good.

Few of Sir Angus's colleagues would be so honest, but we should not stop there. Classical economic theory holds that it does not matter who owns what, nor what is made where. Comparative advantage means countries do what they are good at, and buy what other countries provide. Thus, trade makes us all

richer. But this is not the case. First, governments get in the way. Countries like Russia and Iraq - controlled by Iran - can sell us hydrocarbons, but we should not fund our enemies. China was good at manufacturing protective equipment, but blocked its export when Covid first struck. The European Union sought to confiscate vaccines bought by Britain.

Neither does comparative advantage make everyone better off. If Britain only does the things it is best at - like financial services - and stops doing the things it does less well, the people and places reliant on those abandoned industries suffer. We end up, as economic geography shows us now, with one prosperous but overcrowded corner of the country, with the remainder reliant on fiscal transfers to sustain an acceptable quality of life. Economic theory, and generations of politicians, told us not to

worry about leaving manufacturing behind. But the balance of the economy matters. Goods can indeed be exported around the world, but services are protected by governments through hidden protectionism, and language barriers apply more to services than to goods. Being a services superpower is good for Britain, but it is not enough. With artificial intelligence coming, many service industries face enormous disruption. Regardless, with important exceptions such as life sciences and aviation, our manufacturing sector is too small. The result is a bifurcated labour market, poor productivity and a deep trade deficit.

Since we moved to a floating exchange rate, economists and politicians have claimed this does not matter. But the trade deficit is both a product of our problems and a cause. It is a product because we do not make, do

## When wounded empires rise and seek revenge

Ghassan Charbel

**A**N experienced man once advised me: "Don't forget the wounds of history when you write about the crises of the present." I paused at his statement. The speaker believes that the world is headed toward a new dangerous phase where the sole superpower loses its hegemony, and empires of the past seek revenge through major coups that will change maps and the distribution of powers. He believes that the coups will take various forms, such as military or ideological invasions, drone, rocket and cyberattacks, and the sponsorship of militias.

Have the wounds of empires, which believe they have been wronged by history, reopened? Do these empires harbor dormant volcanoes that are waiting for the right moment to vent their rage?

The man reminded me of what several Arab communist leaders told me after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Mohammed Ibrahim, Aziz Mohammed and George Hawi, the respective secretaries-general of the Sudanese, Iraqi and Lebanese communist parties, said Russia would not languish under the snow of defeat and would not become a subjugated state. It would regroup, rise and seek revenge.

Some observers have said Russia's military and security institutions, which were so overwhelmed by the Soviet collapse and terrible Western victory, had plotted secret revenge and tasked a junior KGB officer to implement it. I do not advocate this theory because I worry about exaggerating scenarios. But a person has the right to think that a wounded Russia is now living under a wounded czar who harbors the greatest coup project since the Second World War.

Set aside the terrorist attack that struck Moscow on Friday: This terrible massacre will not shake Vladimir Putin's control. He has just been reelected president in a landslide victory the scale of which the likes of Biden, Trump, Macron and Scholtz can only dream.

I am aware that the West has said the czar tailored the election so that he ran without a serious competitor. But I believe that Putin succeeded in connecting with the depth of the Russian spirit. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, I witnessed the elderly in Moscow yearn for the days of Joseph Stalin. The Russians love the strong ruler, even if that means ruthless killings and tempting fate.

The man who knows Putin believes that he cannot tolerate defeat in Ukraine even if it means teetering on the edge of a nuclear inferno. He may be right. Putin knows that a defeat in Ukraine may lead Russia to a collapse similar to the one suffered by the Soviet Union.

One must also remember his image in history. I recalled what one of Saddam Hussein's friends once told me. They said that his failure to withdraw from Kuwait was also tied to his image before history and before his friends in Baghdad. There is no doubt that the invasion of Ukraine is different to the invasion of Kuwait. The man calling

the shots here is different from the one there, but experience has shown that the "historic leader" sometimes becomes a prisoner of his own image.

The man asked why the West refuses to coexist with Putin's coup the same way it is coexisting with the coup carried out by Iran. He said the Iranian coup changed the features of four maps and the balances of power within them. It gave Tehran the right to appoint ministers, form governments and fire rockets. He noted that the US was dealing the Houthi militias calculated strikes that have led it to grant China and Russia permission for their vessels to safely sail in the Red Sea. Decades ago, the shah of Iran viewed the borders of his country as a robe that was too tight to contain the legacy of its empire. Khomeini's revolution, which overthrew the shah, made the "export of the revolution" a main article of the constitution.

Istanbul is not too far from the wounds of history. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan also views Turkiye's current borders as a tight robe that has stifled the Ottoman spirit. So, he has tried to lure the orphans of the Soviet Union, especially the Turkish speakers. He also tried to alter the features of major countries in the region when the Arab Spring swept through.

Turkiye boasts a long history of wars with the Persian and Russian empires. Now, it is paving the way for a "security belt" inside Iraq and another inside Syria, while the West denies Russia the right to establish its own belt in Ukrainian territory. One must make the distinction here between a belt that restores land, and another that does not.

China is also suffering from the wounds of history. It has been firm in declaring that Taiwan cannot be estranged from it forever, and its patience is running out. Lucky for the world that Chinese leader Xi Jinping is banking on an ally called time and, unlike Putin, has not yet launched a coup to fix the border situation.

The chaos of empires is frightening in the current international jungle. The West is no longer capable of managing the world. The policeman is gone and wounded empires have risen. The UN Security Council is out of service, and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' tears cannot tend to the wounds in Gaza or Ukraine.

The world is in store for worse. The terrorist attack in Moscow is dangerous given its timing and targets. The perpetrators operated differently to Daesh. The whole truth may not come out if the confessions are manipulated by the intelligence service. The attack will mark a turning point should the theory about the Ukrainian thread be true. It could pave the way for a massive escalation in the war in Ukraine. Can the West tolerate the victory of the Russian coup? Can Europe take in such a huge bitter pill? What about Russia and the master of the Kremlin if the West decides to prolong the war in Ukraine and trim the claws of the new empire and its czar?

Arab News

## Our economic model is bust

Nick Timothy

richer. But this is not the case. First, governments get in the way. Countries like Russia and Iraq - controlled by Iran - can sell us hydrocarbons, but we should not fund our enemies. China was good at manufacturing protective equipment, but blocked its export when Covid first struck. The European Union sought to confiscate vaccines bought by Britain.

Neither does comparative advantage make everyone better off. If Britain only does the things it is best at - like financial services - and stops doing the things it does less well, the people and places reliant on those abandoned industries suffer. We end up, as economic geography shows us now, with one prosperous but overcrowded corner of the country, with the remainder reliant on fiscal transfers to sustain an acceptable quality of life. Economic theory, and generations of politicians, told us not to

or sell enough to the rest of the world.

In 2024-25 Britain plans to issue a record £271.7 billion in new gilts, and the strangers upon whom we depend will demand higher yields. They will wonder about inflation - higher in services than goods - and the value of Sterling, and price British debt accordingly. Some in the City foresee a gilts crisis, especially if a future government shows signs of fiscal irresponsibility. There are no shortcuts, then, on the journey to rebalancing our economy. We cannot borrow to fund a spending splurge. We cannot slash taxes without slashing the country's needs. And in the years ahead, spending on defence, pensions, health and social care will increase. But we can be honest. Our economic model is bust. The theories that underpin it have failed. We need fiscal rectitude to survive our dangerous exposure to the bond markets. And we need brutal honesty about

what we can and cannot afford. The state and public services must be made efficient. The welfare system must be reformed. Absurdities such as the unilateralist climate change policies that further undermine domestic production need to be rethought.

And we need a serious strategy to reindustrialise, increase private and public investment, improve manufacturing output, narrow the trade deficit and rebalance the economy. With increased global transport costs, technology that brings production closer to customers, and Brexit - which challenges the logic of comparative advantage - the objective is feasible. But the task of achieving it is enormous. Time is limited and the danger very grave. It will take intellectual honesty, leadership and unstinting resolve. We cannot buck the market - and we cannot buck reality any longer.

The Telegraph



# Why a booming economy isn't helping Biden

Fareed Zakaria

**THE central puzzle about this election campaign, that has pollsters and pundits opining, is the disconnect between the state of the economy and President Joe Biden's approval ratings. A simple rule of thumb is that a president's approval rating predicts the chances of reelection. It used to be that the public's view of the president depended mostly on its view of the economy. But that relationship has gone haywire recently.**

Look at the current state of the economy. America is in unusually good health. It has recovered better from the Covid-19 pandemic than any other major economy. For two years the unemployment rate has been under 4%, a streak the US hasn't seen in more than five decades. Inflation, which was worrying, has dropped sharply since mid-2022 and is now 3.2%. Wage growth for lower-income workers over the past few years has outpaced that of high-income workers.

The flood of good news also includes some unprecedented data. In a reversal of a decades-long trend, Black workers' participation rate in the labor force is now higher than that of White workers. And yet, Biden's third-year average approval rating was about 40%, the second lowest of modern presidents. It's currently around 38%. Part of the answer is probably the disconnect around people's perception and feelings. While consumer sentiment is up dramatically from its all-time low in June 2022, and many people have positive views of their personal finances, they are still gloomy on the economy at large.

Explanations for this disconnect abound. Some say it's a time lag, others that people are being swayed by social media, still others that residual feelings about inflation tends to trump all else. But I think that the real answer is that politics is no longer fundamentally driven by economics - that our political preferences are today shaped more by issues of culture, class and tribalism than by how much money we make. That is one of the core theses of my new book,

"Age of Revolutions," which argues that we are living through a huge backlash after decades of rapid accelerations in technology and globalization. And this backlash is largely centered on cultural anxiety in a fast-changing world. The disconnect between economics and politics has been growing for a while. As Nate Cohn of The New York Times has noted, ever since Barack Obama's presidency, the rock-solid connection between the health of the economy and a president's approval ratings has "almost gone."

Former President Donald Trump presided over a very strong economy until Covid-19, and yet his approval ratings were extremely low, just like Biden's. And during the 2020 election, something extraordinary happened: Democrats' and Republicans' views of the economy flipped massively in the months around Biden's inauguration. Democrats who had previously thought the economy was in terrible shape now thought it was booming, and Republicans did the opposite.

A similar flip-flop occurred when Trump was elected in 2016. In other words, peoples' political leanings shaped their views of the economy, not vice versa. What then is shaping peoples' political affiliations? I argue in the book that it is identity - which encompasses culture, class and tribalism. In the 20th century, political leanings were shaped by economics. Where you sat economically determined where you voted politically.

It made sense in a much poorer age when vast numbers of working-class voters were fundamentally motivated by moving up to secure a decent living. (America's per capita GDP in 1950, adjusted for inflation, was around \$15,000.) Most Western societies achieved that basic condition by the 1960s, and people began to express other "post-materialist" identities and values. (I am drawing on powerful survey research, done over decades, by the social scientist Ronald Inglehart.) Many people

believe that populism is fundamentally about rising inequality and a working class that has been left behind. But look at northern European countries like Sweden and Denmark. They spend lavishly on social safety nets and worker retraining programs and have relatively low inequality. And yet, populist parties - at least one with a direct lineage to fascism - have surged in these places to become major political players. France has coddled and shielded its workers more than almost any other industrial nation and yet, were elections held today, the xenophobic National Rally would probably win.

All these countries have seen large tides of migrants over the last few decades. In 1970, most major Western European countries had under 6% of their population who were foreign-born. In 2020, most had more than 12%. In Austria, Germany, and Sweden, it was close to 20%. (For comparison, the US has seen those numbers rise from around 6% to 15% during the same period.) Immigration today remains the rocket fuel that propels populist parties. Immigration is, in a sense, the visible face of globalization. You cannot see or feel capital flows or trade liberalization. But you can look at these new entrants into your society, who look different, speak differently, and often worship different gods, and feel unnerved.

One counterexample helps make the point. A major industrialized country that has not had much right-wing populism and where the old ruling establishment continues to hold the reins of power largely unchallenged is Japan. It is surely relevant to note that Japan also takes very few immigrants. Beyond immigration, one sees how other issues that divide people along lines of religion, culture and class feed the new politics. In his last book, Inglehart noted a startling fact about the United States. The US had always been an outlier among developed countries as a rich nation that remained deeply religious, closer to Nigeria than to

Denmark on this cultural scale. In recent years, the single strongest drop in religiosity (among countries he studied) occurred in the United States. America is rapidly secularizing, and this is causing extreme anxiety in large parts of the country, especially among non-urban, non-college educated people. The religious and cultural divide in America is layered underneath a class divide: urban vs rural, college-educated vs non-college educated. And economic differences are malleable; you can split the difference between someone who wants to spend \$2 billion and another who wants to spend \$4 billion. But how do you split the difference on issues of identity, religion and morality like abortion and gay rights?

This rise of cultural politics explains the other great shift in polling that has been best observed by the Financial Times's John Burn-Murdoch: "a racial realignment." All non-White voters, especially Hispanic and Black voters, are becoming more evenly divided between left and right than they have been for decades. Why? Perhaps many of them are realizing that on many of the social issues that now dominate - abortion, gay rights, immigration - they may lean more right than left. In recent decades, globalization and technology have moved so fast that they have left many people in advanced societies deeply anxious. And when people see their world in flux, they often move not left on economics but right on culture.

They want the world to stop changing so fast and to listen to politicians who promise to take them back to "the good old days." Or make America great AGAIN. The left's instinct is to solve this problem by spending money. Biden's policies have disproportionately helped people in rural areas without college degrees - likely Trump voters, in other words. But I doubt this will make them into Democrats. The left needs to play more effectively on the new crossroads of politics, where culture and class have replaced economics.

# Britain seems stuck in a doom loop of poverty

Gordon Brown

**A**n election year is the time to confront the paralysing gloom and declinist thinking besetting our country and, by rediscovering our moral compass, inaugurate a new age of hope. The British people long to feel part of a shared national endeavour. But instead, near-zero growth is giving birth to a zero-sum mentality, a belief that you can only do better if at someone else's expense.

Young people - historically the most optimistic about the future - yearn to believe in something bigger than themselves, yet this generation is fast losing faith in the very idea of progress. But the most devastating twist in this doom loop is the one created by rising poverty, the despair and divisions it causes, and the mounting public concern about its impact on our social cohesion. To break out of this downward spiral, Britain needs a reason for optimism - and a good starting point is a new partnership to end destitution and poverty that, by bringing charities, companies, communities and government together in a common national project, shows the United Kingdom can be united in more than just name.

For these are desperate times for today's poor children. That 4.3 million children - a number equivalent to four cities the size of Birmingham - were last week declared to be below the official poverty line is shameful enough, but on the ground we are now witnessing types of penury we once imagined we had consigned to history. Children now form 1.5 million of the 6 million people enduring 'very deep' poverty, living not only below the standard breadline, drawn at 60% of the typical income, but below 40%. One million children are thought to have had a recent brush with 'destitution', defined as being without the absolute basics: keeping warm, dry, clean, housed and fed.

Last night, 140,000 children were homeless, and 1.1 million youngsters tried to go to sleep without a bed of their own; it is estimated that 2.6 million children are missing out on meals. No society can or should be at ease when children are being brought up in houses without heating, kitchens without cookers, bedrooms without beds, floors without floor covering, or toilets without toilet roll or soap. And all the evidence is that, unless we act, things will get even worse.

But how to fix it? Three seismic shifts have unfolded over the last decade. First, the welfare safety net has been systematically shredded, with the government abandoning responsibilities taken for granted since 1945. Second, charities and food banks, which have taken over from universal credit as the last line of defence, are

exhausted and justifiably angry about having to pick up the pieces with insufficient resources. They even fear their desperate relief efforts could provide cover for the government walking further away. Third, unsure how they fit into a poverty-free, pollution-free future, the corporate sector has in the last decade donated less, not more. Yet the many business leaders who are now championing a greater sense of environmental and social responsibility know they can, and should, play a bigger role.

With Jeremy Hunt now hinting at an autumn mini-budget, this government has a last chance to break with the past decade and offer hope to millions by setting out a firm timetable for abolishing destitution and ending extreme poverty.

There can be no ducking the changing nature of the poverty we are addressing. A generation ago, worklessness was the overwhelming cause. Today, nearly three poor children in four live in a working household and no government can perpetuate the myth any more that the majority of our poor people are workshy or part of a dependency culture. Alongside a root-and-branch review of universal credit to reflect this, we should be raising the pay floor, creating new opportunities to climb the career ladder including through better skills (today only one in six on low pay ever escape low pay), and rewiring the various markets - for utilities, travel, rented housing and childcare - that are currently skewed against poorer families. We should offer NHS help to those who are sick and economically inactive to restore their fitness before delivering any lectures on laziness.

But action cannot await reviews and phased reforms, however necessary. Were the government to declare the end of poverty to be a national goal and set clear deadlines, there would be a way out of the current emergency. Then it could credibly invite charities, corporations and community and civil society groups to join a time-limited partnership to alleviate poverty now. Only then will it be understood that the shared goal is not to for ever fall back on food banks in place of the necessary long-term solutions, but to create immediate breathing space as government transitions us away from mass poverty.

Within the bounds of the fiscal envelope, government can build on the £1bn a year that has until now been allocated to the household support fund. A start could be made with between £1.3bn and £3.3bn found by imposing a similar reserve requirement on banks that the European Central Bank, the Swiss and others currently do

(and we once did), thus hypothecating for poverty eradication a small fraction of what banks currently receive in interest payments on their balances at the Bank of England.

By simplifying the Gift Aid system, £700m of ancillary relief, which currently can end up being back with higher-earning donors, can go straight to good causes. And the Chancellor's autumn statement could also offer additional time-limited tax incentives to encourage more giving. The top 1% donate overall just 0.2% of their income - that's just £538 a year from average incomes of £271,000. But if that top 1% were incentivised to donate just 1%, £1.4 billion a year could be raised for good causes. Some companies take corporate philanthropy seriously, but overall their donations represent just 0.8% of the pretax profits of FTSE 100 companies. But even if the real value of their donations had remained at its level of ten years ago, good causes would now be at least £5bn better off.

For the period of this current emergency, companies should consider donating more of their surplus products - and so reduce pollution as well as poverty. But if they cannot give free of charge, they should offer to sell to charities essential goods - toothpaste, nappies, toilet rolls, soap and shampoo, as well as food - at production cost or less.

If we share the discounted cost, and if families are referred through social workers, teachers, health visitors and GPs as well as food banks, we would be getting vital goods to those too impoverished to buy, and doing so in the most cost-effective way. Indeed, in the pilot phase of the new Multibanks - which sit alongside food banks and are food, clothes, bedding, toiletries, furnishings, and baby banks rolled into one - every £1 donated has procured supplies worth £5 in value.

This partnership is not a permanent or comprehensive solution. It would be a one- or two-year transitional arrangement, which would only succeed if the government offers benefit improvements that exceed the value of what others provide in kind. It would not be the end of poverty, but it is the signal the whole country needs: the beginning of the end. It would address the costs crippling families now, and create the headroom in which to fix our welfare safety net. With communities, charities, companies and government working together to deliver a shared national goal, we can rapidly banish destitution, and support the 2,600 food banks in their ambition to make themselves redundant - and a divided country can find unity, and hope, again.

The Guardian

# Experts' take on Asian economic development

Cyn-Young Park

**THE countries responsible for 88 percent of global carbon emissions, including large emitters in Asia, have pledged net-zero emissions by 2050 (with some realizing the goal between 2060 and 2070), yet current efforts are insufficient to achieve that target. Integrating trade policies with climate initiatives could break the gridlock and bring us closer to achieving this crucial goal.**

A growing number of countries have pledged to achieve the time-bound net-zero emissions. More than 140 countries, which account for about 88 percent of global emissions, including the biggest emitters - China, the United States, India and the European Union - have now signed up. Their net-zero targets are translated into climate action plans, or Nationally Determined Contributions, to reduce emissions and slow the pace of global warming.

However, the current NDCs are not enough to achieve the climate goal set in the Paris Agreement to keep global temperature rise to below 1.5 degrees Celsius above the average preindustrial level. Trade policies need to become more integrated with the NDCs to cover the shortfall. Unfortunately, the nexus between trade policy and climate actions continues to be overlooked in formulating the NDCs. The economic rationales for improving the interface between trade policy and climate actions are compelling. For example, green trade can offer many solutions to climate change by expediting the transition to renewable energy, promoting technology

transfer, and encouraging investment in green sectors and low-carbon technologies among others.

Leveraging green trade and investment is also key to successfully facilitating the energy transition and the NDCs' implementation in developing countries which face difficulties in gaining access to finance and technologies. Policy frameworks under the NDCs, which help create new trade and investment opportunities in renewable energy for example, can support just transitions in developing countries and increase their NDC ambitions.

But geoeconomic fragmentation is a growing threat to the transition to clean energy and developing a net-zero economy. Conflicting national interests in the name of energy security have led many countries to undertake unilateral actions and restrict trade in materials critical for energy transition. And as enterprises compete in the global race to secure the supplies of critical minerals for new business opportunities, governments lend their support to domestic companies and promote domestic energy transition through additional protectionist measures. With many governments leaning toward protectionism, businesses and investors retreat further from overseas activities.

Protectionist policies could persist despite their adverse consequences on the reliability of global supply chains and national long-term energy security, if the lack of collective global actions continues to create uncertainties over trade

and supply chains. Given the complex workings of deeply interconnected global value chains, protectionist measures such as export bans, tariffs and subsidies create uncertainty, which in turn will discourage investments. They can also distort business incentives, create supply chain bottlenecks, and disrupt the flow of essential inputs that could be detrimental to the successful transition to clean energy technologies.

Trade policies need to become more integrated with the NDCs to address the shortfall the current NDCs represent in delivering on the global climate goal. It would be more sensible therefore to implement proactive policies such as encouraging investment in infrastructure and human capital development, and implementing reforms to improve the overall business environment while preserving open trade and investment regimes. As global energy transitions gather pace, developing reliable, diversified and responsible supply chains for critical mineral and clean energy manufacturing is becoming strategically important in Asia and the Pacific.

The region boasts rich natural resources, well-established manufacturing and industrial bases for clean energy technologies, as well as a high-quality and skilled workforce. To unlock the massive economic potential from the global energy transition, the region's policymakers must take coordinated measures to reduce business uncertainties, help manage environmental, social and governance risks,

and support reforms to address supply-side constraints. Governments, for their part, can encourage private and foreign investors to input capital into projects by "de-risking" investments, leveraging government funding and tax incentives, and forging strategic partnerships to reduce policy uncertainties and political instability.

A united front on green trade and investment can exert significant influence on national climate pledges. For example, trade agreements with strong environmental provisions can help increase the NDC ambitions and make their implementation more efficient by aligning private sector incentives with climate goals and creating an environment conducive to green trade and investment. More importantly, coherent policies and coordinated actions across countries will help strengthen their NDC targets and expedite their implementation. The current trade tensions and geoeconomic fragmentation harm our chances of capitalizing on these opportunities and reaching the global climate goals in time to avert the climate crisis. The collective ambition to achieve net-zero emissions underscores the urgent need to leverage trade policies for climate action. Trade policy reforms focusing on transparent trade rules and regulations can reduce market uncertainties that hamper investment in green projects, boost confidence and trust by increasing market access for private and foreign investors, and facilitate cross-border investment and technical transfers.

The China Daily

# As a cancer survivor, I feel for Kate Middleton

Sara Stewart

**A**s news that Catherine, Princess of Wales had announced her cancer diagnosis dominated headlines Friday, I felt a deep and traumatic solidarity. Recovering from major abdominal surgery - as Kate has been since January - is ghastly, and having to do it so you can be healthy enough for chemotherapy is a humbling one-two punch from the universe. For Kate, that's topped off by having to endure it all while the entire world chases you down like a fox on one of those hunts the royals are always throwing.

Kate has not yet disclosed specifically what kind of cancer she has. An oncologist told Today.com that it could be colon, stomach, genital or urinary cancer. We know that rates of colon cancer diagnoses in particular are going up alarmingly in younger populations. I was 45 when I received my diagnosis of stage 3 colon cancer, and, like Kate, underwent major abdominal surgery followed by chemo. I was told by countless doctors and nurses that they were

seeing an upsetting uptick in younger patients like me.

One of the first things health care providers recommend to aid your recovery from surgery is reducing your stress. I truly cannot imagine trying to deal with the indignities of post-surgical recovery - such as, in my case not being able to walk even a single block unassisted for weeks, or being incontinent when you used to be a normal healthy person - on top of the relentless scrutiny Kate's been under since that unnecessary photoshopped image.

But I do know this: She is in a unique position to be a much-needed voice for people around the world dealing with cancer at a young age. As a survivor of a gastrointestinal cancer, whose sufferer's face much greater stigma than other types of cancer, I feel this most acutely. Kate is someone with a global public profile whose voice can truly make a difference in, for example, advocating for younger people to get colonoscopies and

other cancer screenings. For the development of blood tests to detect gastrointestinal and other hard-to-detect cancers. And for health care providers to get on board with more modern practices, like the study that just found it's unnecessary for people to starve themselves on a liquid diet the day before a colonoscopy.

I just celebrated my five-year canceriversary, which is to say I've been cancer-free since I finished a course of chemotherapy in February 2019. People ask me how I'm feeling now, and when I answer, I make sure to throw in details like "I'm definitely going to be advocating for more public restroom access from now on!" and "My digestive system will never be the same, but I'm happy to be alive!"

Maybe this makes me a Debbie Downer, but I'm fine with risking that to call attention to the fact that colon cancer survivors are often dealing with a very different version of "healthy" than the world might prefer to think about.

Depending on the nature of her abdominal surgery, Kate might have been assigned a short-term or a permanent colostomy bag. If she was lucky enough not to, she's very likely dealing with all kinds of abdominal distress nonetheless. And although I cannot stress enough that she owes absolutely nothing to the public while she goes through treatment, my fervent hope is that once she's on the other side of it she'll become a powerful voice advocating for more ways of early testing and destigmatization.

Having cancer is not elegant. It is not sophisticated. I'm sure it's the kind of thing the royal family would rather never, ever think about. But it's landed squarely in their midst regardless, so this is Kate's chance to make a real difference in the health outcomes of countless people around the world. Here's to a speedy and minimally awful course of chemotherapy, Kate. If you ever want to swap caustic bathroom humor with a fellow survivor, you're always welcome to come sit next to me.

CNN

Realpolitik is how it works. The fate of the Uyghurs never stopped David Cameron and George Osborne begging for Chinese cash for power stations and railways; business was business. Today the world's relations with China are in one area crucial. That country is responsible for more than a quarter of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, and rising. Britain is now actively participating in China's proposed "greening" of its BRI programme, which is largely about infrastructure. Given that a third of all greenhouse gas emissions are from construction - a fact still ignored by British planning policy - this collaboration with China is central to fighting the climate crisis. It is not about diplomatic posturing. It is about something essential.

The reality is that all states spy on each other, mostly to no effect and at vast cost. Nothing justifies hacking other people's emails, but a helping of public outrage and a few Chinese diplomats sent packing should be enough to restore Westminster's machismo. It is also clear that international action is needed to police the darker regions of the digital universe, where the entire world is wandering without a candle.

But, for all these concerns, a sense of proportion remains the hardest but most necessary quality to maintain in international relations. We are told daily that global heating is the greatest threat now facing the world. Unless that applies only before lunch, then it should surely lie at the centre of all relations with China.

# Does China spy on Britain?

Simon Jenkins

**O**NCE upon a time Britain would have sent a gunboat up the Yangtze River. That would teach those Chinese a lesson. To hear some MPs talk about Beijing's espionage activities, you would think gunboats were already on their way.

Of course, it is malicious and hurtful for a foreign state patently to hack into Britain's Electoral Commission and target senior parliamentarians - as the government on Monday claimed China did in 2021. It is equally malicious to fabricate MPs' emails and use a Commons researcher as an informant. No less evil is the culture of fear sown among Britain's 150,000 Chinese students by agents of Beijing, albeit tolerated by British universities greedy for money.

How to react is another matter. Rishi Sunak was quick to the fray. "We've been very clear that the situation now is that China is behaving in an increasingly assertive way abroad, authoritarian at home, and it represents an epoch-defining challenge, and also the greatest state-based threat to our economic security," he said. "So, it's right that we take measures to protect ourselves, which is what we are doing." That was clear. It was also ridiculous. On Sunday night, an equally absurd BBC political bubble programme, the Westminster Hour on Radio 4, seemed to regard war as at hand. MPs demanded that the deputy prime minister, Oliver Dowden, "call out China", rather as though it had broken a Garrick Club rule. Beijing was "unacceptable". There should be "consequences". The

Yangtze gunboat was clearing its decks.

But ahead of that, Dowden was indeed having his say. There will be a reckoning, he promised MPs, more sanctions. Iain Duncan Smith, the former Tory leader, who is said to have been targeted alongside other parliamentarians in the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China, was also blunt. China is not just a challenge to us, he said. "It must be framed as a threat. "As they grow in power and potency, we are shrinking before them," he said.

Still, I doubt if this gets even a news-in-brief in the People's Daily. Britain's parliament cannot be a big deal in the hierarchy of Beijing security. The fulminations of Duncan Smith will hardly have had the People's Liberation Army straining at the leash. It is sound and fury, much like at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, when any British minister meeting a Chinese host was told always "to raise issues concerning Uyghur human rights". A Chinese acquaintance told me it became comical, "like the Brits saying grace or asking about the weather".

British diplomacy still exists in a mist of lost imperial power. China, meanwhile, is expanding its global influence exactly as the west once did. Its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) now extends across Asia, Africa and Europe. Its investments have advanced China's interests but also the lives of those it assists. BRI has, incidentally, been much to the gain of the City of London, in construction, banking, insurance and professional services.





# PSX loses 137 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Friday, losing 137.02 points, a negative change of 0.20 percent, closing at 67,005.11 points against 67,142.12 points the previous trading day.

A total of 313,035,305 shares valuing Rs.9,899 billion were traded during

the day as compared to 421,118,268 shares valuing Rs.16,159 billion the last day. Some 343 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 136 of them recorded gains and 188 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 19 remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were PIAC (A)

with 39,192,500 shares at Rs.31.54 per share, PTCL with 32,214,179 shares with Rs.18.27 per share and Cnergyico PK with 18,949,050 shares at Rs.4.42 per share.

Hoechst Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.70.00 per share price, closing at Rs.1,300.00, whereas the runner-up was Pakistan

Tobacco Company Limited with a Rs.42.95 rise in its per share price to Rs.1,122.95.

JDW Sugar Mills Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.15.50 per share closing at Rs.452.00, followed by Mahmood Textile Mills Limited with Rs.10.97 decline to close at Rs.383.03.

## Prudent policies lead to sustainable economic recovery: Finance Ministry

ISLAMABAD (APP): The country's economic and financial position continues to improve with each passing month of the current fiscal year, attributed to prudent policy management and the resumption of inflows from multilateral and bilateral partners, finance ministry said in a recent report.

According to monthly Economic Update and Outlook for March, Pakistan reached a Staff-Level Agreement in its final review successfully concluding the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) program and securing a disbursement of \$1.1 billion. The ongoing efforts in policy and reform are easing out pressures on the gross financing needs, which has been intensified by increased external and domestic financing demands and an uncertain external environment. These positive developments have led to a sustained economic recovery and an uplift in the country's overall economic confidence.

In real sector, agriculture outlook is promising, it says adding in Rabi season 2023-24, the wheat sowing has surpassed the target of 8,998 million hectare. The farm inputs also showcased an impressive growth in FY2024 with tractor production and sales up by 68.6 percent and 67.6 percent, respectively. Agriculture credit disbursement also rose by 34.7 percent to Rs 1,279.4 billion.

The Large Scale Manufacturing (LSM), observed a marginal decline of 0.5 percent during July-January FY2024, compared to a contraction of 2.7 percent last year. However, LSM output increased YoY by 1.84 percent in January 2024 when compared with January 2023. During July-January FY2024, 12 out of 22 sectors witnessed positive growth.

Headline inflation is on a downward trajectory; it dropped to 23.1 percent in February 2024 from 31.5 percent in February 2023. To reduce the inflationary impact, the federal government has provided the Ramadan Relief Package of Rs 12.5 billion, targeting low-income groups with food subsidies through various measures. On the fiscal front, the primary surplus increased to Rs 1939 billion during July-January FY2024 from Rs 945 billion

last year. The fiscal deficit during July-January FY2024, however increased to 2.6 percent of GDP as compared to 2.3 percent recorded last year.

The government is putting all its efforts to ensure prudent fiscal management through cautious expenditure and effective resource mobilization.

Current Account posted a deficit of \$1.0 billion for July-February FY2024 as against a deficit of \$ 3.9 billion last year, with largely reflecting an improvement in trade balance. In February 2024 current account posted a surplus of \$ 128 million as against a deficit of \$ 50 million same period last year.

Year-on-Year Exports increased by 16.2 percent to \$ 2.6 billion in February 2024 as compared to \$ 2.2 billion in February 2023 owing to ease in imports restriction and exchange rate stability which resulted in smooth supply of raw material for export-oriented industries.

The YoY imports also increased by 10.2 percent to \$4.3 billion in February 2024 as compared to \$3.9 billion same month last year. The Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) witnessed an inflow of \$ 131.2 million in February 2024 compared to an outflow of \$ 173 million in last month. Remittances also show an upward trend, it increased by 13.0 percent in February 2024 (\$ 2.2 billion) as compared to February 2023 (\$ 1.9 billion). SBP has maintained the policy rate at 22 percent on 18th March, 2024 – due to susceptible inflation outlook to risks amidst elevated inflation expectations. During 01st July–01st March, FY24 money supply (M2) registered growth of 3.8 percent (Rs 1192.1 billion) compared 1.14 percent growth (Rs 313.9 billion) in last year. To maintain the policy and reforms, efforts are vital to entrench economic and financial stability during last quarter of on-going fiscal year. Moreover, sustaining the pace of external inflows to meet upcoming gross financing needs and external sector stability is inevitable.

According to the report, sustainable economic recovery requires continuation of fiscal consolidation and prudent policy stance, timely and adequate financial inflows to meet gross financing needs and external sector stability.

## LCCI President advocates ‘soft inspections’ to address health & OTC concerns

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) on Friday urged the government to address concerns of the health and over-the-counter (OTC) sector regarding recent raids on manufacturing units in Punjab as it is also tarnishing the soft image of this sector.

LCCI President Kashif Anwar said that these raids were damaging the reputation of the health & OTC sector which resulted in a significant reduction in exports and losing a big share of export market to competing countries. He was speaking to a delegation of the health and OTC sector.

The delegation emphasized that while they acknowledge the importance of maintaining quality standards and regulation, the manner in which surprise raids were conducted has become distressing for workers and staff. They highlighted that the current approach often leads to humiliation and a sense of insecurity among the workforce. Moreover, the release of videos depicting

these inspections further add to negative sentiments prevailing in the market, impacting the sector's performance amidst an already challenging economic environment. The delegation proposed a more constructive approach, advocating for "soft inspections" that would allow for the identification of discrepancies or areas needing improvement without subjecting the workforce to undue stress. They emphasized the importance of collaborative efforts to address compliance issues, ensuring that regulations and standards are upheld while safeguarding the dignity and morale of the workforce.

LCCI President Kashif Anwar affirmed the chamber's commitment to advocating for a reasonable approach by the authorities. He emphasized the need to evaluate the impact of raids on the reputation and integrity of the health and OTC sector, stressing that it takes years to build a reputation that can be tarnished in mere moments.

## Rupee gains 09 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Friday gained 09 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs277.94 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.03.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs278 and Rs280.75 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by 44 paise to close at Rs299.55 against the last-day closing of Rs299.99, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs1.83, whereas an increase of 28 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs350.86 compared to the last closing of Rs350.58. The Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 03 paise and 02 paise to close at Rs 75.68 and Rs 74.11 respectively.

## Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Five ships namely, X-Press Mekong, Taxidiara, Kerala, Sky Runner and Al-Bidda and scheduled to load/offload Container, Cement, Furnace oil, Palm oil and LNG, berthed at Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal, Liquid Terminal, Elengy Terminal and Oil Terminal respectively on report period.

A total of eleven ships were engaged at POA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, Chemroad Rose and Belforest left the Port on today morning while three more ships, Sky Runner, Nimble Nicky and X-Press Mekong are expected to sail on today afternoon.

Cargo volume of 167,069 tonnes, comprising 120,863 tonnes imports cargo and 46,206 tonnes export cargo carried in 1,145 Containers (305 TEUs Imports and 840 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours. There are 5 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them edible oil carrier 'Yung Ding-19' & another ship, RDO Concord carrying Palm oil and Container are expected to take berths at LCT and QICT on Friday.

While four more container ships, APL Antwerp, X-Press Salween, Wide Alpha and Meratus Jayakarta are due to arrive at Port Qasim on Saturday.



KARACHI: Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb in a group photo during kickstarts business activity at the Pakistan Stock Exchange Gong Ceremony in Karachi as the Chief Guest, ringing the bell to symbolize the commencement of trading.

## Weekly inflation falls slightly

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed a decrease of 0.09 per cent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on March 28, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 323.20 points as compared to 323.50 points during the past week.

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

witnessed an increase of 29.41 per cent.

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

The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs. 17,732, decreased by 0.27 per cent and went down to 313.35 points from last week's 314.20 points.

The SPI for consumption groups from Rs. 17,732-22,888, Rs. 22,889-29,517; Rs. 29,518-44,175 and above Rs. 44,175, decreased by 0.22 percent, 0.17 percent, 0.12 and 0.03 percent respectively.

During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 04

(7.84%) items increased, 18 (35.30%) items decreased and 29 (56.86%) items remained stable.

The items, which recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included tomatoes (12.04%), wheat flour (3.80%), garlic (2.59%), LPG (2.42%), onions (1.74%), potatoes (1.07%), bananas (0.77%), pulse gram (0.57%) and sugar (0.49%).

The items that recorded an increase in their prices included LPG (1.49%), chicken (4.92%), eggs (1.61%), shirting (0.56%) and rice Irri 6/9 (0.15%).

On Year-on-Year basis, the commodities that wit-

nessed decrease included cooking oil 5 litre (20.50%), bananas (20.20%), vegetable ghee 2.5 kg (17.87%), vegetable ghee 1 kg (17.72%), mustard oil (14.02%), diesel (2.47%), wheat flour (0.27%) and cigarettes (0.06%). The commodities which recorded an increase in their average prices on year-on-year basis included gas charges for Q1 (570.00%), chillies powder (86.05%), onions (78.98%), gents sponge chappal (58.05%), gents sandal (53.37%), garlic (52.20%), gur (37.70%), chicken (37.57%), salt powder (33.29%), sugar (31.56%), energy saver (29.83%) and pulse mash (27.09%).

## PTC rebuts misleading tax loss figures, seeks fair market competition

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Tobacco Company (PTC) on Friday expressed concern about the recent misinformation spread across the media regarding loss to the national exchequer due to non-payment of taxes by legitimate tobacco companies.

PTC officials have expressed their concerns about the figures presented by an Islamabad-based think tank, showcasing a substantial revenue loss inflicted upon the national exchequer by legitimate tobacco companies around Rs 567 billion, said a news release.

It is important to note that this figure is incorrect, misleading and detached from ground realities. The only loss incurred to the Government of Pakistan by the tobacco industry is because of tax evasion of illicit manufacturers as the legitimate industry pays all applicable duties and taxes.

The misrepresented number is for accumulated loss over a decade, which has unfortunately been overlooked in much of the discourse following the report's release.

This oversight has led to misconceptions and potentially skewed perceptions of the legitimate tobacco industry's economic impact.

The nuanced context of these findings is crucial for informed public dialogue, as the portrayal of the data, without explicitly clarifying its decade-long spread, might contribute to a narrative that seems to align with the interests of certain entities advocating for the illicit tobacco sector.

Representatives from PTC questioned the legitimacy of such a report, which downplayed the impact of the illicit tobacco trade in the country.

They shared that the introduction of a 3-tier system in 2017 was the need of the hour for the government due to the fall in revenue collection, and this regime not only allowed revenues to increase and illicit market share to decrease but also paved the way for a level playing field and sustainability for the industry.

However, the illicit tobacco sector operates outside the stringent regulatory framework and yet, paradoxically, seems to evade the scrutiny and regulatory actions that are promptly applied to their legitimate law-abiding counterparts.

There is a growing concern within the relevant segment that this portrayal and the ensuing public narrative might be steering the government towards policy decisions

that inadvertently favour these non-compliant entities.

The report also cited the Senate Special Committee on the causes of the decline in Tax Collection of the Tobacco Sector, to highlight the issue of lower tax collection. Ironically, in the same minutes, the FBR claimed the illicit market share to be more than 36 per cent, which caused tax revenues to fall.

The representatives urged the law enforcement agencies to initiate a nationwide crackdown against illicit cigarette trade, causing the Government of Pakistan losses of Rs 300 billion annually rather than what the impact the report has claimed spread out over a decade and raised questions regarding the intentions behind publishing such a report.

Contrary to the report's impression and subsequent coverage, the legitimate tobacco industry has significantly contributed to the national exchequer, with substantial payments in the fiscal year, Rs 148 billion in 2021-22 and Rs 173 billion in 2022-23.

This financial input underscores the legitimate industry's commitment to fulfilling its budgetary responsibilities and adhering to the agreed-upon tax structures, which

were meticulously designed to ensure fair and substantial revenue generation for the country's development.

They said that it is paramount to acknowledge that the legitimate tobacco sector has consistently complied with every regulation imposed by the government, including implementing the Track and Trace System (TTS).

This compliance starkly contrasts with the illicit sector, which continues to defy these laws with apparent impunity.

This discrepancy in regulatory enforcement undermines the rule of law and places the legitimate industry at a competitive disadvantage, challenging the principles of fair trade and market competition.

The representatives highlighted that the Government of Pakistan recently recognized PTC as one of the country's top tax-paying entities that showcasing the company's strict adherence to the laws of the land and good corporate citizenship. It was emphasized that provision of a level playing field is crucial for the legitimate sector to ensure sustainability which is currently undermined by the unchecked operations of the illicit sector.



ISLAMABAD: Women purchasing jewelry during Eid shopping in preparation of upcoming Eid-ul-Fitar.

## ‘Need economic long march for country’s development, prosperity’

ISLAMABAD (INP): Vice President Pakistan Business Forum (PBF), Chaudhry Ahmad Jawad has said that the country needs an 'Economic Long March' to move on a consistent path of development and prosperity.

Speaking during his meeting with President Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Atif Ikram here on Friday, he said that the financial matters of the country could not be sustained on loans permanently and stressed the need to increase production capacity, suggesting imposing an export emergency in the country.

They two business leaders urged opposition parties to play a positive role in Parliament so that the country could move forward to achieve the goal of economic stability effectively. It's now and never.

Ahmed Jawad also suggested trade with neighbouring countries may be allowed in Pakistan rupee in order to save a foreign exchange. He said that it was high time the government may form a task force with representatives from the Commerce Ministry, the State Bank of Pakistan, and

the FPCCI to draw up a list of countries with which Pakistan could consider doing its trade in Pak rupee. The PBF official said that he thinks trade with Iran and China too should be also in Rupee, as we have a substantial import from China.

The forum has called for a 15 percent rebate on all active and upcoming export orders for the duration of one year. This strategic move is aimed at bolstering exports and enhancing the inflow of dollars from both exports and remittances, which could provide some relief to the rapidly depreciating Pakistani rupee. FPCCI President Atif Ikram told that a clear policy on the rupee is necessary to support traders and industries during this period of economic instability that has persisted since January 2023. He drew attention to the stark contrast between Pakistan's faltering export figures and Bangladesh's flourishing Ready-Made Garment (RMG) sector, which saw a significant 16 percent growth in exports, amounting to \$18.33 billion as opposed to Pakistan's \$15.86 billion in the previous year.

### Court Notice

IN the Court of Qaisar Khan Afridi Additional District Judge II/Azafi Zila Qazi Buner at Dagar.Appeal.No.64/13 Institution 21/6/2023. Date of hearing: 27/4/2024.Bakht Rasol etc VS Provincial Govt etc. Notice to no 7.Diyar Khan s/o Ghafar Khan.12/2.Zeshan Khan s/o Khanzada late resident of Krapa thesl Daggar district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not 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 am dated 27/4/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex- parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.





In brief

England claim victory

WELLINGTON (Agencies): England withstood a spirited performance from New Zealand to win the fifth T20 by five wickets and complete a 4-1 series victory. The visitors were easing towards their target of 137 with Nat Sciver-Brunst and Heather Knight's classy stand of 57. The White Ferns then fought back to dismiss both set batters in the 18th and 19th overs. But Sophia Dunkley held her nerve, hitting her second ball for four to win with seven balls to spare. Earlier, the hosts slipped to 31-4 and 69-5 after choosing to bat first, but Izzy Gaze's unbeaten 51 from 28 balls led a recovery to 136-6. Sciver-Brunst triggered the top order collapse in a hostile and disciplined opening spell with Lauren Filer, who went wicketless but troubled the inexperienced line-up with her pace and bounce. Opener Bernadine Beuzidenhout was caught behind off Sciver-Brunst in the first over, star all-rounder Amelia Kerr fell for five in the third before spinner Charlie Dean dismissed Suzie Bates for 11 to complete England's dominant powerplay. Sophie Ecclestone then ripped through the middle order with 3-30 but Gaze, 19, added 56 for the sixth wicket with Brooke Halliday and reached her maiden international half-century with a reverse-sweep for four from the final ball of the innings. The game was in the balance with England 65-3 at the halfway mark on a surface favouring the bowlers, but captain Knight's 35 and Sciver-Brunst's 31 broke the back of the chase and Dunkley calmly scored the five remaining runs following the skipper's dismissal. The white-ball series continues with three one-day internationals, starting on Sunday 31 March at the same venue.

Bayern striker Kane passed fit

MUNICH (Agencies): Bayern Munich striker Harry Kane has been passed fit to face Borussia Dortmund in the Bundesliga on Saturday, manager Thomas Tuchel has confirmed. Kane, 30, suffered an ankle injury in a 5-2 win against Darmstadt prior to the international break. He reported for duty with England but sat out the 1-0 loss against Brazil before returning to Germany to recover, missing the 2-2 draw with Belgium. "It's all fine, he'll play [against Dortmund]," Tuchel said. Kane joined Bayern from Tottenham in August for an initial 100m euros (£86.4m) and is the leading scorer in the German top flight with 31 goals in 26 games. England's all-time top scorer hit a hat-trick when Bayern won November's Der Klassiker 4-0 at Dortmund. Bayern goalkeeper Manuel Neuer is not ready to make his return, though, after tearing a thigh muscle during training with Germany last week. Neuer, 38, is expected back for the trip to Heidenheim on 6 April, which could put him in the frame to start against Arsenal in the first leg of their Champions League quarter-final at Emirates Stadium on 9 April. "Manuel Neuer is out. It's nothing to do with risk. The pain is simply too great. We hope a week is enough," Tuchel said. Bayern are 10 points behind Bundesliga leaders Bayer Leverkusen, with Dortmund 10 points further back in fourth. The label of 'Der Klassiker' is afforded to Bayern-Dortmund matches because of a decades-long rivalry at the top of the German game.

PCB meets to discuss national team captaincy amid reports of Babar Azam comeback

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): The chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) met the body's selection committee and other key officials to discuss the national team's captaincy, the PCB said on Friday, amid reports former all-format captain Babar Azam's name was under consideration for the position.

PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi chaired the meeting at the PCB headquarters in the eastern city of Lahore, according to the cricket board.

PCB Chief Operating Officer Salman Naseer, Selection Committee members Muhammad Yusuf, Wahab Riaz, Abdul Razaq and Bilal Afzal, and PCB International Cricket Director Usman Wahla attended the conference.

"The members of the

selection committee made recommendations to Chairman PCB Mohsin Naqvi about the captain of the national cricket team," the PCB said in a statement. "Coaches were also consulted at the meeting."

Local media has widely speculated this week that Babar could make a comeback as Pakistan captain in the upcoming five-match T20 series against New Zealand. The series is scheduled to be played in Rawalpindi on April 18, 20 and 21 and in Lahore on April 25 and 27.

The PCB, under former chief Zaka Ashraf, had appointed Shaheen Shah Afridi as Pakistan captain for the limited-over format after the national team's poor show at the 2023 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup in India. Shan Masood was

given the Test captaincy at the time.

In November last year, Babar announced he was stepping down as all-format captain following the team's failure to reach the World Cup semifinals with five defeats — including a seven-wicket mauling by India in front of more than 100,000 fans — and four wins. The team also lost to Afghanistan for the first time. Babar was particularly under fire for the poor show of a team that was ranked as the world's top ODI side before the tournament. This was the fifth time in the last six World Cups that Pakistan failed to reach the semifinals. Babar was appointed T20I and ODI captain in 2019 before eventually captaining the Test side since 2020.

Army, Wapda, Navy win opening matches of All Pakistan Ramadan Cup Basketball Tournament

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Army, Lycans A. Wapda and Navy registered big wins on the first day pool round matches in the Women's and Departmental categories of All Pakistan 3x3 Ramadan Cup Basketball Tournament here at outdoor basketball courts of Pakistan Sports Complex Islamabad organized by Federal Basketball Association (FBBAA).

According to organizing secretary of the tournament Ouj E Zahoor, large numbers of basketball teams are participating in the four-day event played under

floodlights with the support of the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB).

In Women's category Pakistan Army with a brilliant game defeated AK White by 16-3 points. Army's Aamina Mohsin scored 6 and Aiman Riaz scored four points. In the second match, Lycans A won by 11-2 points against Lycans Juniors with the help of Farha Naz's five points and Fariha Mushtaq's three points, while in the third match, Lycans B defeated AK Purple by 6-2 points.

In the departmental cate-

gory Wapda (A) beat Army (C) team by 19-16 points with the help of Zain ul Hassan who scored 15 points for the winning side. In second match Navy Beat Police (B) by 18-2 points in one sided match Navy's Zia ul Rehman scored 8 and Usman Khalid scored 6 points in the match while Wapda (C) won against Police by 21-13 points, thanks to Aalijah and Sajid Ali who scored 10, 10 points in the match. Wapda (A) thrashed Army (B) by 21-11 and Wapda (C) beat Police (A) by 21-13 points respectively.

No timescale for Murray's return after ankle injury

LONDON (AFP): Andy Murray has pulled out of events in Monte Carlo and Munich next month with no timeline set for the three-time Grand Slam champion's return to court after tearing ankle ligaments at the Miami Open.

Murray said earlier this year he did not plan to "play much past this summer" after slipping down the world rankings due to fitness problems and a struggle to recapture his best form.

A two-time Wimbledon champion, Murray was preparing for a farewell appearance at the All England Club and hopes to take part in

one more Olympic Games in Paris in July.

However, with just over three months until Wimbledon, Murray faces a race against time to be fit.

The Scot said he had suffered a full rupture of his anterior talofibular ligament and near full-thickness rupture of his calcaneofibular ligament in a third round defeat in Miami to Tomas Machac on Sunday.

"Following consultation with his team and medical experts, Andy Murray has taken the decision to miss the Rolex Monte Carlo Masters and BMW Open Munich," said a statement

from Murray's management team on Friday.

"At this stage, it is still not clear how long Andy will be out of action, and he is continuing to review options with his medical team.

"Obviously this is very disappointing news for Andy and he has reiterated his desire to get back on court as soon as possible."

The two-time Olympic champion also has little time to qualify for the Paris Games. Direct entry into the Olympic men's singles will be given to the top 56 players in the ATP rankings on June 10 with Murray currently 62 in the world.

Manchester's Old Trafford Stadium hosts Iftar dinner

MANCHESTER (Agencies): Lancashire Cricket Foundation on Thursday hosted an inter-faith Iftar dinner event here at the iconic Old Trafford Cricket Ground.

The representative of King Charles, the members of the British parliament and British army officials attended the event.

Notable social and political personalities from all faiths and communities, including the Lord Mayor of Manchester, the Leader of Manchester City Council, councillors, and Greater Manchester Police officers, joined together at the iftar to show solidarity with Muslims.

"It is a great event to be involved in where multiple communities come together in Manchester," said Mike Russell, the Chief Inspector of the Greater Manchester Police.

"I just like to thank you for inviting me this evening to this wonderful event. This was my first iftar and I thoroughly enjoyed it," said Lindsey M Forbes, the deputy commander of Army Headquarters North West.

The event attendees expressed that such events promote interfaith harmony and communal peace among citizens.

Alcaraz stunned by Dimitrov in Miami quarter-finals

MIAMI (Agencies): Carlos Alcaraz says he was made to feel like a "13-year-old" by Grigor Dimitrov after being beaten in the quarter-finals of the Miami Open.

Bulgarian Dimitrov won 6-2 6-4 to set up a last-four meeting with Germany's fourth seed Alexander Zverev. "He played amazing tennis, almost perfect," said top seed Alcaraz, 20.

He was aiming to become the first man to win the 'Sunshine Double' — back-to-back titles at Indian Wells and Miami — since Roger Federer in 2017.

But 11th seed Dimitrov upset the Spaniard and Alcaraz added: "I couldn't find solutions. I couldn't find a way to make him feel uncomfortable on the court. It was a great game from his side. "It was crazy. I was talking to my team, saying that I don't know what I have to do. I don't know his weakness. I don't know anything."

Dimitrov dominated the opening set, breaking Alcaraz's first service game before striking again at 5-2. The two-time Grand Slam champion fought back from 4-1 down in the second, but Dimitrov broke for a fourth time to wrap up a second successive win over the Spaniard in 92 minutes.

"To win against him, you



have to play at your best — that's just how it is," said Dimitrov, who also beat Alcaraz at October's Shanghai Masters.

"Sometimes simplicity is genius. It's very hard to do it, especially when you play against an opponent like that, but I was able to dictate the game, read the game a bit better than the last time." Dimitrov will return to the top 10 for the first time since 2018 if he beats Zverev to reach the Miami final.

Dominant Zverev sweeps aside Marozsan

Zverev reached the last four of the Miami Open for the first time since 2018 with a 6-3 7-5 victory over

Hungary's Fabian Marozsan. The Olympic champion used his serve to great effect, while taking four of the seven break points he created against the 57th-ranked Marozsan, who had already beaten top-10 players Holger Rune and Alex de Minaur on his way to the last eight.

"I'm happy to be back in these late stages of these tournaments, playing the best players in the world, I think there are only those left," said Zverev, 26.

"I'm looking forward to the challenge."

Italian second seed Jannik Sinner and Russian third seed Daniil Medvedev had already booked their

places in the last four on Wednesday, setting up a rematch of their recent Australian Open final.

Zverev was beaten by Medvedev in the Melbourne last four as he still looks to claim a maiden Grand Slam title.

Despite not yet being able to land one of the sport's biggest prizes, he has continued to demonstrate why he is one of the ATP Tour's leading players and reached a 17th Masters 1,000 semi-final by sweeping aside Marozsan.

Novak Djokovic, Rafael Nadal and Andy Murray are the only active players to have played in more Masters semi-finals than Zverev.

Pakistan to tour Ireland for three T20Is in May

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): The PCB has announced May 10, 12 and 14 for Pakistan's three-match T20I tour of Ireland, with the matches slotted for Castle Avenue in Dublin.

The series forms part of a 12-match run-in Pakistan have ahead of the T20 World Cup in the USA and the West Indies in June. Before Pakistan leave for Ireland, New Zealand will arrive in Pakistan in April to play five T20Is, with the first of those matches on April 18. The final game takes place on April 27. That is followed by a tour of England, where Pakistan play four T20Is starting May 22.

The last time Pakistan were in action was also in a T20I series, against New Zealand, who hosted them for five matches in January.

Pakistan last visited Ireland for Ireland's inaugural Test match in 2018. That was also the last time that the two teams had met across formats. And though Pakistan were scheduled to play Ireland in two T20Is in Dublin in July 2020, they were postponed because of the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Ireland, meanwhile, will be going into the T20Is against Pakistan on the back of ODI and T20I series defeats against Afghanistan in the UAE earlier this month, though they did secure a historic first Test win in Abu Dhabi to kick off that tour. Pakistan were also scheduled to play another three T20Is against Netherlands in May, but that series was postponed indefinitely last November at the PCB's request. Netherlands' cricket board Koninklijke Nederlandse Cricket Board's high-performance manager Roland Lefebvre had, at the time, confirmed to ESPNcricinfo that the tour had been put off because the PCB had cited scheduling clashes and concerns about player workload. The PCB had then said that they were actively looking to find another window.

IMARAT lights up Ramadan with Night Golf Tournament at Bahria Golf Club



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Over 150 golfers including distinguished diplomats, enthusiastic ladies, seasoned amateurs, respected senior amateurs, and invited guests gathered to partake in the IMARAT Group's first Ramadan Night Golf Tournament of 2024. The event, held at the Bahria Golf Club, Rawalpindi.

Amid the backdrop of the Bahria Golf Course's 9th hole, where Golf Floras is under construction, golfers competed across two halves, with a break for Iftar Dinner and prayers. This inaugural night golf event of 2024 drew an enthusiastic response, with the community embracing the concept wholeheartedly.

Group Director IMARAT, Mr. Farhan Javed, spoke highly of the event's festive atmosphere, "The Ramadan Night Golf Tournament is not just an event; it's a precursor to the community lifestyle that Golf Floras will epitomize. We extend our warmest con-

gratulations to the winners and express gratitude towards all participants for making this a landmark event"

Brigadier Saeed Zafar (Retd), Secretary of Bahria Golf Club, commended the tournament and the continued partnership with IMARAT Group. "We're incredibly thankful to IMARAT Group for their generous sponsorship which made this event a resounding success. The excitement around the competition has been extraordinary, and we intend to keep the momentum going throughout the summer, culminating with the Chairmen Bahria Town Golf Tournament at the end of August 2024."

Mr. Sharjeel A Ehmer, Group Director IMARAT, also emphasized

IMARAT's dedication to community-building, "Golf Floras represents our commitment to crafting spaces that foster community ties and celebrate the essence of togetherness. We are honored to witness such a

magnificent turnout at this event, which reflects the strong community values that are the cornerstone of all IMARAT projects."

The tournament awarded 24 prizes and a special trophy, commending the high-spirited competition among the following winners:

Ladies Category: Net Winner: Ms. Fatima Azhar, Gross Winner: Aml Qin, Senior Amateur's Category: Net Winner: Touseef Ahmed, Gross Winner: Brig Masood Amateur's Category: Net Winner: Hamza Baig, Gross Winner: Raja M. Israr, Invities Category: Net Winner: Akram Chaudhary, Gross Winner: Qaiser Sajjad, Special Prizes: Hole In One: Nor Azuan Aiyub from Malaysia, Club Championship Trophy: Umair Saleem.

The tournament was a vibrant reminder of the ties that bind the community during the sacred month of Ramadan, and the role that sports and communal activities play in strengthening those bonds.

Bristol City defeat piles pressure on Leicester



LONDON (Agencies): Anis Mehmeti's second-half stunner piled more misery on Championship title-chasers

Leicester City as they lost 1-0 to Bristol City. Ex-England striker Jamie Vardy wasted two huge chances

for the visitors as they missed their opportunity to move back to the top of the table.

The home side had two strong

penalty shouts waved away in the first half as the teams went in goalless at the break.

But Mehmeti's first home goal this year, rifled past Leicester goalkeeper Mads Hermansen, was enough to give the home side all three points.

Leicester, who have now lost four of their past six league games, remain level with table toppers Leeds and one point ahead of Ipswich, with both teams playing later.

Much of the build-up to the game had focused on the away side's Premier League and EFL charges, as well as the announcement they would take legal action against the leagues.

The Robins dominated the first half and forced a double save from Hermansen, through the lively Tommy Conway and then Scott Twine's rebound.

Hamza Choudhury then hauled Rob Dickie to the ground in the box with his eyes focused

on the player before Wout Faes appeared to tug the shorts of Conway right on the edge of the area but referee Andrew Kitchen waved both shouts away.

Faes almost riled the home fans further as he headed wide from a Harry Winks free-kick for the visitors, before Vardy grazed the post with the Foxes hitting the home side on the break.

Vardy will wonder how he didn't add to his 13 Championship goals in the second half when he was twice put clean through on goal.

Bristol City keeper Max O'Leary made himself big to save with his foot to deny the Leicester captain, before turning Stepho Mavididi's rebound behind.

The second chance was even clearer, as Zak Vyrer gifted the ball to Vardy in the area — but his split-second delay allowed O'Leary to get across and make a fantastic save to deny the striker

again.

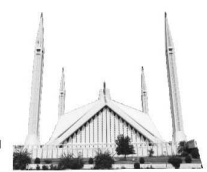
You could sense a goal was coming as Vardy stretched but couldn't connect with a header and Abdul Fatawu's curling effort went just wide.

But it was the hosts who would make the breakthrough with Mehmeti lashing his left-foot effort from the edge of the box past Choudhury and beyond Hermansen to give the home side the lead.

Substitute Mark Sykes almost immediately doubled the lead for the Robins, shooting low at goal but Hermansen just diverted it behind for a corner.

The Foxes almost drew level through former Manchester City striker Kelechi Iheanacho, brought on for Vardy, as he dinked beautifully over the out-rushing O'Leary into the net, but the assistant referee raised his flag and the home side kept the clean sheet to claim a massive win in front of their fans.





## In brief

### IRSA releases 92,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 92,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 74,300 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1416.13 feet and was 18.13 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 19,500 cusecs and 35,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1066.40 feet, which was 16.40 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 25,000 cusecs and 28,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 42,800, 36,800, 28,000 and 6,200 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 16,800 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 6,600 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### Latif Kapadia rememberd

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 22nd death anniversary of legendary stage and television actor Latif Kapadia was observed on Friday. He was born on March 27, 1934. Latif Kapadia began his career as a stage actor and later stated working in Pakistan Television dramas. His TV plays that earned him fame were Qissa Sotay Jagtay Ka, Ek Din Ka Sultan, Baarish, Fifty Fifty, Nadan Nadia, and Shikast-e-Arzo. Latif Kapadia also performed in numerous films. He received the Pride of Performance award from the government of Pakistan in 2001.

### Police bust street criminal gang

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have busted a street criminal gang by arresting two of its active members allegedly involved in street and other crimes and recovered cash and valuables from their possession. According to a police spokesman, Sadiqabad police held two street criminals namely Yasir and Abdullah and recovered cash Rs 18,000, two mobile phones, a stolen motorcycles, weapon and other items from their possession. A case has been registered against the accused while further investigation is under process, he said adding that the accused are being shifted to jail for identification parade. Superintendent of Police, Rawal directed the police to make efforts to net other members of the gang.

### NHA restores road link between KP, Balochistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Highway Authority on Friday successfully restored the vital road link between the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Following persistent and dedicated efforts by NHA's skilled construction experts, the road connection on the Dhanasar-Zhob section of N-50 has been fully restored, said a press release issued here. Severe weather conditions, including heavy rains and subsequent landslides, had previously led to the suspension of traffic on this crucial route, necessitating diversions to alternate roads. Under the guidance of Chairman NHA Arshad Majed Mohmand, the NHA staff deployed in the region worked tirelessly, around the clock, utilizing heavy machinery to effectively reopen the damaged road segments. The relentless efforts of NHA General Manager, Agha Inayat, Deputy Director Agha Baseer, and their team were instrumental in achieving this feat through sheer hard work and commitment.



RAWALPINDI: Pakistani Catholic Christians attend the prayer at Cathedral Church to mark 'Good Friday' event.

## Pakistan, Azerbaijan to enhance cooperation in IT and Telecom sector

ISLAMABAD (INP): Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima, and Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, Khazar Farhadov, held discussions on Friday regarding matters of mutual interest and collaboration in the IT and Telecommunication sector.

The Ambassador of Azerbaijan congratulated Minister of State for IT, Shaza Fatima, for assuming her office, said a news release. Both sides agreed to strengthen cooperation in the IT and telecom sector.

Shaza Fatima highlighted the brotherly relations between Pakistan and

Azerbaijan, emphasizing Pakistan's high regard for its ties with Azerbaijan. She expressed Pakistan's desire to establish substantial relations between the two countries in the field of IT and Telecom.

Minister of State for IT, Shaza Fatima, articulated Pakistan's aspiration to initiate a youth exchange program with Azerbaijan.

She emphasized that the exchange of start-ups between the two countries would enhance relations. She underscored the importance of starting a joint IT training program for the youth of both nations.

Shaza Fatima also highlighted Pakistan's conducive atmosphere for foreign direct investment, particularly in the IT and Telecom sector. She stressed the immense potential within Pakistan's IT and telecom sector and assured full cooperation with Azerbaijan in this field. Ambassador Khazar Farhadov acknowledged Pakistan's progress in the IT and Telecom sector, expressing Azerbaijan's desire to further enhance ties with Pakistan in the field of Information and Technology (ICT).

### ICCI, CDA sign MoU for upgrading, maintaining public washrooms

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) and the Capital Development Authority (CDA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Friday for the upgrade and maintenance of public washrooms located in various markets across the capital city. The agreement was signed by President ICCI Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari and Mashooq Ali Shah, Director of Sanitation CDA, said a press release issued here.

Under the agreement, ICCI will be responsible for overseeing the newly constructed washrooms in various markets throughout the capital city. Their duties will include ensuring the operational functionality, management, maintenance, and upkeep of hygienic standards to facilitate visitors to these markets.

Speaking on the occasion, the President of ICCI stated that a nominal fee would be charged for the use of these facilities, and the revenue generated would be allocated towards the upgrading and maintenance of the washrooms.

Additionally, ICCI will ensure the deployment of janitorial staff, attired in appropriate uniforms, at each facility. He emphasized ICCI's commitment to facilitating Islamabad's evolution into a model city and pledged to utilize all resources towards achieving this goal. Additionally, he unveiled plans to install water filtration plants at multiple locations to guarantee access to clean and potable water.

### Arts Council board meeting held

RAWALPINDI (APP): The meeting of the Board of Management (BoM) of Punjab's Council of Arts Rawalpindi was held today at Council's hall.

Chaired by President BoM Saqib Rafique, the meeting discussed various issues of Rawalpindi Arts Council. Members of the Board of Management also participated in the meeting.

The meeting also presented tribute to Batin Farooqi the city's well-known artist for receiving the Pride of Performance Award.

## Federal, provincial govts on same page to address Balochistan issues: Bugti

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Bugti, Friday said that both the federal and Balochistan provincial governments are on the same page to address issues of the province.

Addressing a press conference along with leaders of allied political parties in Islamabad, he said that the state is using the relevant tools to prevent threats and causes of insurgency in Balochistan.

He said that the leadership of Balochistan was united for resolving the issues of province. He said the Balochistan government was making efforts to promote the good governance as the beneficiary of such governance was common people of the province, who is main victim of bad governance.

He mentioned that all parties were actively involved in providing relief to the common men of the province. He said that for the first time in history, Senators have been elected from the province unopposed. In response to a question, he stated that violence cannot guarantee the provision of rights to Balochistan as all the

rights granted to Balochistan to date have been conferred by the country's parliament. He expressed gratitude to the Pakistan People's Party, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Awami National Party, and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz for giving him the opportunity to serve the people of Balochistan as Chief Minister.

Paying tribute to the security forces for foiling terrorist attacks in Gwadar and Turbat, the Chief Minister said the vigilant jawans thwarted the terrorist attack in Gwadar by killing the suicide bombers within a period of only twenty minutes.

In response to another question, he mentioned that over 2,000 teachers are drawing salaries without working, and doctors are also receiving salaries without providing services to the government or the people. He expressed resolve to check such malpractices.

Regarding smuggling, he stated that while the government discourages it, a lenient approach has been taken due to the lack of job opportunities. However, the government does not condone smuggling.

## IGP inspects under-construction safe city building

RAWALPINDI (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar on Friday visited Rawalpindi city and inspected the under-construction Safe City Project building and Liaquat Bagh Service Center.

Regional Police Officer (RPO) Rawalpindi Babar Sarfraz Alpa, Senior Superintendent of Police, Operations Rawalpindi and other officers were also present on this occasion.

RPO Rawalpindi gave a briefing to IGP Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar on the ongoing projects. The IGP directed the authorities that no compromise should be made on quality of construction work and development projects should also be completed within stipulated time frame.

The IGP said that all-out efforts should be made to ensure speedy justice and improve police service delivery. All available resources were being uti-

lized to provide modern facilities and clean environment to the citizens, said Dr. Usman Anwar.

He said that the upgradation of the police stations and police offices with provision of latest resources and best working environment would improve the public service delivery.

According to a police spokesman, as many as 1886 cameras under Rawalpindi Safe City Project would be installed at 306 locations to make Rawalpindi a safe city.

A Punjab Police Integrated Command, Control, and Communication Centre in Rawalpindi had been set up and the security arrangements of the city were being monitored through cameras on the digital wall.

He said, the Punjab government was committed to improve facilities in Rawalpindi and several other projects were underway.

### DC reviews meeting

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Commissioner Irfan Nawaz Memon on Friday reviewed the meeting and directed the concerned to take action against token tax violations, fancy number plates and tinted glass vehicles.

According to ICT spokesman, Dr Abdullah Tabbassum, Directors of Excise and Taxation Department, Additional Deputy Commissioner General, Assistant Commissioners, Magistrates and other stakeholders attended the meeting. During the meeting, the DC directed the magistrates and Excise & Taxation officers to launch a crackdown against tinted glasses and fancy number plates. He urged the citizens of the federal capital to remove tinted glasses and fancy number plates from their vehicles and use only approved number plates issued by the Excise and Taxation Department to avoid any action. It is pertinent to mention here that the joint operation of the Excise and Taxation Department and the Islamabad Transport Authority, is being conducted on a daily basis.

## IESCO notifies 2-day power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Friday notified 2-day power suspension programme for Saturday and Sunday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period on Saturday From 07:00 AM to 12:00 Noon, Islamabad Circle, Shikar Padian, Karpur, F-8/2, G-9/1, I-8/3, H-8, New Exchange, PHA-II, Shah Allah Dutta, NIH, Pindi Point, Beirut, Balawara, Mangyal, Athal, Shahpur, Treat, T&T, Bhara Kahu-I & II, NIH Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Ghousia Colony, Iqbal Road-II, Zeeshan Colony, P&T Wani, Chakra, Rata, Pandhoo, Masrial Road, Nest Road, APHS, Sadiqabad, Fourth Road, Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Bank Road-I,

Jehangir Road, Kot Jabi, NPF-I, Model Town, Jhanda, Major Riaz, Shahpur, Dhamial, Chontra, Hamid Jhang, New Kallam, Sukhu, Nishan Haider, Mahuta, Askari-7, Sir Syed Road, FFC, Khadam Hussain Road, Adamji Road, Feeders, Attock Circle, Sangjani, Pind Pran, Dharek, Nawababad, Mushtaq Hussain, Purmiana, Islampur, Fowara Chowk, Akhuri, Haji Shah, Pindi Gheep City, Azim Shaheed, Murt, Pari, Dharnal, Gagan, Chub Feeders, Jhelum Circle, F-7 Kachheri, F-13 Garmala, Kriyala, Fatehpur, F-6 Mohalla, Pakhwal, Hamlet, Madu Kalas, Sohan, New Domeli, Khai Kholian, Mumtaz Shaheed, Hayat Sir Road, Sohawa Kachhari, Baba Shaheed, Thakra, Kangar Thati, Gujjar Khan, Main Bazar, Chhapar Sharif, Thakra, Dora Bhadyal, KTM, RTM, Qazia, Chhapran, Shukrila, Mandi

Bhalwal, Abbaspur Feeder, Chakwal Circle, Karijala, Ara Bazar, Jamalwal, Kaler Kahar, Main Bazar, Aadi, Dhadyal Express, Sehiglaabad, Chakral, Dandut, Duffer, Dalwal, Ahmedabad, Kachhari, Sagarpur, Kot Gullah, Kot Shera, Pachand, Dharabi, Akwal, Bilalabad, Darut, Mail, Vanhar, Adi, Daulatala Feeders, GSO Circle, 09:00 AM: 00 AM to 02:00 AM, Datot, Jandroot, Mohara, Kerala, Dhadyal City. 1, Rata, Khadmadad Feeders

On Sunday From 07:00 AM To 12:00 Noon, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Dhok Awan, IST, Zaraj, I & II, Mohra Nagyal, New Rawat Feeders, Attock Circle, Chub Feeder, GSO Circle, From 08:00 AM to 01:00 PM, Khoi Ratta Express, Chirohi Dungi, Dana Bhal, Sri, Chirohi Express, Bharat Gala, Durbar Mai Totti, Khoi Rata, Dhadyal City 2, SECI, Khattar Express, Ona Town Feeders and surrounding areas.

## Collective efforts urged to stop drug abuse in educational institutions

RAWALPINDI (APP): A high level meeting held here discussed the spread of drugs and anti-drug measures particularly in educational institutions and stressed the need for a collective campaign in educational institutions.

The meeting was held at the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Headquarters Rawalpindi which was presided over by the Secretary of the Ministry of Narcotics Control. Senior officials of the ANF Headquarters, Ministry of Narcotics Control and others attended the meeting. High level officials of Higher Education Commission, Ministry of Education and several educational institutions were also present in the meeting. Vice Chancellor of Dow University of Health Sciences

Karachi also participated in the meeting. The implementation of the approved HEC policy 2021 on drug and tobacco use was also taken into consideration.

Director General, ANF on the occasion gave assurance of all possible support and assistance to the educational institutions for the successful conduct of the campaign. Secretary, Ministry of Narcotics Control stressed the need for collective efforts to achieve the target.

According to ANF spokesman, the purpose of the meeting was to review the spread of drugs in educational institutions and the measures taken by the administration to deal with this problem. A comprehensive briefing was given to the participants by ANF and HEC on the agenda.



ISLAMABAD: Labourers working on Chak Shahzad Road expansion in the Federal Capital.



Charity foundation provides food

HELMAND (TOLOnews): The Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation (MBRF) of the United Arab Emirates is providing food aid to 500 needy individuals in Helmand province. Sayed Ahmad Selab, a representative of the foundation, said that this aid will also be distributed to the needy in four other provinces of the country. Selab said: "The humanitarian aid of the (MBRF) started in Helmand, helping 500 families with nine types of food items, including flour, oil, black tea, green tea, beans, chickpeas, rice, and salt."

IEA condemns Israel

KABUL (ARINA News): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) strongly condemned on Thursday Israel's decision to seize 800 hectares of land in the occupied West Bank's Jordan Valley region. Foreign Ministry said that the recent actions by "the Zionist regime demonstrate that it does not adhere to international laws, especially international humanitarian law." "Continuation of such unilateral actions and ignoring the rights of Palestinian people will further deteriorate the situation," the statement said.

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

# Afghanistan and Pakistan reach trade and transit agreements



KABUL (Khaama Press): After two days of discussions, the officials from the Taliban's Ministry of Commerce and the Pakistani delegation agreed on trade and transit. Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesman for the Taliban, unexpectedly announced on Thursday, March 28th, that bilateral talks between the caretaker government delegation led by Nooruddin Azizi, the acting Minister of Industry and Commerce, and the Pakistani delegation led by

Muhammad Khurram Agha, the deputy minister of commerce of that country, had taken place. According to the statement, in bilateral negotiations with Pakistan, emphasis was placed on separating politics from trade and on trade and transit relations without obstacles for the benefit of the people of both countries. The spokesman for the Taliban government added that both sides discussed the APTA agreement in the negotiations and decided

that this agreement should be finalized within the next two months. The agreement with Pakistan would provide facilities for transferring goods from international containers to local containers in the ports of Karachi within a maximum of six months. The statement stated that the two sides agreed that both parties would receive preferential treatment for 10 items of exported goods, including 8 agricultural products and 2 industrial goods.

According to Mujahid, an agreement was reached on a temporary entry document for the free movement of trucks for one year between both sides, which will be implemented from the beginning of May of the current year. Both sides have also agreed on the transit of goods through the airports of both countries in the next two months. Pakistan has also agreed to lift the obligation of bank guarantee within one week and to confine itself to insurance as in the past. According to the statement, Pakistan has also committed to taking necessary actions to remove other obstacles upon the advice of the Afghan side. The statement also mentioned that both sides have refrained from barter trade and agreed to establish and develop banking relations between the two countries. After two days of negotiations, the Pakistani side has expressed readiness to purchase Afghan coal at the global rate. A delegation led by the acting Minister of Commerce of Pakistan arrived in Kabul a few days ago at the invitation of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce of the Taliban.

# Norwegian Charge d'affaires emphasizes reopening girls' schools in Afghanistan

Mehdi Rezaei

The Norwegian representative in Kabul emphasized the reopening of girls' schools in the new academic year during meetings with Taliban officials and the head of UNAMA. Paul Klouman Bekken, Norway's Chargé d'affaires to Afghanistan, tweeted on his "X" account on Thursday, March 28th, about meetings with Mawlawi Kabir, the political deputy of the Taliban regime, Hamid Karzai, the former president of Afghanistan, and Roza Otunbayeva, the head of UNAMA. He added that with the start of the New Year, girls must return to schools and universities. Meanwhile, Karen Decker, the US embassy official for Afghanistan in Doha, stated that another Nowruz has passed in Afghanistan. However, there is still no sign of reopening girls' schools in Afghanistan. He made these remarks on Wednesday, March 27th, in a meeting, adding, "Afghanistan is experiencing its third year under the Taliban government, but



schools have so far remained closed to girls beyond the sixth grade." The US embassy official for Afghanistan continued to emphasize that "Afghanistan, for the third consecutive year, is the only country in the world where girls beyond the sixth grade cannot pursue modern education." The 1403 academic year began in Afghanistan (March 2024) under the Taliban rule about nine

days ago, but this year, like the past two years, only boys have been allowed to attend classes, and girls are still awaiting the reopening of schools beyond the sixth grade. Mahdia, one of the girls who completed the sixth-grade last year and is now unable to attend her classes, urged the Taliban officials to allow girls to return to their classes at the beginning of this academic year. Speaking to

Khaama Press, she said, "I completed the sixth-grade last year, but I am prepared for the new year. I hope I can return to my class again." The Ministry of Education of the Taliban reiterated the importance of girls' adherence to the hijab at the beginning of the new academic year but did not make any indication of reopening school gates for girls in middle and high school.

# Dubai ruler awards humanitarian medals to Afghan businessman and 3 others

KABUL (Khaama Press): Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai, bestowed the Order of Humanitarianism on Mirwais Azizi, an Afghan businessman, and three other merchants. The Dubai government named the other three recipients of this honour as Abdul Rahim Zraoni, Nershi Bahwani, and Poutan

Manoun. According to a press release issued by the Dubai government media office on Friday, March 29th, circulated on the social media platform X, these medals are awarded to recognize the philanthropic contributions of these merchants and their involvement in charitable campaigns. Mirwais Azizi, an Afghan businessman who

also owns Azizi Bank, expressed gratitude to the ruler of Dubai on his social media platform X and pledged commitment to cooperate in humanitarian efforts in Dubai once again. Azizi Bank, established in 2006, emerged as one of Afghanistan's prominent financial institutions, offering various banking services to individuals and

businesses nationwide. With a focus on fostering economic development, the bank played a pivotal role in facilitating access to financial resources, promoting entrepreneurship, and supporting infrastructure projects vital for the country's growth. Moreover, Azizi Bank contributed to the modernization of Afghanistan's banking sector by introducing innovative products and services, including mobile banking, internet banking, and ATM networks, enhancing convenience and accessibility for customers across urban and rural areas. However, Allegations have emerged against Azizi Bank in Afghanistan, casting doubt on its operations and management. Accusations of financial mismanagement, corruption, and failure to meet regulatory standards have been made. Critics highlight irregular lending, poor risk management, and internal improprieties within the bank.



# Narcotics production shifting from neighbor countries to Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Ministry of Interior stated that the production and processing of narcotics has shifted from neighboring and regional countries to Afghanistan. According to Abdul Matin Qane, the spokesperson for the ministry, drugs are clandestinely produced in parts of the country by certain groups; however, efforts to combat them are ongoing. "We have some cases where (production areas) have become established, but they were transferred in their entirety from regional countries, especially from the same countries you men-

tioned; however, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is very serious and is conducting its own investigations in this sector. We take any new discovery in the production of drugs very seriously and do not allow it," said the spokesperson of the Ministry of Interior. Abdul Matin Qane added that regional countries and international organizations have not paid special attention to the narcotics sector after the return of the Islamic Emirate and have not cooperated with the caretaker government in combating this phenomenon. "In all our meetings

with the United Nations, UNAMA, the European Union, and other countries, we have called for cooperation; unfortunately, practical cooperation in this regard has not taken place, and we have not witnessed it," he said. The Islamic Emirate has banned the cultivation, production, and trafficking of all types of narcotics in the country. However, some farmers who previously cultivated poppies criticize the lack of assistance to plant alternative crops and are called for assistance. "They told us not to cultivate poppies and the government will provide you

with the chemical fertilizer or wheat," Abdul Salam, a farmer, told TOLOnews. "We did not cultivate poppies, and they did not help us, we should be helped," said Purdel, another farmer. Previously, Russia and Iran expressed concern over the increase in industrial drug production from Afghanistan and stated they have not recorded any change in the reduction of drug trafficking and production from Afghanistan; however, the United Nations has repeatedly reported significant reductions in narcotics in Afghanistan in its reports.



# Contract signed for final phase of Khaf-Herat railway project

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Office of the Economic Deputy of the Prime Minister announced the signing of a contract to construct the second phase of the fourth section of the Khaf-Herat railway line between the railway administration and Gamma Group. This office stated in a newsletter on Thursday that the second phase of

the fourth section of the Khaf-Herat railway line is 47 kilometres long, costing \$53 million. The newsletter mentioned that this project is expected to take approximately two more years to be completed and operationalized. According to the information provided in the newsletter, this is the final segment of the Khaf-

Herat railway project, which starts from Rabate-Paryan and reaches the Herat International Airport and the industrial park of this province. The statement added that with the completion of this phase, the project will connect Afghanistan to important Iranian seaports and reach Europe via the Turkish railway network. It also stated

that this project, traversing Afghan territory, will pave the way for increased transit of commercial goods between Central and South Asia. The statement further noted that the reconstruction of this project will facilitate the extension of the railway network to the provinces of Farah, Nimroz, Helmand, and Kandahar.



# Bead-making craft flourishing in Herat

KABUL (TOLOnews): Bead-making is an ancient industry of Herat that has recently seen a resurgence of interest. A bead-making workshop in Herat makes various types of precious beads and exports the products to Islamic countries including Saudi Arabia. Seven young residents of Herat in this workshop make beads from the wood of pomegranate trees, pistachio trees, olive trees and others. "The beads we make here range from 150 Afghani in price, and the reason for the latter price I mentioned is that we use gold and silver in their making, which is why they are priced so high," said Abdul Wahid Arab, the head of the bead-making workshop. According to these young people, expensive beads are produced for export and cheap beads are made for domestic use. "I want friends who invest to come and create

such arts in Afghanistan so that the youth can be engaged in work," Fareed Ahmad, an employee, told TOLOnews. "I am an apprentice in the section that makes beads from date palm wood, and I am satisfied with the work I do here,"

said Mohammad Ayub, another employee. Local authorities in Herat said they support handicrafts including bead making as it provides permanent job opportunities for the youth in the country. "We have handicrafts at

the level of Herat province, and we are facilitating this; we have now created the house of arts specifically for this purpose," said Ahmadullah Muttaqi, the head of Information and Culture in Herat. Muslims use beads for remembrance in their worship.





# Senate polls: PHC orders PTI leaders to submit reply

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Syed Arshad Ali ordered Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders and Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) candidates for Senate of Pakistan scheduled for submission of reply in plea against acceptance of their nomination papers for the elections till 1st April, on Friday.

Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) candidate for Senate of Pakistan Taj Muhammad Afridi challenged Election Tribunal decision regarding acceptance of PTI leaders including Murad Saeed, Azam Swati, Azhar Mashwani, Faisal Javeed, Khurran Sher Zaman and Faisal Javeed nomination forms for Senate Elections.

Barrister Saqib Raza argued that Election Tribunal had accepted nomination forms of SIC candidates and PTI leaders including Murad Saeed, Azam Swati, Azhar Mashwani, Faisal Javeed, Khurran Sher Zaman despite they are nominated in several cases for commencement of different offenses across Pakistan. He argued that Murad Saeed is still absconder from courts of law of the Pakistan.

SIC candidates and PTI leaders had concealed several facts in the nomination papers for Senate of Pakistan election scheduled in April 2024, the counsel argued. Barrister Saqib Raza argued to turndown Election Tribunal decision and

contended for disqualification of PTI leaders.

PHC's divisional bench comprising of Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Syed Arshad Ali ordered Murad Saeed, Azam Swati, Khurran Sher Zaman, Faisal Javeed and Azhar Mashwani for submission of reply till 1st April after initial arguments in this regard.

Meanwhile, PHC granted another transit bail in four other cases to PTI vice chairman Shah Mahmood's son Zain Qureshi while Chief Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan observed that we will recover you {Shah Mahmood's son Zain} if Punjab police arrest him after bail granted by the High Court.

Chief Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan inquired from Zain Qureshi counsel during his appearance before court that you {Shah Mahmood's son} already approached PHC for bail. The petitioner {Zain Qureshi} is booked in four other cases and added that there is fear Shah Mahmood's son arrest on his appearance before concerned courts without bail, the lawyer answered.

In the meantime, Chief Justice observed that we (PHC) will recover you {Zain Qureshi} if Punjab police arrest him in a case in which PHC had granted the bail and provided transit bail in other four cases. It is worthy to mention that earlier PHC had granted transit bail to Zain Qureshi (PTI vice chairman Shah Mahmood's son) in more than 20 cases.

## 59 candidates to contest for remaining Senate seats

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: As many as 59 candidates were in run to contest for the remaining Senate seats after completion of the phase of withdrawal and opposed elections of many candidates.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) said that all the candidates for general, technocrats, and women seats have been elected as Senators unopposed from Balochistan. While seven candidates returned uncontested for general seats from Punjab. The ECP maintained that 20 aspirants are in the run from Sindh, four from Islamabad, nine from Punjab, and 26 from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

For one general seat of Islamabad, two candidates would face each other while as many candidates are in the run for one technocrat seat from the capital.

In Punjab, there are four candidates for women's two seats and three candidates for technocrat and scholar seats of the province. Whereas two candidates were contesting for the minority seat from Punjab.

In the Senate elections from Sindh, 11 candidates are contesting for general seats, three for women and four for technocrat seats. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, there are 16 candidates for the general seats, four for women and six for technocrats seats.

Earlier on Thursday, seven Senate candidates from Balochistan on general seats returned unopposed after retirement of 8th candidate. Former caretaker prime minister Anwar ul Haq Kakar has been elected unopposed on Senate as an independent candidate.

Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam's Ahmed Khan and ANP's Aimal Wali Khan, National Party's Jan Buledi, People's Party's Umar Gorgej, PML-N's Shahzeb Durrani and Syedal Khan Nasir have also been elected unopposed as members of the Senate. On March 27, seven Senate candidates from Punjab including Mohsin Naqvi have returned unopposed.

Seven candidates for Senate's general seats from Punjab have elected unopposed including Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's Ahad Cheema, Pervaiz Rashid, Nasir Mehmood, Talal Chaudhry, have elected unopposed. Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi of the ruling coalition has also been elected. Sunni Ittehad Council's Hamid Khan and Raja Nasir Abbas have been elected on the Senate's general seats.

## Sacrifices of FC commendable

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has paid glowing tributes to sacrifices of martyrs of Frontier Constabulary (FC) laid for peace, sanctity and security of the country. He was speaking during his visit to Frontier Constabulary (FC) headquarters in Peshawar on Friday.

The Interior Minister was welcomed by Commandant FC Moazzam Jah Ansari on this occasion and introduced other FC officers to him. Mohsin Naqvi laid floral wreath on the Martyrs Monument and offered prayers for them.

He also paid a fitting tribute to the martyrs, praising their commendable efforts for peace as they sacrificed their lives while fighting for the sanctity and security of the country. Commandant FC also explained the working and performance of the FC in a meeting presided by the Interior Minister. A plant was also planted in the lawn at the end of the meeting as part of the plantation drive by the Interior Minister.

Mohsin Naqvi said, "The Frontier Constabulary should be made a more effective force to curb the anti-state elements. I will make sure to visit the FC headquarters again in order to take a follow up. The Interior Minister said, "Enemies of the state are trying hard to disrupt the peace in the country. We will beat them with the force of unity. The terrorists and their support groups will not be allowed to operate at any cost."



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan, Dr. Reza Amiri Moghadam, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

# JI doesn't take decisions under pressure': Liaquat

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Jamaat-e-Islami leader Liaquat Baloch Friday refuted claims made by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Khan regarding his party being "under pressure" and their failed meeting plans in Islamabad for talks on government formation following the February 8 general elections.

After the polls, the two parties were reportedly mulling to unite with PTI's successful independent candidates looking to join other parties in the parliament, so that they could jointly form a government in the provinces and Centre where they could have possessed a majority number of parliamentarians. Gohar, however, claimed that the PTI was "under pressure" not to talk to PTI on the said matter and the party's leadership was avoiding meetings with him.

The PTI lawmaker's comment came during his appearance in a private TV channel program in which he said that the JI leaders did not attend a meeting that was decided to take place between him, Liaquat Baloch and other leaders of both parties. However, in a video released by JI, Baloch said: "There was no pressure on us and JI doesn't take decisions under pressure."

In the wake of his several failed attempts to meet with Gohar and PTI's plans to only talk regarding a government formation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the JI veteran maintained that his party's central majlis-e-shura considered it right to welcome whatever decision the PTI made, as there was divisiveness amongst its leadership on matters. The politician added that JI unconditionally wanted to facilitate PTI across the country and that the party would again hold consultations on the new proposal shared by PTI.

Despite Gohar's claim, the senior politico has shared his willingness to still meet with the PTI chief.

"Insha'Allah, I would meet Barrister Gohar myself and we want contact to increase between Opposition parties." He added that there is no room for any misunderstanding among Opposition parties, which could benefit the "establishment and anti-Opposition" powers.

At the start of the video, Baloch said that the stance shared by Barrister Gohar Khan was not completely true. "The truth is that KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur Had contacted JI chief Siraj-ul-Haq after the February 8 elections, seeking JI's support in providing a platform for the independent candidates backed by the PTI."

He added that the party conducted [internal] consultations following Gandapur's request and a committee was formed as a result that decided that they would gather in Islamabad on February 12. It was decided that the meeting will be conducted at 4pm and Barrister Gohar would arrive with his team, Baloch said.

"Professor Ibrahim, Inayatullah, others and I were present at Mian Aslam's house. After 4pm we were informed that he would arrive at 6pm, then 6:30pm, then 7pm, then 8:30 and then at around 9pm his secretary, via a phone call, said the meeting cannot be conducted due to some engagements," the politician revealed. Baloch continued that his party informed CM Gandapur and Azam Swati about the development. "Late at night, Azam Swati acknowledge that it was not right and Barrister Gohar would arrive tomorrow. I told him to inform me about the time, so that I could reach Mian Aslam's home."

However, the politician added, that he neither received any "confirmation or communication" nor he was informed about 10 o'clock by Barrister Gohar, but he arrived at the aforementioned time. "Our former parliamentary leader Sahibzada Tariqullah sahib, who was informed by Azam Swati, was also present

there. I then spoke with Barrister Gohar on telephone and told him I could arrive in half an hour or 40 minutes," he said.

Baloch added that Gohar refused saying that he had to go meet PTI founder Imran Khan at Adiala jail and said he would contact after his meeting. "But the contact never happened." On the other hand, the PTI chief said: "I spoke to Liaquat Baloch sahib and went to Mian Aslam's house to meet him after he asked me to arrive there. I went at his house at the designated time, the lights were on, everything was there, but he was present. The host was also not there." Gohar said he reached there at 10pm on the day decided for the meeting, but neither of the two politicians were there and was later informed by them that they were an hour away.

"We approached them again and I talked to him to tell him that we wanted to move forward [with JI]," he said, adding that the party was pressured so much that "they backed out" of the talks. He insisted that it was them and not PTI that backed out. "Liaquat Baloch sahib was supposed to come meet me, we had adjusted the time. But when I understood that he was avoiding, I called him up myself and told him that I would come, as he is a senior parliamentarian."

Gohar added that it was then decided that the meeting will take place at Mian Aslam's house. "One of their former MNA from Dir arrived and even he did not know that they were not present." Baloch also said that during this time, Amir Dogar and Azam Swati were in contact and talks continued with JI. "They said that they will discuss something with JI in relation to the KP government." This happened when Siraj-ul-Haq sahib resigned as JI chief, he said, adding that the party then held a meeting of the central majlis-e-shura which also included discussions on the contact with PTI, along with the country's situation.

# Israel kills dozens in airstrikes across the Gaza Strip

## Israel says Lebanon strike kills a Hezbollah rocket unit commander

BEIRUT/JERUSALEM (AFP): An Israeli army air strike in Lebanon killed the deputy head of Hezbollah's rocket unit on Friday, the army said, the latest deadly cross-border violence since the Israel-Hamas war erupted. The strike in south Lebanon's Bazuriyeh killed Ali Abdel Hassan Naim, "one of the leaders for heavy-warhead rocket fire and responsible for conducting and planning attacks against Israeli civilian," the Israeli military said. Hezbollah, an ally of Palestinian militant group Hamas, has exchanged near-daily fire with the Israeli army since Hamas launched its unprecedented attack on southern Israel on October 7 triggering war in Gaza.

The hostilities have raised fears of all-out conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, which fought a devastating war in 2006. Lebanon's state-run National News Agency (NNA) said "a raid by an enemy drone targeted a car" in Bazuriyeh in south Lebanon's Tyre district, reporting at least one dead. AN army security source, requesting anonymity as they were not authorized to speak to the media, said the person killed was "a Hezbollah official." Hezbollah did not immediately comment on the strike, but announced it had carried out attacks on Israeli positions on Friday. An AFP correspondent reported the targeted vehicle was destroyed and debris scattered nearby, and said authorities had cordoned off the area. The Iran-backed group says it is acting in support of Hamas with its attacks. Israel has targeted Hezbollah and Hamas officials inside Lebanon in response. Recent days have seen an uptick in deadly hostilities, and the White House on Thursday called on Israel and Lebanon to put a high priority on restoring calm. The United Nations said this week it was "deeply disturbed" by attacks on health care facilities, after several strikes blamed on Israel killed rescue workers in southern Lebanon. Cross-border fire since October has killed at least 347 people in Lebanon, mostly Hezbollah fighters, but also including at least 68 civilians, according to an AFP tally. The fighting has displaced tens of thousands of people in southern Lebanon and in northern Israel, where the military says 10 soldiers and eight civilians have been killed.

Thousands more dead are believed to be buried under rubble and more than 80 percent of Gazans have been displaced, many at risk of famine.

The war erupted after Hamas militants broke through the border and rampaged through communities in southern Israel, killing 1,200 people and abducting 253 hostages, according to Israeli tallies. In the northern Gaza Strip, where the United Nations has warned famine is imminent as early as May, an elderly man died of malnutrition and lack of medication, Palestinian media said. On Thursday, the World Court unanimously ordered Israel to take all necessary and effective action to ensure basic food supplies to Gaza's population and halt spreading famine.

"The renewed binding order from the @ICJ (International Court of Justice) yesterday is a stark reminder that the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip is man made and worsening. It can however still be reversed," Philippe Lazzarini, head of the UN Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA, said on X. "(This) means that Israel must reverse its decision and allow @UNRWA to reach northern Gaza with food and nutrition convoys on a daily basis and to open additional land crossings," he added. Earlier this week, UNRWA said Israel told it that it would no longer approve its food convoys to north Gaza. Four such requests were denied since March 21, it added.



PESHAWAR: Federal Minister for Interior, Mohsin Naqvi offering dua at the Martyrs Monument during his visit to Frontier Constabulary Headquarters.

# Government, lender banks conclude PIA's commercial debt negotiations

ISLAMABAD (APP): The commercial debt negotiations of Pakistan International Airlines Corporation Limited (PIACL) have been successfully concluded among the government, domestic lender banks and Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) as part of the entity's restructuring for privatization.

A statement issued by the PIACL on Friday said the step paved the way for filing of the Scheme of Arrangement (SOA) for legal segregation of PIACL with Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan on Thursday. The federal cabinet had approved the legal segregation plan of PIACL on February 6, 2024.

PIACL's privatisation has been a priority agenda for the federal government, and above developments represent one of the most complex restructuring exercise undertaken to prepare PIACL for privatisation. This arrangement will help make a viable business case for private sector investment in the national carrier. The domestic banks and

financial institutions demonstrated firm commitment to the government's privatisation initiative and extended their full co-operation in finalising the arrangement for PIACL's commercial domestic debt. Under the arrangement, PIACL's Commercial domestic debt will be moved to PIA Holding Company Ltd., established by the federal government as part of PIACL's legal restructuring. The term sheet covering mutually agreed commercial aspects of loan transfer was signed yesterday between PIACL, PIA Holding Company and lender banks.

In order to manage the affairs of PIA Holding Company diligently, a seven-member independent board comprising of ex-State Bank Governor with prominent leaders from banking and other areas of expertise was notified this week by the Federal Government. The new board in its inaugural board meeting, held at Islamabad, endorsed the Scheme of Arrangement delineating the pathway for the privatisation of Pakistan

International Airlines. Following the approval of draft SOA by PIACL and PIA Holding Company boards, the Scheme of Arrangement (SOA) for PIACL restructuring was filed with Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) yesterday.

## Rizvi appointed new Islamabad IGP

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The government on Friday appointed Ali Nasir Rizvi as the new inspector general of police (IGP) for the federal capital, replacing Dr Akbar Nasir Khan.

Akbar Nasir Khan has been asked to report to the Establishment Division. Rizvi has served as SSP Operations, DPO Kasur, DIG Operations Lahore and other key postings during his services. Meanwhile, the Establishment Division has also appointed Khurram Agha as new secretary interior.