



## Pervaiz Ashraf welcomes Aseefa to NA

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Peoples Party Central Punjab President and former Speaker of the National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Ashraf has welcomed Aseefa Bhutto Zardari to the National Assembly.

In a statement issued here on Saturday, he said that Aseefa Bhutto Zardari's uncontested victory is a beauty of democracy.

Congratulating her on being elected as a Member of the National Assembly under Article 207, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf said that her presence in the National Assembly would strengthen the Parliament, Constitution and women's voices.

He said that Aseefa Bhutto Zardari's presence in the Parliament is evidence of public and democratic rights awareness. He said that sitting in the House with the daughter of Bibi Rani (Mohartma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed) was no less than an honor, and it was hoped that the Parliament would benefit greatly from its young and competent members.

## AMC students plant 200 saplings

LAHORE (APP): Students of Ameeruddin Medical College (AMC) Lahore planted 200 saplings on the college premises on Saturday in connection with Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz's 'Plant for Pakistan' campaign.

Principal College of Nursing Ameeruddin Medical College/Lahore General Hospital Ms Shazia Kausar supervised the plantation campaign. The principal said that in order to control environmental pollution and create a healthy environment, everyone should play a role and take part in plantation. She said the civilised nations in the world fulfill their responsibilities well to make their country green and to eliminate pollution.

This work is not only done by governments but social organisations, and the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) should play their role to transfer the new generation to a greener Pakistan and in order to secure the future of the country. Deputy Chief Nursing Superintendent said the heat intensity would decrease and the climate would become clean and clear by planting more trees. The nursing instructors were also present.

# CM orders operation against electricity theft, hoarding

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, chairing a meeting of the Energy Department here on Saturday, directed to adopt zero-tolerance policy against electricity theft, smuggling and hoarding.

The CM directed authorities concerned to conduct a grand operation across the province against electricity theft, smuggling and hoarding and to implement a policy devised in a meeting chaired by the Prime Minister yesterday.

The CM directed to fix targets in this regard, and present a compliance report on their completion after the expiry of one month deadline. Every connection including industries, factories, shops, houses, shopping malls would be checked, she stressed. The relevant authorities would be

responsible in case of any failure, she warned.

The CM said whoever is found involved in power theft, smuggling and hoarding, should not be given any relief. She also directed to legislate for severe punishment and heavy fines for the complete elimination of electricity theft. She highlighted that electricity theft is already a cognizable offense. So, arrests and immediate punishment should be ensured.

The CM said that action would also be taken against government officials involved in electricity theft, adding that black sheep within the system should be identified and tried under the relevant laws.

The chief minister said the Ministry of Energy will also monitor all electricity distribution companies (DISCOs) of the

province. She directed to form a task force of the experts and government representatives to devise an effective strategy to curb this menace. This task force would monitor the Ministry of Power, the performance of DISCOs and the operation against power theft.

Earlier, it was briefed in the meeting that electricity worth Rs 100 billion is being stolen in Punjab every year. She reiterated that there would be zero tolerance on electricity theft in Punjab. She added billions of rupees lost in electricity theft would be spent on health, education and development of the people.

Senator Pervaiz Rashid, Punjab Senior Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Chief Secretary and Secretary Energy attended the meeting.

# Search and combating operations continue in Lahore

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Police continues its series of special search and combating operations across the city in connection with security for Ramadan and the martyrdom day of Hazrat Ali (AS). So far, 936 search operations have been conducted.

This was stated by the Lahore police spokesperson in a statement issued on Saturday. The spokesperson said that during the search operations, 25,504 houses, 12,306 tenants, and 90,267 individuals were checked. Action has been

taken against 207 individuals under the Tenancy Act during the search operations. Additionally, 13 hotels, 38 hostels, 65 factories, and 904 shops were also checked. During this period, 39 proclaimed offenders were arrested, and 20 narcotics cases were registered. Furthermore, 28 individuals were taken into custody under the 55/109 CrPc Ordinance.

Capital City Police Officer Lahore Bilal Siddique Kamyana stated that enhanced security is being provided to mosques,

imambargahs and other religious places during Ramadan. He emphasized that the objective of search operations is to root out criminals, proclaimed offenders, and other miscreants. Bilal Siddique Kamyana issued directives to police teams to increase patrolling in sensitive areas and instructed supervising officers to oversee operations themselves, adding that search operations would continue during the month of Ramadan for the maintenance of peace and law and order.

# Kisan Card with picture of Nawaz challenged in LHC

SHIKARPUR (PPI): A citizen on Saturday challenged the move to place the picture of PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif on newly launched Kisan Card.

The citizen, Mashkoor Hussain, filed petition in the Lahore High Court through a lawyer, holding the chief minister, provincial government and Nawaz Sharif respondents. The petitioner prayed that

the public funds cannot be used for personal publicity and it is against the law to paste the picture of Nawaz Sharif on Kisan Card.

The petitioner prayed that the Punjab government should be directed to stop issuing Kisan Card with the picture of Nawaz Sharif.

He urged the LHC to direct the authorities to stop printing the Kisan

Card till the final decision of the case.

The Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz had approved the 'Nawaz Sharif Kisan Card' yesterday during a meeting held on the agricultural reforms.

The chief minister said 500,000 farmers will be given loans of Rs150 billion in a year on easy terms through Kisan Card.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaulah Tarar is talking to the media at Gwalmandi. —APP Photo

# CM, Japan ambassador discuss progress of Rs8.5bn JICA projects

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah in his meeting with Ambassador of Japan Mr WADA Mitsuhiro discussed the development projects launched with the support of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for Rs8500.5 million.

The meeting was attended by the Consul General of Japan Mr Tahara, and First Secretary Mr Fukuda while the chief minister was assisted by his Principal Secretary Agha Wasif, Chairman P&D Najam Shah and Secretary Investment Mureed Rahmo.

The chief minister said that the JICA project of upgradation of Girls Schools into Elementary Schools in rural areas has been launched for Rs2,287.24 million and was at the advanced stage. He added that the prequalification of the contractor and bids for construction and completion of works have

been finalised.

It was pointed out that in the first phase, 11 elementary schools were being constructed, including seven in Khairpur district and four in Naushehroferoze.

In the second phase construction of elementary schools in Sukkur, Larkana and Malir Karachi would be taken up. The main components of the project include civil works and procurement of furniture.

The Ambassador of Japan said that the project was most important, therefore it needed to be expedited. Discussing the program for Flood Response Through Reconstruction of Education Facilities the CM said that the project has been initiated with the assistance of JICA in 9 districts- three in Mirpurkhas Division, two each in Sukkur and Ghotki.

The project has been launched for Rs1.566 bil-

lion, including Rs1.42 billion of JICA and Rs142.41 million of Sindh government share. Under the project primary school buildings badly damaged by the floods and heavy rains are being reconstructed. The damaged furniture would be replaced, and the school buildings would be solarised.

The CM told the Ambassador that the consultant agreement signed and verified by the JICA had been achieved, and work would be started shortly.

The Sindh government has launched the project of establishing a Maternal and Child Health Care Center at Liaquat University Hospital, Jamshoro for Rs4963.331 million, including Rs174.225 million Sindh government share.

The CM said that the objective was to extend/strengthen the medical services including

neonatal/children hospital and MCH Center, LUH Jamshoro.

The centre would be provided with the equipment for the facilitation of the patients and to improve healthcare and reduce maternal & infant mortality in the Hyderabad division and adjacent areas.

Mr Shah said that the centre would also provide tertiary care level health services while improving OPD/ indoor, intensive care, operation theatre, general ward and emergency services for mothers, infants and neonates.

Chairman P&D Najam Shah told the meeting that as per JICA recommendation consultant has been hired and the construction work has been awarded.

The chief minister and the ambassador agreed to review the progress of these new projects every three months so that work on them could be completed well in time.

## PML-N confident of Senate election victory

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique expressed his confidence on Saturday that Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) would win the upcoming Senate elections.

In a meeting with Punjab Assembly members here, he pledged to prioritise welfare of people and emphasised the party's dedication to serve people under the leadership of party supremo Nawaz Sharif.

The meeting focused on strategies for the technocrat, minority, and women-specific Senate elections.

Present in the meeting were Abida Bashir, Qudsia Batool, Shazia Rizwan, Uzma Jabeen, Salma Butt, Ishrat Ashraf, Amna Parveen, Zeba Ghafoor, Shahrabano, Shaughta Faisal, Uzma Butt, Maria Talal, and Rahat Afza.

## MCL removes encroachments

LAHORE (APP): The Metropolitan Corporation Lahore (MCL) carried out an anti-encroachment operation and demolished illegal structures in the provincial capital.

An MCL spokesperson told the media here on Saturday that an encroachment squad of Ravi zone, led by Zonal Officer Ali Tahir, conducted a comprehensive encroachment cleanup operation in various areas of Shahdara and Bhatti Chowk, and three truck-loads of materials were shifted to the MCL junk yard.

During the operation, the MCL squad removed numerous encroachments and seized 65 counters placed at roadsides. Around 40 challans were issued to shopkeepers over violation.

MCL Administrator Rafia Haider warned that the operation would continue till clearance of city roads and bazaars.

She urged citizens to cooperate with the MCL and its anti-encroachment squads to eliminate encroachments and bring back the lost glory of the provincial capital.

# Govt focusing on solving problems of people: Bukhari

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari said on Saturday that the Punjab government was focusing on solving the problems of the people of Punjab and in this regard various initiatives had been taken during one month.

While briefing media about the one month performance of the Punjab government here, she said that 6.4 million families were being facilitated under the Ramadan Nigheban package as per the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz.

She said that the Punjab government had decided to conduct a survey of poor people in three months. Azma Bukhari said that 90 days target had been given for making neat and clean Punjab and work in this regard was ongoing.

She said, "Maryam Nawaz believes in taking practical measures and not on hollow slogans.

A free wifi project is being started again and the government would provide services at doorsteps.

The Safe Cities Project started by Shehbaz Sharif would now be launched in 18 more districts in Punjab," she added.

She said roads would be constructed in Punjab at a cost of billion of rupees. Azma Bukhari said that free medicines were available in emergency of all public hospitals across the province, adding that hepatitis patients would get their medicines in their homes.

She said for the first time prices of essential items were reducing in Punjab.

Under the Green Punjab Programme, 1.8 million

saplings had been planted in one day across the province, she said and added that a new mechanism was being brought to control prices of essential items.

She said that steps were being taken to solve property-related problems of expats, adding that transfer of property would be made online. Azma said that solar panels would be given to 50,000 electricity consumers purely on merit. She said that the 'Easter' package had been set aside for the Christian community and approval had been given to Kisan Package worth Rs 30 billion.

She further said that in five years Punjab would be totally changed, adding that Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz and the PML-N Quaid had a vision to run an underground train.

# FBR organizes seminar on tax education



F.P. Report

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During the meeting held on this occasion, souvenirs were also presented to the Vice Chancellor and other officials of Air University by the FBR.

<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Amin Ullah with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Ikram Ullah citizen number 173015594011 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs.</p> <p>1.Hameeda (Daughter)2.Shahid Arshad (Daughter)3.Abbas (Son)4.Amin Ullah (Son)5.Saeed Ullah (Son)6.Zaki Ullah (Son)</p> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA SWABI-SFU</p>	<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Muhammad Bilal with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Mehrez Bibi citizen number 1720123264385 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs.</p> <p>1.Tahira Naz (Daughter)2.Farah Arshad (Daughter)3.Shahid Arshad (Daughter)4.Rahmat (Son)5.Muhammad Ismail (Son)6.Muhammad Bilal (Son)</p> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA NOWSHERA-SFU</p>	<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Ms. Mehrez Bibi with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Nazir Muhammad citizen number 1410107991557 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs.</p> <p>1.Mehrez Bibi (Spouse)2.Zeenat Ullah (Son)</p> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA HANGU-SFU</p>	<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Aziz Ur Rehman with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Bibi citizen number 17301207415419 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs.</p> <p>1.Nasratta Bibi (Daughter)2.Ahmed Hussain (Son)3.Anwar Hussain (Son)4.Muhammad Tahir Hussain (Son)5.Ahmed Khan (Son)6.Ilyas Khan (Son)7.Hakeem Khan (Son)</p> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA RHO PESHAWAR-SFU</p>
<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Ms. Rifiat Hafeez with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Azhar Mehmood citizen number 3730214644011 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs.</p> <p>1.Asif Mehmood (Brother)2.Mazhar Mehmood (Brother)3.Wasif Mehmood (Brother)4.Rifiat Hafeez (Spouse)</p> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA NOWSHERA-SFU</p>	<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Najeeb Ur Rehman Abbasi with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Muhammad Azam citizen number 1310164902357 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs.</p> <p>1.Kousar (Daughter)2.Anwar Jan (Spouse)3.Najeeb Ur Rehman Abbasi (Son)</p> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA ABBOTABAD-SFU</p>	<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Shah Wali Khan with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Gul Sher Jan citizen number 1420247663187 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs.</p> <p>1.Jasmina (Daughter)2.Nekam Jana (Spouse)3.Shah Wali Khan (Son)</p> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA KARAK-SFU</p>	<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Aziz Ur Rehman with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Abdullah Jan citizen number 1120107415419 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs.</p> <p>1.Zainab Bibi (Daughter)2.Abid Bibi (Daughter)3.Abdur Rehman (Son)4.Ahmed Khan (Son)5.Abdul Manan (Son)6.Aziz Ur Rehman (Son)</p> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA LAKKI MARWAT-SFU</p>
<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Waqid Ali with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Akbar Ali citizen number 173015594011 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs.</p> <p>1.Maria (Daughter)2.Sadia Bibi (Daughter)3.Nargis Bibi (Spouse)4.Waqid Ali (Son)5.Irfan Ali (Son)6.Sajid Ali (Son)</p> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA RING ROAD-DSFU</p>	<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Waqid Ali with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Muhammad Ibrahim citizen number 173015594011 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs.</p> <p>1.Maria (Daughter)2.Sadia Bibi (Daughter)3.Nargis Bibi (Spouse)4.Waqid Ali (Son)5.Irfan Ali (Son)6.Sajid Ali (Son)</p> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA RHO PESHAWAR-SFU</p>	<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Ms. Seema Riaz with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Sher Zada citizen number 1610168161841 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs.</p> <p>1.Seema Riaz (Daughter)2.Falak Niaz (Son)</p> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA MARDAN-SFU</p>	<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Umar Gul with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Mawiz Gul citizen number 2120116699863 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs.</p> <p>1.Hameeda (Daughter)2.Ahmed Bibi (Daughter)3.Robina (Daughter)4.Paidia Khela (Spouse)5.Umar Gul (Son)6.Ghazi Gul (Son)7.Abad Gul (Son)</p> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA MEGA CENTER PESHAWAR-SFU</p>
<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Ahmad Saadullah Khan with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Rifiat Sufat citizen number 1310126906642 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs.</p> <p>1.Noor Ali Huda (Daughter)2.Ashab Noor (Daughter)3.Durre Samin (Daughter)4.Altar Bibi (Mother)5.Ghulam Pervez (Spouse)6.Ahmad Saadullah Khan (Son)</p> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA ABBOTABAD-SFU</p>	<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Gul Shahzada Khan with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Ms. Muhammad Bibi citizen number 1420174618630 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs.</p> <p>1.Gul Shahzada Khan (Son)</p> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA KARAK-SFU</p>	<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Aziz Ur Rehman with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Hukam Jana citizen number 1120184094042 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs.</p> <p>1.Shahid Begum (Daughter)2.Zainab Bibi (Daughter)3.Abid Bibi (Daughter)4.Abdur Rehman (Son)5.Ahmed Khan (Son)6.Abdul Manan (Son)7.Aziz Ur Rehman (Son)</p> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA LAKKI MARWAT-SFU</p>	<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Kalsoom with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Burhan Ud Din citizen number 1720132235719 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs.</p> <p>1.Kalsoom (Spouse)</p> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA NOWSHERA-SFU</p>

## Zero results in SSC Exam: Action on card against teachers

PESHAWAR (APP): Action against teachers of government schools with zero results in matriculation is sufficient and the Education Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has authorized the District Education Officers of 2 tribal areas and 12 districts including Peshawar to act under the discipline rules.

The action against the teachers of the government schools in the districts who had zero results including Abbottabad 7, Buner 11, Dera Ismail Khan 2, one each from Khyber, Momand, Swat, Mardan 2, Swabi 4, Shangla 2, 6 teachers from Peshawar has been included.

District Education Officers in this connection have also issued instructions to the teachers who have zero result, said an official of the Education Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said a total of 39 government schools in 12 districts of the province, including 2 integrated tribal districts, were identified.

Two female students' schools are also involved, because notices are being issued to the respective teachers after the identification of the Education Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

If the explanation is unsatisfactory or the show cause notice is not answered after 7 days, action will be taken against them under Disciplinary Rules 2011, he said. The teachers who gave zero results include CT, AT, Primary School Headteacher, PTC, Head Master and DM. All teachers are of grade 15 and below, he informed.



PESHAWAR: Senior lawyer Ishaq Ali Qazi casting his vote during District Bar Peshawar elections. — F.P. photo

## Operations against sales of fake drugs continued

PESHAWAR (APP): The major operations of FIA Peshawar Zone continued as 6 inquiries have been registered against the elements involved in the sale of fake medicines, a FIA spokesman said here Saturday.

The raids were conducted by Composite Circle Mardan and Abbottabad, the spokesman of FIA said, adding, it was conducted at various medical stores located in Thakot, Bagram, Bazar,

Abbottabad, and Topi Bazar Swabi.

A large number of fake and unregistered medicines were recovered during the raids and DRAP authorities sealed fake and unregistered medicines on the spot and sent them to the laboratory, FIA spokesman said. Several medical stores were also sealed and inquiries have been registered against the accused, the official said.

In the light of the report of DRAP officials, cases

## SNGPL collects fine of Rs.49.6 million in drive

PESHAWAR (APP): Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) authorities in Mardan Region on Saturday collected a fine of Rs. 49.6 million in a campaign against gas thieves.

According to the sources of Sui Northern Gas Pipelines, the fine was imposed on 514 consumers who had tampered their meters while another 229 were found to have got direct gas connections.

Under the supervision of Regional Manager Sui Gas Mardan Region Akif Noor, all possible efforts and resources are being used to reduce gas losses.

One of the reasons for the reduction in losses is the replacement of old rotten lines.

This year, the work of reappearing 60 km of old lines is going on, which has not only reduced the gas losses, but has also improved the pressure and

## Power supply of 54 feeders suspended

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) on Saturday notified that power transmission was affected due to heavy rain and hailstorm in different parts of the province.

The spokesman said that 54 feeders have failed due to rain in Peshawar, Nowshera, Mardan and Swat.

Instructions has been issued to the PESCO field staff to fix the fault as soon as possible and restore power, said the spokesman. The PESCO control room is trying to ensure power supply during Iftar hours.

At the time of Iftar, the affected areas will be supplied with electricity from an alternative route. He said that despite of rains, the field staff was busy to restore electricity. In view of the inclement weather, the customers are requested to cooperate with PESCO, he added.

## Rain, thunderstorm predicted for KP

PESHAWAR (INP): The meteorological department here predicted rain, wind and thunderstorms with isolated hailstorms in Chitral, Lower & Upper Dir, Malakand, Buner, Swat, Shangla, Kohistan, Battagram, Torgar, Mansehra, Abbottabad and Haripur.

The same weather conditions would prevail in Swabi, Mardan, Nowshera, Peshawar, Charsadda, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Kurram, Orakzai, Hangu, Karak, Kohat, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, North & South Waziristan, Tank and DI Khan districts.

The rain and thunderstorm may trigger landslides in Chitral, Dir, Swat, Buner, Shangla, Kohistan, Battagram, Torgar and Kurram districts.

Wind and thunderstorms may damage structures like electric poles and solar panels. People are advised to take precautionary measures during these emergencies. Tourists are advised to avoid travel unnecessarily while farmers are advised to remain cautious about their crops. All concerned authorities have been directed to be alert.

## Timings of 2 BRT routes extended

PESHAWAR (INP): The timings of two routes of BRT Peshawar have been increased to facilitate people in the holy month of Ramadan.

Route ER-09 which runs from Gulbehara to Phase 6 Terminal will now be operational till 9:45 PM instead of 7:25 PM whereas the last bus on route SR-08 will leave at 10 pm instead of 9 pm.

Bus route SR-08 runs from Gulbahara to Mall of Hayatabad and stops at all stations.

During the preparations for Eid and the last days of Ramadan, the rush of passengers is increasing. Looking after such a rush of passengers, the management of BRT Peshawar Services decided to service timing in order to facilitate the maximum number of passengers.

An increase in the number of passengers has been seen on both these routes after Iftar due to which this decision was made in the larger public interest.

## Rain relief operations continued

PESHAWAR (APP): As many as seven people died and 9 others were injured due to last day's rain in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Dr. Khateer Ahmed, Director General Rescue 1122 told media men here on Saturday.

Four people who died in various accidents are less than 10 years old, Director General Rescue 1122. Roof collapse incidents occurred in Peshawar, Nowshera, Shangla, Bannu and Bajaur, Director General Rescue 1122 said.

Partial damage has also been caused due to the collapse of roofs and walls in various districts, Director General Rescue 1122 said. Medical and disaster teams of Rescue 1122 participated in rescue operations, Director General Rescue 1122 said.

All the control rooms of Rescue 1122 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are fully operational, Director General Rescue 1122 said, adding, services can be availed by calling the toll-free number 1122 of Rescue 1122, Director General Dr. Khateer Ahmad said.

## HMC okays eid allowance distribution

PESHAWAR (APP): Hayatabad Medical Complex (HMC) on Saturday approved distribution of eid allowance of Rs.10,000/- to the lower class employees.

The hospital administration has approved eid allowance for HMC and its related institutions class four staff, security guards, lady searchers and drivers.

## Dying Cinemas: A victim of commercialization in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

PESHAWAR (APP): Notwithstanding to the pace of commercialization, several cinemas in Peshawar were bulldozed in recent years for monetary gains, depriving thousands of films lovers from infotainment services.

Peshawar, which was once known as the city of cinemas, theaters and artists, have started losing one of its prime entertainment tools including the decades' old cinemas after it was mostly converted into trade and commercial plazas due to commercialization, mushroom growth of social media and terrorism.

Produced many national and international legendary artists including Bollywood Super stars Yousaf Khan alias Dalip Kumar, Raj Kapoor, lollywood famous actors Qavi Khan, Ismail Shahid, Najeebullah Anjum, Javed Babar and Firdus Jamal, Peshawar have lost seven cinemas including those of colonial era due to lack of production of new films of Urdu and Pashto, high property taxes on cinemas, security concerns, rising trend of social media and commercialization.

As many as seven cine-

mas out of 15 cinemas in Peshawar were razed to ground including the oldest cinema houses including Shabistan (Firdus), Palwasha, Capital, Falak Sair, Novelty, Metro, Sabrina and Ihsrat – converted into trade and commercial centers viz a viz hotels.

Other cinemas includes Arshad Cinema, Sabreena, Aaeena, Naz and Shama are mostly deserted due to unavailability of new films, high-production film-cost, pathetic seating facilities and lackluster approach of the government towards film and entertainment industry in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

"Whenever I come from UAE to my home city, I use to watch a Pashto movie at Firdus cinema on every Eidul Fitr celebrations. I am extremely disappointed to see the demolished Firdus cinema where a trade Plaza was constructed, resulting deprivation of thousands of fans of entertainment," said a Peshawari born UAE transporter, Janisar Khan while taking to APP.

He said it was heart-breaking that still no announcement regarding a new Pashto or Urdu film to be released on Eidul Fitr



PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Ghandapur chairing a meeting of Information Technology Department.

## KP Food Authority's crackdown continued

Authority said.

The Operation of Nowshera Food Safety Team along with Cantonment Board in Nowshera Cantt continued and the teams inspected several bakery production units and during checking four bakery units sealed for poor hygiene and sanitation, the Spokesman said.

About 12000 liters of syrup, 10 kg of dye, 200 liters of oil, 10 kg of besan, 125 kg of syrup were seized from the bakery units and destroyed on the spot. Dir lower team also conducted inspections in various markets wherein more than 65 kg of expired food items were exported and destroyed, spokesperson said.

Heavy fines have been imposed on owners for violating hygiene rules, spokesperson said, adding, Food safety teams should speed up operations against adulteration mafia across the province, directed by Director General Food Authority Wasif Saeed.

Citizens should also timely inform the Food Authority authorities against violation of hygiene rules and non-standard foodstuff businesses, Wasif Saeed said.

## PPC Ramadan Sports Gala enters next phase



PESHAWAR: Ramadan Sports Gala, organized by Peshawar Press Club in collaboration with HBK, entered its second phase. Former provincial minister Kamran Bangash was the chief guest on the second day of the Gala while, President of Peshawar Press Club Arshad Aziz Malik, former President Riaz Khan, General Secretary Irfan Musa Zai, President of Sports Writers Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Asim Shiraz, General Secretary of Khyber Union of Journalists Imran Yousafzai, and Chairman of the Sports Committee Abid Khan were also present.

Addressing the participating journalists at the sports gala, Kamran Bangash expressed his appreciation for such healthy activities organized for the journalist fraternity. He highlighted the importance of sports in both physical and mental well-being, urging journalists to actively participate and showcase their creative abilities. He emphasized that amid their professional responsibilities, engaging in sports activities is essential. He also stressed the need for such sports events to be organized across all

## Power supply of 54 feeders suspended

institutions, fostering a healthier environment.

Furthermore, Kamran Bangash remarked that nations that prioritize sports have excelled globally. He expressed his confidence that the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, under the leadership of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, would revitalize sports in the region. He urged for more events like the one organized at the Peshawar Press Club, stating that such events provide mental relaxation to journalists.

President of Peshawar Press Club, Arshad Aziz Malik, acknowledged Kamran Bangash's efforts for journalists and thanked him for his consistent support. He praised Bangash for his unwavering support at every turn.

In Ludo, Intisham Bashir, Zarshad, Abdul Razzaq, Arif Ikram, and Aaqib Adnan emerged victorious, while in the Carom Board event, Arif, Arsalan Junaid, Shahzad Darani, and Zulfiqar Ahmed secured wins. Similarly, in the Badminton event, Muhammad Irshad and Kashif-ud-Din were defeated by Niaz Ali and Abbas Ali, whereas Intisham Bashir and Sheikh Ashfaq defeated Muhammad Faheem and Zahid Mirakhel after a thrilling contest. In Snooker, under the name of Sohail Qalandar, Zeshan Liaqat, Hassanein Ali, Madasir Zaib, and Hassam-ud-Din achieved success.

It is worth mentioning that more than 150 male and female journalists are participating in the annual Ramadan Sports Gala, which includes five different games: Table Tennis, Badminton, Carom Board, Snooker, and Ludo."



## In brief

### Heavy downpour kills cattle F.P. Report

WANA: The recent heavy downpour and stormy wind killed 28 sheep, 7 goat and two cows which were dead due to different mishap related to rainwater. According to detail, like most parts of the country, South Waziristan district Wana was also devastated by strong winds and torrential rains. Due to strong winds and torrential rain last night, hundreds of pine-nut trees have been uprooted in the mountain ranges of Tehsil Barmal, which has caused a loss of millions of rupees because a single pine-nut tree is more than in crore rupees. Apart from this, two cows and five goats have been killed due to the collapse of the roof of the room in the area. On the other hand, 28 sheep, 7 goats and two cows were swept away by the floods in Gorgora area of Wana tehsil. According to the local senior citizens, for the first time in history, stormy rains and strong winds caused such destruction that the poor people had to suffer crores of rupees. In this regard, the public and political circles have demanded the provincial and federal government to announce compensations for the poor people who incurred heavy losses due to recent torrential rain in the area. On the other hand, Meteorological Department claimed that rain and hail will continue in the upper areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the next 48 hours.

### 2 prime suspects arrested

SUKKUR (INP): In a major development, two prime suspects Yasin and Khalid were arrested for their alleged involvement in the rape and murder of a 13-year-old boy in Sukkur. The tragic incident occurred in Sukkur where a 13-year-old boy Zainul Abideen Siddiqui was allegedly raped and killed in Madina Colony. As per details, the father of the victim said that he heard firing sounds right after his son went outside of the home, later he was informed that his son had been shot dead as a result of the firing. The body of Zainul Abideen, a student in the fifth grade, was handed over to the family after the post-mortem, police added. The family of the teenage boy, staged a sit-in with the dead body on the road outside the Sukkur press club. The victim's family said that they had no animosity with anyone while alleging that their son was killed after being raped. Moreover, police has registered an FIR on the complaint of the victim's father against three unknown assailants. He stated in the FIR that his son was raped before getting murdered. He added that despite several complains of rape earlier, no action was taken against the accused. The accused were taking his son on that night to subject him to sexual violence but killed him when he resisted, the father added.

### Int'l Day of Zero Waste observed

MULTAN (INP): The countries around the world, including Pakistan, are marking the International Day of Zero Waste, as designated by the United Nations General Assembly on December 14, 2022. The day serves as a reminder of the critical need to enhance waste management practices globally and promote sustainable consumption and production behaviors. Waste pollution poses a significant threat to human well-being and economic prosperity, exacerbating challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution.



FAISALABAD: City Police Officer Captain (retd) Muhammad Ali Zia monitoring the process of burning kites and string at Police Lines, during anti-kite-flying drive.

## HRCP takes notice of Maria murder case

### F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: The National Commission of Human Rights (NCHR) on Saturday took notice of the gruesome murder of Maria Bibi, who was choked to death by her brother.

According to the details, the NCHR in a statement reacted swiftly to the murder case, promptly assuming the role of a party in the proceedings. Muhammad Khalid, the Coordinator of NCHR Punjab, took a proactive approach by personally visiting the scene of the incident in Toba Tek Singh.

During his visit, Khalid diligently recorded statements from residents regarding the murder inci-

dent. The NCHR coordinator emphasized that the commission is committed to upholding the rights of women and vowing that under no circumstances would these rights be violated. He added that the NCHR was closely scrutinizing the ongoing police investigation into the matter to ensure a fair investigation.

Meanwhile, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leader and Senator Sherry Rehman has condemned the brutal murder of 22-year-old Toba Tek Singh girl Maria allegedly by her brother and father. In her statement, Senator Sherry Rehman said she was heartbroken to hear about the

heinous and inhumane act of killing an innocent woman.

"The murder of Maria by her brother and father is a violation of basic human rights and our traditions," she said. She said the video circulating on social media had made everyone hang head in shame. "It should not be considered a normal incident and its terrible nature should not be neglected. Instead, a transparent investigation into this murder should be held to punish all those involved," she demanded. Rehman added that everyone was feeling sad for Maria and all the victims of such atrocities.

## Kite flying life-threat for citizens

### F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: A prominent educationist named Saima Nawaz said that kite flying is proving to be life-threatening for the citizens and the youth who used to have a pen and book in their hands are now engaged in kite flying.

She expressed these views at a ceremony organized in his office to end kite flying and talking to daily The Frontier Post in an exclusive conversation. She said that the souls of those who lost their lives due to kite flying in recent times are questioning whether we are from a nation that does not distinguish between good and bad. Parents are reducing the mental capacity of their innocent children by giving them mobile phones and they are becoming a part of anti-moral activities from their childhood.

The government is cracking down on kite fly-

ers, if the public supports them. It will produce effective and positive results. The parents of these youths are responsible for playing bloody games on the roofs of the streets and buildings. Those who should train their children in healthy activities and under their supervision and keep a close eye on them.

Meanwhile, District Police Officer Toba Tek Singh Ibadat Nisar, lead an awareness walk against kite flying in light of Chief Minister Punjab and Inspector General of Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar orders.

DPO Ibadat Nisar said that practical steps are being taken by Toba Tek Singh Police to prevent kite flying across the district. He added that the awareness walk on the implications of kite flying was conducted while DSP Traffic Asif Raheem Butt and other police officers and employees, Rescue 1122, business-

men and journalist community, civil society, police internship program and students of other schools and colleges participated in full. Kites and strings were also burnt at the end of the awareness walk.

DPO Ibadat Nisar said kite flying has become a deadly sport, avoid playing this bloody sport. Make sure to wear a helmet while riding a bike and wrap your neck with muffler etc. Along with this, make sure to install a safety rod on the bike.

Avoid placing small children in front of the bike. If someone flies kites or sells kites near you, report it immediately to 15. He further said that operations will be continued under the zero-tolerance policy on kite flying. However, for the complete elimination of kite flying, parents should play their role and prevent children from playing the bloody game.

## Gender inequality in education in rural areas

### Muhammad Rasheed

**I**n this article we are going to discuss the gender inequality in education within the rural areas of Pakistan, highlighting the significant disparities between male and female educational opportunities and achievements. The study focuses on socio-cultural norms, economic constraints, and inadequate infrastructure as the primary factors contributing to these gaps.

This article sets the stage by discussing the critical role of women in society, emphasizing that their contributions, whether through employment in educational sectors or other means, are vital for societal well-being. It then transitions into the problem statement, articulating the significant challenge that gender inequality in education poses to social and economic development in rural Pakistan. This disparity not only infringes on the fundamental right to education for girls and women but also limits their participation in various spheres, ultimately stunting national progress.

The root causes of gender inequality in education, identifying cultural norms and practices, economic factors, early marriages, and the quality of education

as the key contributing factors. It details how patriarchal values prioritize male education over female, leading to a preference for investing in boys' schooling. The cultural biases are further exacerbated by economic challenges, with families often facing difficult decisions about whom to educate when resources are scarce.

Thus limiting educational opportunities for young women and perpetuating cycles of poverty, how poverty exacerbates educational disparities, with impoverished families more likely to allocate scarce resources to boys' education, viewing it as a better investment. The indirect costs of education, such as uniforms and transportation, which can be prohibitive for many families, particularly affecting girls.

The quality of education in rural areas is critiqued for being inferior to that in urban centres, with a lack of female teachers, inadequate materials, and poor infrastructure hindering girls' education further. The government policies and their implementation, highlights the shortfall in resources and political will as significant obstacles to achieving gender equality in education.

Despite existing policies

aimed at reducing disparities, their execution often falls short, hindered by various challenges. Harnessing the collective power of local communities, educators, policymakers, and global allies, we stand on the brink of transforming the educational landscape into one where all girls' educational aspirations become tangible realities.

This unified pursuit transcends moral duty, representing a pivotal investment in our collective destiny. It promises to elevate communities by unleashing the immense potential of its female populace. Advocating for bespoke, community-driven strategies, this effort requires unwavering dedication from all societal quarters to foster gender educational equity.

This imperative aligns with global sustainable goals, championing equality and justice. The insights gleaned from this study illuminate the intricate barriers to gender parity in rural Pakistan's education, spotlighting the urgent need for targeted, innovative strategies to bridge these gaps effectively.

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## Malagare Wakilan wins Swabi Bar elections

### F.P. Report

SWABI: Malgare Wakilan (Lawyer Friends), a forum of lawyers associated with Awami National Party has emerged victorious in annual elections of District Bar Association Swabi.

Sagheer Khan Advocate was elected President from panel of Malgare Wakilan, Safdar Zaib elected General Secretary, Zar Shah elected Joint Secretary.

Similarly, Changaiz Khan of Malgare Wakilan elected President of District Bar Topi, Naseer Ahmad elected General Secretary, Muhammad Tufail elected Vice President, Muhammad Ilyas elected Joint Secretary and Naveed Shah elected Press Secretary of Topi Bar Association.

## Drug dealer along with arms held

### F.P. Report

KARAK: A drug dealer and criminal arrested with large quantity of arms and drugs, booked. According to the details, district police officer Karak Waqas Khan has issued clear orders to circle officers and all SHO's to crack down on drug dealers without discrimination. Oz has arrested several drug dealers.

In continuation of the crackdown against drug dealers, Naseer Khan, in charge of Chowki Ahmedabad, arrested drug dealer Umar Fayyaz alias Panik along with a large quantity of drugs during an operation based on secret information. The police recovered a pistol with 30 bore and ammunition, 4875 grams of hashish, 82 grams of ice from the drug dealer, against whom another case was registered.

The arrested drug dealer was also wanted by the police in a drug trafficking case. To the excellent investigation and professional policing of SHO Rehan Khattak, the accused in the drug case reached the end. SP Investigation Kohat Taj Muhammad awarded Rehan Khattak with a certificate of appreciation for sentencing him to 18 months imprisonment and a fine of Rs.80,000.

## 3 outlaws arrested

### F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Dera police during the operation against criminals arrested three outlaws and recovered one stolen motorcycle and 2490 grams of hashish from their possession in the limits of Gomal University Police station on Saturday.

According to the police spokesman, on the direction of the District Police Officer Dera Nasir Mehmood, a team of Gomal University Police station led by Station House Officer (SHO) Malik Imran conducted a successful action against the criminals and arrested the accused Muhammad Kamran son of Abdullah.

The accused was wanted in theft cases. Police also recovered one stolen motorcycle from the possession of the accused. Similarly in another case of theft wanted criminal Muhammad Abid son of Muhammad Ibrahim was also arrested.

# Residents block Malakand highways against police

### F.P. Report

MARDAN: The residents of Takhtbhai protested against the Charsadda police while blocked Malakand highway for all kinds of traffic, shouting slogans against the alleged disappearance of citizen by influential landlord named Zahoor Khan while police providing protection despite registration First Information Report, on Saturday.

According to the details, 22-year-old Daniyal Khan a resident of Bajaro Korona, Takhtbhai area has been missing for the past one week. His relatives say that Zahoor Khan an influential person has taken a hostage in the limits of Khanmai Police Station in Charsadda district. In this regard his brother has formally filed a report against Zahoor Khan at Khanmai Police Station but the police have completely failed to arrest the accused and recover the hostage. He has alleged that the local police are in connivance with the accused.

The protestors appealed to the provincial government and IG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and said that we are poor people there is nothing with us and we have no influence. For God's sake, play your role in recovering our relative. He added that the kidnapped Daniel is an orphan, his father died some time ago.

All the sympathies of the people of the area are with him in this hour of difficulty he will fully support them, if our plea is not heard and action is not taken on our appeal, then

we will again protest by blocking the Malakand highway.

**MCCI to oppose any anti-businesses policy:** Mardan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) President Zahir Shah said that they will strongly resist any such decision without taking the traders into confidence. He said that the business community is paying a number of indirect and oppressive taxes in utility bills and want to collect more legitimate taxes from their share in the treasury of the government of Pakistan.

We have given suggestions to the previous governments to increase the tax net and we assure the present government of full cooperation to increase the tax net again. He further said that he would strongly oppose the government's measures to collect taxes on electricity bills on a monthly basis without taking the true representatives of the traders into confidence.

MCCI President Zahir Shah said that instead of controlling tax evasion, FBR is trying to impose more taxes on small retailers and traders. He further said that electricity and gas rates should be reduced. The policy of giving free electricity units, free petrol to officers of various departments should be reviewed and this cycle should be stopped immediately.

He added that considering the country's economic situation, we do not want to create any kind of difficulties for the government and will not allow any government officials or institu-

tions to harass or exploit the business community. To increase the tax net, FBR should take businessmen into confidence so that those who are outside the tax net can be convinced that paying tax is in the interest of the country and our own.

Meanwhile, in a campaign against gas thieves, Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited authorities in Mardan Region collected a fine of Rs. 49.6 million, the officials of Sui Northern Gas Pipelines said. According to relevant officials of Sui Northern Gas Pipelines, the fine was imposed on 514 consumers who had tempered their meters while another 229 were found to have got direct gas connections.

Under the supervision of Regional Manager Sui Gas Mardan Region Akif Noor, all possible efforts and resources are being used to reduce gas losses. One of the reasons for the reduction in losses is the replacement of old rotten lines. This year, the work of replacing 60 km of old lines is going on, which has not only reduced the gas losses, but has also improved the pressure and delivery of gas.

He said that for the provision of gas in Ramadan and for quick resolution of customers' complaints, a situation room is working in which an officer is on duty around the clock, for gas theft and other complaints. Citizens should report on the helpline 1199. The name of the informer of gas theft will be kept confidential, he concluded.

## KUST distributes cheques among scholarship winners

### F.P. Report

KOHAH: Kohat University of Science & Technology (KUST) hosted the grand ceremony for the cheques' distribution among the 07 selected recipients of the Scotland Pakistan Scholarship for Young Women and Girls, in his inaugural speech briefed the participants about the scholarship. He highlighted the importance of providing opportunities for young women to excel academically and contribute to society.

The Deans of various faculties, Head of Teaching Departments, Director QEC, Registrar, Treasurer, Staff, and students, gathered to honor

the scholarship recipients. Nadar Sarfaraz, Director Planning & Development KUST, who is also the Focal Person for the Scotland Pakistan Scholarship for Young Women and Girls, in his inaugural speech briefed the participants about the scholarship. He highlighted the importance of providing opportunities for young women to excel academically and contribute to society.

Each recipient was presented with a cheque by Prof. Dr. Naseer-ur-din, Vice Chancellor of Kohat University of Science & Technology, expressed his gratitude to the Scottish government and the British Council Islamabad for their unwavering support in promoting education and gender equality.

The atmosphere was filled with excitement and pride as the beneficiaries expressed their gratitude to the KUST, Scottish Government and the British Council, Islamabad and shared their aspirations for the future.

In the speech by the Chief Guest, Prof. Dr. Naseer-ur-din, Vice Chancellor of Kohat University of Science & Technology, expressed his gratitude to the Scottish government and the British Council Islamabad for their unwavering support in promoting education and gender equality.

## Female Meena Bazaar in Buner to start today

### F.P. Report

BUNER: The first ever female Meena Bazaar at Girls College Khali Kalay area Tehsil Khadukhel will be inaugurated today (Sunday) till Chand Rath (moon night). This was announced by Assistant Commissioner Khadukhel's Nimra Owais and added that the initiative was started with the collaboration of social welfare & women empowerment department along with Tehsil Municipal Administration assistance for public good, on Saturday.

AC Khadukhel Nimra Owais has made an excellent decision to set up a

Meena Bazaar for women in Girls College Khali Kalay in Totalai Tehsil Khadukhel. In this regard, she shared a detailed view her social media message regarding the establishment of Meena Bazaar on Sunday. Respecting the local culture, only female to set stalls and children up to seven years of age will be able to go with their mother or sister in the Meena Bazaar for shopping.

This is the first initiative of its kind to set up Meena Bazaar in Khadukhel, which will be a good initiative to welcome. The Assistant Commissioner said that it is better than

going to the markets that women can buy the things they need at one place in a peaceful and free atmosphere. She added Eid clothes for women and Eid shopping for children will be easy in the Meena Bazaar.

The locals have welcomed the efforts made by Assistant Commissioner Nimra Owais for women and prays for her that her efforts will be fruitful. The Meena Bazaar will continue from Sunday, March 31 to Chand Raat. Leaders of Khadukhel and all political parties fully supported this initiative and thanked the administration.

## Action against mafia sought for deducting money from BISP beneficiaries

### F.P. Report

SHAHADKOT: In whole Sindh especially in Kamber Shahdadkot district, retailers providing money to Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) beneficiaries became a mafia openly deducting money against the law from the stipend of the deprived segments.

According to details, Device mafia rampant in Qamber- Shahdadkot district, open deduction of up to two thousand from BISP stipend to beneficiaries, administration is silent. Device mafia has become rampant in the cities and surrounding areas of Qamber Shahdadkot, a politically influential district in Sindh province, 1500 to 2000 and more out of the

episode are engaged in looting by illegal deduction in public, expressing concern of the citizens on the criminal silence of the administration, device in Pakho, Ghogharo area of taluka Kamber and warah taluka's cities Lalaurank, waggan, Nasirabad & others areas of taluk Warah, the tyranny of holder owners and BISP agent mafia has completely failed the monitoring team and high officials of Benazir Income Support Program to provide assistance the poor, widows and destitute deserving women without any deduction.

It is also revealed that the devices are operated by the device holders under the auspices of political figures at any place other than the device center. Expressing

concern over the illegal deduction of 1500 to 2000 rupees and the irregularities and criminal silence of the administration, immediate notice from the Deputy Commissioner Kamber Shahdadkot, DIG Larkana, SSP Qamber Shahdadkot and the administration of Taluk Qamber and Warah. Demanding to take strict legal action against the people involved in device holders mafia and said that immediate action should be taken against the corrupt device holders mafia and the writ of law should be established in any case so that hundreds of widows and poor women Actions should be taken to get Benazir Income Support Program without any deduction.



Sunday, March 31, 2024



GAZA STRIP: Palestinians inspecting the damage to a building after overnight Israeli bombardment in Rafah.

## UN expert says Haiti now needs 5,000 foreign police

NEW YORK: Haiti needs up to 5,000 international police to tackle “catastrophic” gang violence that has killed more than 1,500 people in the first three months of this year alone, including many children, according to a United Nations expert.

The comments by William O’Neill came as he presented a new report by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) calling for “immediate and bold action” to tackle the “cataclysmic” situation in the country. Haiti has faced years of political turmoil and violence but instability increased following the 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moise. The subsequent power vacuum boosted the influence of the dozens of armed gangs operating in the country, including powerful groups that control most of the capital, Port-au-Prince.

Unrest intensified in February when heavily armed rivals led by former policeman Jimmy “Barbecue” Cherizier joined forces and unleashed waves of attacks in a bid to remove unelected Prime Minister Ariel Henry. Currently locked out of Haiti, Henry has promised to resign amid the pressure but the violence targeting hospitals, banks and other critical institutions has continued unabated amid a deepening hunger and displacement crisis. The OHCHR report said the number of victims of gang violence surged last year, with 4,451 people killed and 1,668 wounded.

Hundreds of people were lynched, with many others stoned or burned alive by the so-called “self-defence brigades”.

Gangs are recruiting and abusing boys and girls, with some children being killed for trying to escape, the report also said. People have been killed in their homes in reprisal for their alleged support for the police or rival gangs, while others have been killed in the street by snipers or in the crossfire, it added. One of the victims was a three-month-old baby.

Gangs are also using sexual violence “to brutalize, punish and control people,” the report said, citing women raped during gang attacks in neighbourhoods, “in many cases after seeing their husbands killed in front of them”. “The recent escalation of violence has heightened human rights abuses, including killings, kidnappings, and rapes, especially against women and young girls,” the report said, and called on states to support the rapid deployment of a UN-backed international security force.

“All these practices are outrageous and must stop at once,” UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk said in a statement, calling for immediate action in a country on the “brink of collapse”. Following a Haitian government request, the UN Security Council in October approved the deployment of an international mission to help restore secu-

city. Kenya offered to lead it but the force is yet to be deployed.

UN officials in July last year said Haiti needed between 1,000 and 2,000 international police trained to deal with gangs but O’Neill said the situation is so much worse today that double that number and more are needed to help police regain control of security. “It is more than urgent that the force gets in there in some way, shape or form as soon as possible,” O’Neill said, warning that if the deployment “takes much longer, there may not be much” of a police force to support.

Henry, meanwhile, has been stranded in Puerto Rico since the gangs’ coordinated attacks began while he was visiting Kenya, trying to finalise details for the deployment of the UN-approved force. Kenyan Prime Minister William Ruto has since said his country will wait until a transitional council is established in Haiti to deploy up to 1,000 personnel. The Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin and Chad have also pledged personnel.

Separately, Caribbean leaders are facilitating the creation of the new ruling council to be formed from several Haitian political groups following Henry’s resignation announcement. The body is billed to have nine members with voting powers, however internal squabbling over how to share authority has delayed its formation. — Al Jazeera

## Japan to resume funding to UNRWA

TOKYO: Japan is planning to resume funding to the United Nations aid agency for Palestinian refugees after suspending assistance over Israeli claims that some of its staff participated in Hamas’s October 7 attacks. Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa met UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini in Tokyo to discuss ways the agency could enhance its transparency and governance, including ensuring the traceability of funds and the neutrality of staff.

“Japan and the UNRWA confirmed that they will advance final coordination about necessary efforts to resume Japan’s contribution,” Japan’s foreign ministry said in a statement. Tokyo’s move follows the lifting of similar funding pauses by the European Commission, Canada, Australia, Sweden and Finland in recent weeks.

Lazzarini told Switzerland’s Keystone-ATS news agency that UNRWA had secured funding until the end of May after previously warning the agency could be forced to halt operations in March. More than one dozen countries suspended funding to UNRWA in January after Israeli authorities alleged that 12 of its staff were involved in Hamas’s attacks on southern Israel.

Israeli authorities subsequently claimed that more than 450 UNRWA employees are “military operatives in terror groups in Gaza.” The UN, which is probing the claims, has said Israel has not provided it with evidence to support the allegations. Founded in 1949, UNRWA provides food, healthcare and education to some 5.9 million Palestinian refugees. The agency was pledged funding worth \$1.2bn in 2022, with the biggest contributions coming from the United States, Germany and the European Union. — Al Jazeera

Thai court acquits dozens

BANGKOK: A court in Thailand has dropped terrorism charges against 67 people who led antigovernment protests in 2008, occupying and shutting down operations at Bangkok’s two airports for more than a week.

The Bangkok Criminal Court ruled that the so-called “Yellow Shirt” protests, which opposed a government headed by allies of deposed Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, were protected under the constitution because they were peaceful and the protesters were unarmed, according to local media and one of the defendants.

“Our ordeal is not wasted. The ruling helps heal our feelings, and many of the defendants shed tears,” said Panthep Puapongpan, the former spokesperson for the People’s Alliance for Democracy (PAD) group, which led the protests at Don Mueang and Suvarnabhumi airports, its members donning yellow shirts to show loyalty to the Thai monarchy. The 67 defendants in case had been indicted on charges of rebellion and terrorism carrying a possible death penalty. Demanding the resignation of then-Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat, the brother-in-law of billionaire Thaksin, thousands of “Yellow Shirts” took control of the airports, leaving hundreds of thousands of tourists stranded. — Al Jazeera

## World warns Israel to obey ICJ on Gaza aid

GAZA: Countries have called for Israel to obey an International Court of Justice order to allow the unimpeded delivery of aid into Gaza, where famine has set in, as it continues to flout a United Nations Security Council resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire in the enclave.

Judges at the UN’s top court, which is examining South Africa’s charge that Israel is committing genocide, unanimously delivered a legally binding ruling that Israel should “take all necessary and effective measures to ensure, without delay ... the unhindered provision ... of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance” in Gaza. South Africa’s presidency welcomed the order, a provisional measure in its genocide case.

“The fact that Palestinian deaths are not solely caused by bombardment and ground attacks, but also by disease and starvation, indicates a need to protect the group’s right to exist,” it said in a statement. Echoing the judges’ ruling, the presidency said the only way for Israel to fulfil its responsibilities to prevent genocide would be to adhere to the court’s directives and to halt military operations in Gaza.

Earlier in the week, the UN Security Council passed a resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire for the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan and the release of all captives seized in the Hamas-led attack on southern Israel on October 7. Belgium praised the ICJ measure and said “Israel must stop starving civilians and children”. Caroline Gennez, the minister of development cooperation and urban policy, posted on X that Israel’s use of “hunger as a weapon of war” was a “flagrant violation of international law”.

Amnesty International said the World Court highlighted “the continuing catastrophic deterioration” in the situation in Gaza, noting that the order had come days after Israel blocked aid convoys from the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) from entering northern Gaza. “This new ruling must serve as a critical reminder to all states of their clear duty to prevent genocide which requires them to ensure that all of the ICJ’s provisional measures are duly implemented,” the rights group said on X.

Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed that it was “committed to international law” and “places no limitation” on the amount of humanitarian aid allowed to enter the enclave. In a post on X, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lior Haiat blamed “operational challenges” on the ground to delivering aid and Hamas for its “abhorrent efforts to commandeer, hoard, and steal aid” as reasons for current shortages

that have already caused the deaths by malnutrition and dehydration of at least 31 people, including 27 children.

Aid agencies and top UN officials have repeatedly said that Israel has deliberately blocked critical humanitarian supplies from reaching Gaza while bombarding the territory and besieging its few remaining hospitals. With malnutrition among children soaring, the UN’s World Food Programme (WFP) said Israel needed to “surge” humanitarian relief into Gaza or there would be starvation.

“There is nowhere else in the world where so many people face imminent famine,” WFP’s Palestine country director Matthew Hollingworth said, noting that Gaza City is the “epicentre of the crisis”. Only 11 convoys of WFP food aid have reached the north of the Palestinian territory since the start of this year, the agency said.

The ICJ order was not likely to increase the amount of assistance flowing into Gaza unless a ceasefire is reached, analyst Marc Owen Jones told Al Jazeera. “After the last ICJ provisional measures [in January], the amount of aid entering Gaza actually decreased,” the Middle East expert at Hamad Bin Khalifa University said. “Just because the ICJ have put this ruling forward doesn’t necessarily mean Israel is going to comply.”

He said only a ceasefire would lead to a spike in aid, adding that “otherwise, I’m afraid Israel’s response will just be rhetoric”. Palestine’s foreign ministry said the ICJ ruling indicated Israel had “committed heinous crimes”. Nations had to “compel Israel to implement the court’s interim measures, to prevent the genocide of the Palestinian people, hold Israel and its officials accountable for this crime, and hold them accountable for the consequences”, it said in a statement.

Yet, Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told relatives of soldiers held captive in Gaza that only military pressure would secure their release and the army was “preparing to enter Rafah”, in the southernmost tip of Gaza where about 1.5 million displaced Palestinians are sheltering. Mustafa Barghouti, general-secretary of the Palestinian National Initiative, said Israel would not stop its assault until sanctions were imposed. “Netanyahu wants to proceed with this terrible war, and he is now even promising a much bigger massacre by attacking Rafah,” he told Al Jazeera, adding that the muted response from Western governments, with many “providing protection to Israel”, sent a message that there was “no more international law”. — Al Jazeera

## DRC ‘at breaking point’

DR CONGO: War is on the doorstep of eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo’s Goma city and the region is at breaking point, activists and aid workers have said, as the United Nations sounds an alarm over the situation in the Central African country.

“One Congolese person out of four faces hunger and malnutrition,” Bintou Keita, the head of the UN’s DRC peacekeeping mission MONUSCO, told the UN Security Council this week, warning of a rapidly deteriorating security situation and a humanitarian crisis reaching near catastrophic levels. “More than 7.1 million people have been displaced in the country. That is 800,000 people more since my last briefing three months ago,” she said.

Heavy fighting between the Congolese army and armed group M23 has intensified in the eastern part of the country since February, forcing hundreds of thousands of civilians to flee their homes as the rebels make territorial gains. The armed group “is making significant advances and expanding its territory to unprecedented levels”, Keita said at the UN.

This comes as fierce battles between the army and rebels have reached the outskirts of Sake, a village about 25km (15.5 miles) from regional economic hub Goma – marking a major advancement for M23. About 250,000 people fled their homes between mid-February and mid-March, according to UN figures, with the vast majority seeking shelter in and around Goma. Pockets of makeshift tents have popped up along roads or desolated areas with no access to basic aid.

“Things are at a breaking point,” said Shelley Thakral, a World Food Programme spokesperson, after returning to Kinshasa from a trip to Goma. “It’s quite overwhelming – people are living in desperate conditions,” she told Al Jazeera. Many people have fled in a hurry with no belongings and now find themselves in cramped camps with little prospect of returning, she added. The effects are also being felt inside Goma, where civilians have seen the price of basic commodities skyrocketing and health services

being disrupted by a steady stream of refugees coming in. “The situation is at its worst and war is at the door,” said John Anibal, an activist with civil society group LUCHA based in Goma.

As the fighting spreads, it is also intensifying. According to ACLED, an independent data-collecting group, the use of explosives, shelling and air raids since the start of this year has quadrupled compared with the average in 2023. The eastern region of the DRC has been plagued by violence for 30 years.

More than 200 armed groups roam the area, vying for control of its minerals, including cobalt and coltan – two key elements needed to produce batteries for electric vehicles and gadgets, such as PlayStations and smartphones. Among the groups, M23 has posed the biggest threat to the government since 2022 when it picked up arms again after being dormant for more than a decade. Back then, it had conquered large swathes of territory, including Goma, before being pushed back by government forces. — Al Jazeera

## Palestinians drown in desperate attempt to get aid dropped in sea

GAZA STRIP: When aid planes dropped packages into the sea off the northwest coast of the Gaza Strip, Yusuf Ghaben, a father of nine, decided to swim for them. “I pleaded with him not to go because of his age. I begged him, but he said, ‘Maybe God will provide for us, and we can feed our children’,” Khitam Ghaben, Yusuf’s wife, told Al Jazeera. Dressed all in black, she fought back tears. “He went to feed his little ones.”

The wind was strong, creating choppy waves. A number of people waded into the water to grab the aid deliveries and some emerged with boxes in hand. But Yusuf had to be dragged out, as he was unconscious. Once he was pulled from the waves, young men attempted to administer CPR, footage of the incident obtained by Al Jazeera showed. Next to him, his son Jihad yelled in agony, “Father?! Father?!”

Yusuf was one of 12 people who drowned attempting to retrieve aid in as-Sudaniya, off the northwestern coast of Gaza on March 26, according to Palestinian authorities. The people

were driven to desperation by a severe famine in the north of the enclave as a result of Israel’s restrictions on aid access, a prospect that humanitarian groups and officials have warned of for weeks. The Israeli military has killed more than 32,000 Palestinians in its war on Gaza. Many Palestinians have lost family members in air strikes or other military actions.

But now people are dying of hunger and disease, too. More than 27 people have starved to death in Gaza in recent weeks, including 23 children, according to the Gaza Ministry of Health. For the 300,000 people in northern Gaza, the worst affected area, widespread famine is on the horizon, if not already there. International actors have turned to airdrops in attempts to ease the dire humanitarian disaster on the ground. But the aid is nowhere near sufficient, and aid groups have criticised the drops as “symbolic”, as Israel’s allies, including the United States, continue to supply it with offensive arms. The administration of US President Joe Biden, in particular, has to date

refused to condition military aid to Israel, despite growing calls from US politicians to do so.

In some cases, the airdropped aid has even proven lethal, killing five people in one incident when a parachute failed to open. The Ghaben family, who live in Beit Lahiya in the northern Gaza Strip, live in tragic conditions. Now in the sixth month of the war, the famine has begun to take hold. The lack of food and basic necessities needed to survive daily life has many Palestinians living in utter desperation.

“I never imagined it would be my father whom the young men pulled out of the sea. He usually wouldn’t run after aid parcels,” Jihad, Yusuf’s son said. “My father was a good swimmer, but the parachutes and their cords are what strangle swimmers. This has happened to many victims of aid parcel drownings, even the most skilled swimmers.” “My father is gone and will not return. We have been deprived of him,” Anwar, Yusuf’s daughter, said as she wept bitterly. “We are afraid because he was the one who protected us. — Al Jazeera

## Sudan slips into famine as warring sides starve civilians

KHARTOUM: One year after the start of the war in Sudan, children are dying of hunger and sick people are not buying medicine so that they can afford food as the population slips towards famine. In mid-April last year, a rivalry between army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the head of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), Mohamad Hamdan “Hemedti” Dagalo broke into open conflict.

Since then, the fighting and significant destruction, paired with much lower agricultural production, have sent food prices soaring and made it extremely hard to find enough to eat. “Civilians are dying in silence,” said Mukhtar Atif, a spokesperson for the “emergency response rooms” (ERRs), a volunteer network helping civilians across the country. Atif’s network provides a single meal a day to about 45,000 people out of about 70 community kitchens in Khartoum North, one of the three cities of the national capital region.

The ERRs are a lifeline for thousands across Sudan, but their access is limited at times and they rely on donations, most of which come via mobile banking apps, impossible to use since a near-total communication outage began in

February. Without it, hundreds of kitchens were forced to close, and the queues got even longer at the few still functioning, people standing for hours for little more than a pot of fuul, a traditional dish of stewed fava beans. While battles mostly centred in Khartoum in the beginning, they spread outwards as each of the parties consolidated power in the areas it controlled. The fighting has severely restricted the regular movement of food and aid convoys, and the hunger crisis in Sudan has deepened.

Nearly 25 million people – half Sudan’s population – need aid, the UN has estimated. The conflict has forced more than eight million people to flee their homes, according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project. A UN source, who asked that their name be withheld due to the subject’s sensitivity, said both warring sides are posing obstacles, trying to prevent food from getting to areas controlled by their rival.

The army has imposed bureaucratic hurdles: An aid convoy in Port Sudan, under the control of the army, needs five different stamps before being able to move to reach civilians in need – a process that can take from days to weeks, the source said. In January, more than 70 trucks were left waiting for

clearance for more than two weeks. Al Jazeera reached out to an army representative to ask whether it prevented aid from reaching areas under RSF’s control. By the time of publication, the army had not replied.

Where the paramilitaries hold sway, the RSF’s command and control structures make it challenging to facilitate access on the ground, due to a lack of communication between those on the ground and higher-up officials within the RSF. More than 70 aid trucks have been stuck in North Kordofan state since October, the source said, in an area the army controls but surrounded by RSF. The convoy cannot leave unless their safe passage is guaranteed through some form of taxation, be it money, goods or fuel. RSF spokesperson, Abdel Rahman al-Jaali, did not respond to written questions about whether his forces are profiteering from aid convoys as alleged.

The food crisis has been compounded by the nearly two-month mobile network shutdown, which has also cut people off from remittances sent by relatives overseas, a critical lifeline for many that they have been using to receive via mobile banking apps. Over the past three weeks, Elon Musk’s

Starlink satellite communication service has offered rare moments of connectivity.

But even that has become a business: In some areas, people have to pay up to 4,000 Sudanese pounds (\$6.60) to connect for 10 minutes. Without cash, people have begun resorting to extreme mechanisms to put food on the table. Parents are skipping meals for their children, selling their last possessions, begging for money or diverting money from medicine to food, WFP officials and activists on the ground said.

Dallia Abdelmoniem, a political commentator working in policy and advocacy for Sudanese think tank Fikra, received reports of women forced to exchange sex for food or become mistresses to RSF fighters to ensure their families’ safety and access to food. A second activist who has been working with female victims of gender-based violence in Sudan said survival sex has emerged as a “common trend”. In tandem with the hunger crisis is the collapse of the healthcare system. Each week, two or three children die of hunger at the Al-Baluk Hospital, the only remaining functioning paediatric health facility in the capital, Khartoum,

according to a Lancet report on March 16.

UK charity Save the Children said 230,000 children, pregnant women and new mothers could die in the coming months due to hunger. All these factors have paved the way for a humanitarian catastrophe, experts and aid groups have warned, as May’s lean season – when food stores are depleted and prices are at their highest – approaches. But food monitoring groups and UN agencies have warned that the season has already begun, as fighting has forced farmers to abandon their land.

Sudan’s cereal production in 2023 was nearly halved, according to a report published last week by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The sharpest reductions were reported where conflict was most intense, including the greater Kordofan state and regions in Darfur where FAO estimated production was 80 percent below average. Nearly five million people are one step away from famine, according to the World Food Programme (WFP). Another 18 million people face acute food insecurity, a threefold increase since 2019, WFP data shows.

In December, the RSF captured

Gezira state – a hub for trade and humanitarian operations and Sudan’s breadbasket that used to produce nearly half the country’s wheat and stock nearly all of its grain. “We are expecting the situation to deteriorate with a real possibility to see hunger at catastrophic levels,” said Leni Kinzli, WFP’s spokesperson for Sudan.

In the “most likely scenario” famine will break out across most of Sudan by June, killing half a million people, the Clingendael Institute, a Dutch think tank, reported. In the worst-case scenario, it added, famine could kill one million people. For the most vulnerable, that scenario is reality. A picture shared with Al Jazeera in early March showed a skeletal three-year-old Ihsan Adam Abdullah lying on the floor in the Kalma camp, south of Darfur.

In refugee camps across Darfur, families cannot get even one meal a day as they have not received aid for nearly 11 months, said Adam Rojal, spokesperson of the General Coordination of Darfur Displaced People and Refugees. And when available, food is sorghum flour and water. A week after Rojal sent the image of the three-year-old boy, he sent an update. Abdullah had died of hunger. — Agencies

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Agri-sector needs reforms and investment

CHIEF Minister Punjab, Maryam Nawaz has officially approved the 'Nawaz Sharif Kisan Card' through which over 500,000 farmers will be provided loans of Rs150 billion in a year on easy terms and installments. According to the details, the Chief Minister presided over a special meeting that reviewed the proposal to introduce a law to prevent the use of agricultural land for residential purposes and also deliberated on restructuring the Punjab Seed Corporation and Punjab Agricultural Research Board to enhance their performances and make them productive for domestic farming. The Punjab government will provide various types of subsidies and agricultural loans through the Nawaz Sharif Kisan Card to purchase the best seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides. In addition, model agriculture centers would be established at Districts and Division level to impart knowledge, expert advice, and farmers' training on Modern agricultural equipment and machinery. As said, a Public-private partnership would be forged to establish model plots and enhance Research and Development (R&D) in the agriculture field through teamwork and cooperation.

Pakistan's agriculture sector faces several critical challenges that impact its growth and sustainability, while the situation worsens every passing day. A sharp decrease in cultivating land, high cost of crop yield, a lack of water resources, and high prices of electricity, fertilizers, and seeds rendered farming unmanageable for the common farmers. Climate change has made farming more challenging because of massive monsoon flooding followed by severe droughts, salinization, and soil erosion. Unexpected rains and flash floods have led to substantial losses in crops, including a 45% loss in cotton, 85% loss in dates, 31% loss in rice, 7% in sugarcane, etc. Unfortunately, extreme weather events both drought and flooding have hit crops hard. Punjab and Sindh are the major agricultural hubs that not only fulfill the domestic food requirements but earn valuable foreign reserves through exports of agri-products including wheat, rice, sugar, mangos, dates, etc. contributing to the overall improvement in the national economy. Punjab is the fertile heartland and a major wheat-producing region in Pakistan. The province contributes significantly to the national wheat supply, which is crucial for food security. The provincial agriculture sector faces a complex web of challenges, and concerted efforts are needed to safeguard food production and livelihoods. A study from 1979 to 2020 investigated the impact of climate change on food security in Punjab. Rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, and wind speed fluctuations affect crop yields. Unfortunately, only about 28% of the cultivable land in Pakistan is irrigated as compared to 80% in neighbouring India. This deficiency arises from an inefficient water management system and inadequate infrastructure. Pakistan's average crop yield per hectare is significantly lower as compared to the other countries which is the result of outdated farming methods, poor seed quality, and use of obsolete technology.

The Punjab government has launched a magnificent initiative to help support farmers through loans, subsidies, and training, revive agri-sector, and enhance food security in the province. It is only one aspect of the gigantic problem wherein massive reforms and bulk investment are needed to increase cultivation area and expand irrigation facilities through the construction of dams, canals, and efficient water management systems along with the adaptation to climate change, and expansion in forests and vegetation to reduce the worst impact of global warming. Historically, financial burden, low-quality seeds, and a heavy yield cost have not only destroyed the agri-sector but significantly contributed toward headline inflation and food insecurity in the country. The government must work to reduce production costs through the availability of cheaper electricity for tube wells, cost-effective fertilizers, and pesticides which will not only revive farming but reduce the cost of crop yield and unrestricted price hikes. Although Pakistan's agriculture sector faces a complex web of challenges, concerted efforts are needed to safeguard food production and livelihoods. Pakistan is an agricultural economy, hence we must overcome our negligence and deficiencies to excel in this field in the world.

Pak-Afghan trade ties

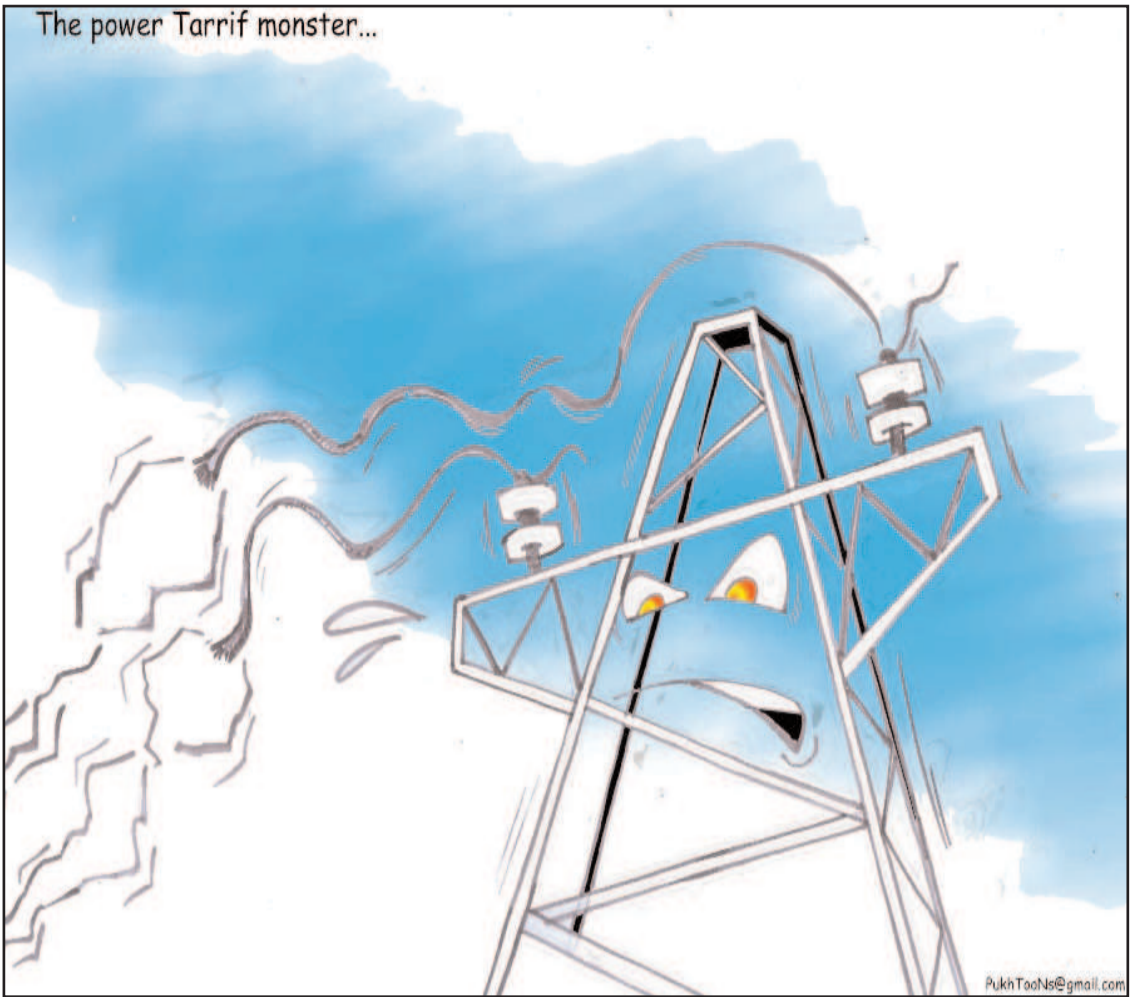
PAKISTAN and Afghanistan reached certain agreements during trade talks in Kabul, including beginning negotiations on a revised transit trade agreement and implementing a temporary admission document (TAD) for trade vehicle drivers. According to the Pakistan Foreign Office, Pakistan's side is encouraged by the progress made on multiple issues and remains committed to promoting trade and people-to-people ties with Afghanistan. There have been breakthroughs in several aspects including a bilateral preferential trade agreement, air transit, the operation of border crossings 24/7 for trade purposes, and addressing the issues in transit trade that passes through Pakistan.

Pak-Afghan bilateral ties have witnessed a record low after the Afghan interim rulers refused to cooperate with Islamabad on the issue of banned terror outfits including the TTP and cross-border terrorism which persistently leashes out across Pakistan. The recent trade talks were the first major bilateral interaction between Islamabad and Kabul amid tensions following Pakistan's airstrikes in Afghanistan's border region against terrorist groups on March 18. Historically, both sides made significant progress on a wide range of issues. 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.

Pakistan also expressed willingness to facilitate the transfer of goods from international containers to regional containers (cross-stuffing) in the ports of Karachi in the next six months. An agreement was also reached regarding preferential trade, where both sides will give tariff preferences to 10 items of export goods, eight of which are agricultural and two industrial. Both sides also reached a consensus on the transfer of goods through both countries' airports in the form of multi-modal air transit, which will start in the next two months. Meanwhile, numerous other administrative issues have also been agreed upon from both sides that will surely facilitate bilateral and transit trade and ultimately benefit both nations in the future. Today's world, particularly the Western nations has progressed and achieved its destination through teamwork and cooperation. In the AfPak case, the decades-long relationship and brotherhood had been sacrificed just for the sake of a political agenda and narrow vision. Peaceful coexistence, trade, and economic cooperation are the only way forward for both nations. If someone perceives this reality through dialogue, conspiracy, or wagging a war. The leaders must have a broader agenda of nation-building, good neighborliness, and well-being of the entire region, otherwise, clash and chaos will not benefit either side.

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Being branded as 'extremist' won't deter Palestine Action

Lisa Minerva Luxx

THE United Kingdom is plummeting into a paranoid deluge of authoritarianism. Since October, our government's steadfast support for Israel has ushered in a new age of state coercion, exposing in its wake the artifice of democracy in Britain.

In response to weekly pro-Palestine protests calling for an end to Israel's onslaught on Gaza attended by hundreds of thousands in London and other major British cities, the Conservative Party government expanded police powers and moved to weaponise concerns over so-called "extremism". Its leading figures referred to peaceful protesters exercising their democratic rights as "mobs" and "hate marchers", classifying any and all opposition to Israel's war and occupation as hate and racism.

On March 1, in an impromptu address to the nation responding to the by-election victory of an independent candidate who campaigned on a pro-Palestine platform, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak condemned what he deemed a "shocking increase in extremist disruption and criminality" in the country, and committed to implementing a robust new framework that would allow his government to tackle "extremism" at its roots – a framework many feared would be another attempt by the unelected Sunak government to curtail political freedoms and make a mockery of the UK's democracy.

Two weeks later, these fears were realised when Communities Secretary Michael Gove unveiled a new "extremism" definition under which certain groups will be blocked from government funding and meeting officials.

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

anything that would "intentionally create a permissive environment for others to achieve" the above aims.

This is an intentionally vague, purposefully subjective definition that would serve to do nothing but silence, marginalise, and eventually criminalise many Muslim communities, civil liberties organisations, and others campaigning to uphold human rights and international law in Palestine. Essentially, it has the potential to brand as an "extremist" any individual or collective who does not align with the government's unconditionally pro-Israel stance.

Our group, Palestine Action, is also facing the threat of being labelled as "extremist" due to the principled actions our front-line members have taken to put an end to Britain's complicity in Israel's occupation and ethnic cleansing of Palestinian territories. The main target of Palestine Action's campaign has been the UK subsidiary factories and offices of Elbit Systems – Israel's largest arms manufacturer that supply some 85 percent of the land and air munitions used by its military.

Since its formation in 2020, Palestine Action has forced the permanent closure of Elbit's Oldham factory and pushed the company to abandon its London headquarters. In 2022, the group's protest action led to the dissolution of contracts worth 280 million pounds (\$353.6m) between the UK Ministry of Defence and Elbit Systems. Our campaign has also successfully impelled several leading British and European companies to cut ties with Elbit permanently. We have long known that the success of our campaign against Elbit Systems, and Israeli interests in general, has upset the government. This is why it came as no surprise that in the draft plan of Gove's new definition, Palestine Action was named as a group that could be captured in the new, extended "extremism" bracket.

However, we will never be deterred by such intimidation attempts. As a network, we have already

faced arrests, house raids, police brutality and imprisonment. In 2023, it was exposed in the British press how Israeli embassy officials have been pressing the Attorney General's Office (AGO) to intervene in the prosecution of Palestine Action protesters on their behalf.

We have not given into such undemocratic efforts to silence us in the past, and we will not do so in the future, whether our group ends up being classified as an "extremist" entity under Gove's new definition or not. The persecution we face in the UK is nothing compared with the horrors communities in occupied Palestine are being subjected to by Israel, with the backing of our government. With that in mind, we see no way forward other than continuing with our campaign, with integrity and determination.

The state's renewed attempts to monitor and bully our movement into silence since the beginning of this latest war on Gaza did not break our resolve or weaken the growing public support for our cause. In fact, Palestine Action has received thousands of fresh sign-ups since October. We have new recruits from across the social spectrum: A young mother of toddlers, a TV producer, many doctors, delivery drivers, primary school teachers, and disability support workers ... People of all ages, classes, religions and experience approached us and said they want to do their part. These new members took on many different roles, including arrestee and justice-system support.

The overwhelming majority – if not all – of these new recruits said that since the beginning of this latest onslaught on Gaza, they have become disillusioned with the façade of democracy in the UK. They told us they have lost faith in marching, signing petitions and writing to their legislators as they helplessly watched on their screens weapon technologies, that continue to be supplied by Britain, shred Palestinian bodies into pieces. They explained that they chose

to join Palestine Action because they measured their Western comfort against their conscience, and felt obligated to do more. That they are ready to dedicate themselves to a practice of justice which leads to material change.

Most of all, they said they now refuse to feel powerless – no more feeling useless at the sight of a mass grave, babies shivering in terror, young boys turned skeletal by famine, body parts hanging from walls, or a father listening for the screams of his daughter under the rubble. Each allegation against Palestine Action unwittingly sheds light on the crimes our campaigners are using their bodies to stop – the most barbaric crimes against humanity.

If a house is on fire with a child inside and a passer-by must kick down the door to stop the child from being burned alive, then the door becomes immaterial. British government's new definition of "extremism", however, appear more concerned with the fate of the door than that of the child – and even less concerned with asking who started the fire, and who supplied the matches. But one cannot speak of the passer-by and the door without speaking of the child and the fire.

As tensions continue to rise in the UK, supporters of Palestine must not lose sight of their uprightness. Alongside other principled groups, including CAGE, Black Lives Matter and Sisters Uncut, Palestine Action will continue to model steadfastness and focus. It is not a time to be subsumed by rhetoric when actions are urgently needed. We are being asked by numerous media outlets how – if brandished – this new "extremist" label would affect our movement. Our response is clear: it won't. If a just democracy was functioning healthily, Palestine Action would not need to exist. Palestine Action's commitment is to Palestinians and the struggle against a genocidal occupation; we will not stop until British complicity stops and Israel's largest arms manufacturer no longer operates out of the UK.

Aljazeera

We must take heed of air war in Ukraine

Luke Coffey

MORE than two years into the war in Ukraine, the front lines are mostly static, at least for now. Russian and Ukrainian forces have both built elaborate defensive lines consisting of complex systems of trenches that would not have looked out of place on the Western Front during the First World War.

While these fortifications have not prevented either side from trying to attack, the few minor territorial gains have come at a high cost to life and equipment. But while on the ground the system of trenches and vast fortifications might seem like they are from a previous century, in the skies above the battlefield the future nature of warfare is rapidly evolving.

Given the difficulties in making progress on the ground, both sides have taken to the air. Over the past couple of weeks, Russia has launched hundreds of suicide drones (meaning the drone does not return to base after its mission and instead flies directly into the intended target), cruise missiles and ballistic missiles against Ukrainian targets. Targets have included civilian apartment blocks, electrical power plants and substations, and even a major dam.

Meanwhile, Ukraine has launched a steady wave of domestically produced suicide drones that have been able to strike targets deep inside the Russian Federation. It is too early to say which side will gain the upper hand in this air war. So far, Russia has fired more than 7,000 missiles of all kinds at Ukraine. The world has not seen airstrikes at this level and intensity for decades.

In February 2022, when Russia launched its initial missile salvos against Ukrainian targets, few could have guessed that more than two years later, Russian forces would still be burning through its stockpiles at such a rate. It has taken the Russian defense industry months to try to meet this new demand. Even so, it is estimated that Russia can only build between 115 and 130 longer-range missiles a month. In the past 10 days alone, Russian forces have fired about 120 missiles. Clearly the recent tempo of missile strikes is not sustainable for a long period of time. However, even a few dozen missiles a month can have a major impact in the absence of adequate air defenses.

While Russia might be burning through its missile inventory, its allies have been willing to help fill the gaps. There is evidence that North Korean missiles are being used to hit targets in Ukraine, for example. There is also extensive cooperation between Moscow and Tehran when it comes to drones. Thousands of Iranian-produced Shahed suicide drones have been supplied to Russia for use in Ukraine since the war started. Last year, ground was broken on a new factory in Russia's Tatarstan region that is expected to be producing thousands of Shahed drones by 2025.

As for Ukraine, creativity, ingenuity, boldness and,

above all, survival instincts have allowed it to counter Russia's air threat fairly successfully. Ukrainians have surprised the world with the rapid development of its own drone fleet, which is able to strike targets deep inside Russia. While the exact details are not publicly known, it is thought that Ukraine has produced at least 15 different types of drones since February 2022. Last week, the world saw firsthand the effectiveness of Ukraine's homemade drones when they struck several Russian oil refineries. At least 13 refineries have been hit by Ukrainian drones so far this year, with the most distant target located in the Samara Oblast, about 800 kilometers from Ukraine.

The ability to hit such targets is important to Ukraine because Western sanctions have been weak in terms of cracking down on Russian oil exports. Moscow depends on oil revenue to generate income for its war chest. Instead of relying on watered-down Western sanctions, Ukrainians have therefore taken matters into their own hands. The results of the drone strikes have already been felt inside Russia; it is estimated that 12 percent of Russian oil-refinery capacity has been put out of commission. Consequently, all Russian exports of gasoline to global markets have been halted until further notice.

Even with Ukraine's recent successes with its drone program, however, Kyiv remains on the defensive when it comes to the air war. The Ukrainians have done a good job of using air defense systems provided by the West, such as the patriot missile system, to counter the Russian missile threat. However, delays by the US Congress in authorizing additional aid for Ukraine mean that stocks of the interceptors needed for these systems are starting to run low. This probably explains why more Russian missiles have been hitting their targets in recent weeks.

Additionally, Ukraine has only been provided with enough advanced air defense systems to protect major cities, such as Kyiv and Odesa. Other population centers lack comprehensive air defense coverage, and soldiers serving on the front lines are suffering, too. This year will be a race, therefore, between Ukraine's allies to provide advanced air defense systems, and Russia's allies to provide more ballistic missiles and drones. At the same time, Ukraine will be working overtime to expand its indigenous drone program in an effort to keep pace with Russia's domestic missile production.

While the conflict seems to be slow-going on the ground, the ongoing barrage of missiles and drones launched by both sides serves as a reminder that it will not end any time soon. The war in Ukraine might seem to be thousands of kilometers away from most people, but it should serve as a wake-up call for everyone. The use of drones and advanced missiles in conflicts will only increase. Policymakers must learn the lessons now to better prepare for the future.

Arab News

Manila must be warned against horrors of war

Yang Xiao

IN June 1914, the major European powers were forced into a war by the shooting down of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, in Sarajevo, which was part of the relatively small country of Serbia at the time. The ensuing World War I was one of the darkest moments in history, leaving indelible scars that still haunt many countries across the world.

Exactly 110 years later, another relatively small country, the Philippines, has been making provocative moves and engaging in reckless brinkmanship, in an attempt to draw major powers into a conflict, which will have unprecedented consequences for the Asia-Pacific region. The Philippines' provocative moves are targeted some islands and reefs in the South China Sea, including Ren'ai Jiao (Reef),

Huangyan Dao (Island) and Tiexian Jiao (Reef). For example, Manila's "abnormal rotation and resupply" to Ren'ai Jiao far exceeds the normal humanitarian supply, encouraging fake fishermen to live on maritime features around Huangyan Dao.

In total violation of the commitment it has made in the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea on "refraining from action of inhabiting on the presently uninhabited islands, reefs, shoals, cays, and other features", Manila has organized a large number of personnel to raid Tiexian Jiao.

Although the Philippines has launched several such assaults, there is a common feature to them: they all highlight the military factor, in order to test whether the United States will fulfill the promises it has made in the US-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty of 1951. To put it simply, the Philippines

has been resorting to military aggression, on the pretext of its armed forces being attacked by their Chinese counterparts, in a bid to prompt the US military to intervene in the matter, without bothering that this could spark a confrontation, leading to a war between the two major powers.

On Tuesday, Philippine Secretary of Defense Gilberto Teodoro publicly "consoled" the Philippine soldiers wounded during the Ren'ai Jiao "abnormal resupply" mission and claimed that "the Armed Forces of the Philippines are under attack". By declaring that these actions and injuries will have "strategic implications", Manila, it seems, is preparing to play the trick-and-trap game.

On March 21, a Philippine Coast Guard brigadier general led a team to land on Tiexian Jiao and

claimed China had launched "helicopter airflow attack" on the Philippines' maritime features. And on March 5, Manila announced that the commander of the Western Military Region of the Philippines was reportedly "wounded" in a "Chinese water cannon attack" while hiding in the "resupply vessel".

Philippine politicians' flirtation with the US in the hope of gaining the upper hand in the maritime dispute with China is extremely dangerous. The lessons of World War I should be heeded, especially by small states, because triggering a conflict will serve no country's interest. As for the US, it will commit a grave mistake if it intervenes in any confrontation between Beijing and Manila. The US has no incentive in backing the Philippines' in the latter's illegal, aggressive territorial ambitions. Also,

falling into the trap of a regional conflict laid by Manila would be detrimental to the US' national strategy.

US decision-makers should realize that before Gavril Princip fired that fateful shot in Sarajevo, no one had imagined that Europe would be caught in a bloody World War I. They should also realize that the US' military intervention on behalf of the Philippines would also be disastrous for neighboring countries. The South China Sea has been a sea of peace and cooperation. Thanks to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, the countries around the South China Sea are seizing the opportunities to advance their economic development, improve the livelihoods of their peoples, and maintain peace in the region.

Only a handful of leaders

in the Philippines, ignoring the increasing challenges, such as rising prices, at home, are stirring up the extreme sentiments of the people by feeding them anti-China rhetoric. What they don't realize is that once the "Sarajevo gunshot" is fired in Asia, the innocent people in East and Southeast Asian countries will become the biggest victims of war.

China follows the principles of peace, development and win-win cooperation. And its exemplary restraint in the face of the Philippines' brinkmanship has prevented the situation in the South China Sea from spiraling out of hand. Therefore, the international community should persuade the Philippines to stop playing the dangerous game and, instead, return to the path of peace, cooperation and development. The "Sarajevo gunshot" should not be heard in the 21st century — in Asia or elsewhere.

The China Daily

# Beit Daras and Gaza: An intergenerational tale of struggle against erasure

ON this day 76 years ago, my ancestral village Beit Daras, located in the northern Gaza district of Palestine, then under the British mandate, was attacked by Jewish militias. The Nakba, or the Zionist ethnic cleansing of Palestine, had already begun. The systematic torment, brutalisation and killing of Palestinians by Zionist militias, aimed at establishing a Jewish ethno-state in historical Palestine, would result in the expulsion of at least 750,000 Palestinians.

As I watch the genocide unfold in Gaza today, I cannot help but reflect on the fate of my village and my ancestors. Just as my grandparents were expelled from their village as children, their descendants are experiencing the same trauma, as they face displacement, injury and death at the hands of the same genocidal Zionist project. Much of what I know about Beit Daras comes from my father, Ramzy Baroud, who dedicated many years to researching and chronicling the history of our family and of Beit Daras.

The grounds of our village had been populated for centuries and had witnessed the rise and fall of various empires and the rule of various conquerors – from the Romans to the Crusaders, to the Mamluks, and the Ottomans. Its long history was imprinted on this quaint community, which in 1948 had a population of 3,190 indigenous Palestinians. Beit Daras was home to my great grandparents, Zainab and Mohammed, my grandfather Mohammed's parents. It was also home to Mariam and Mohammed, my grandmother Zarefah's parents.

Zainab and Mohammed lived off their farm, where they grew fruits and grains. Mohammed was also a skilled basket weaver and would often travel to the Palestinian port city of Yaffa to sell his baskets at the bustling old markets. Mariam and Mohammed were also farmers

and made a living from their land. Both of these families had their roots in Beit Daras.

On March 27, the Haganah Zionist militia attacked the village with mortar fire from the neighbouring Zionist colony Tabiyya, killing nine villagers and burning crops. The horror stories of the Nakba had already reached Beit Daras and residents were mobilising to protect their community. They raised money to buy rifles, with many women selling their gold to support the resistance efforts. The small Beit Daras force was no match for the well-equipped, British-trained Jewish militia, but they nevertheless held their ground for almost two months. "The men fought like lions," Um Adel, who was just a young girl during the Nakba, told my father.

In mid-May, the Haganah surrounded the village, bombarding it indiscriminately. This was the final battle for Beit Daras. Um Mohammed, who survived the onslaught described the scene to my father: "The town was under bombardment, and it was surrounded from all directions. There was no way out. They surrounded it all, from the direction of Isdud, al-Sawafir and everywhere. We wanted to pursue a way out. The armed men [the Beit Daras fighters] said they were going to check on the road to Isdud, to see if it was open." The fighters came back from scouting the road and said a passage had opened for women and children to escape. But that passage was a trap.

"The Jews let the people get out, and then they whipped them with bombs and machine guns. More people fell than those who were able to run. My sister and I ... started running through the fields; we'd fall and get up. My sister and I escaped together holding each other's hand. The people who took the main road were either killed or

injured, and those who went through the fields. The firing was falling on the people like sand," Um Mohammed recalled. David Ben-Gurion, the head of the Jewish Agency at that time, wrote in his diary that Zionist forces had massacred at least 50 Palestinians that day.

The villagers who were not killed, were expelled. On the eve of their expulsion, Zainab and Mohammed collected a few necessities, preparing their family donkey for the trek. They bid what they did not know would be a final farewell to their precious house which they had built themselves. Mariam and Mohammad also prepared to leave. Mohammad had taken up arms to defend the village and Mariam had refused to leave without him. The pain of failing to stop the Zionist militias weighed heavy on Mohammed, who gradually fell ill, as he and his family made their way out of Beit Daras – he and Mariam walking and his children, including two-year-old Zarefah, riding atop the donkey.

Dodging Zionist militias' mortar and sniper fire, the two families made it to what is now called the Gaza Strip, their feet bloodied from the long walk. They were no longer residents of Beit Daras; they had become refugees in Gaza's Bureij and Nuseirat camps, with nothing to their name. On top of their irreplaceable loss, upon pitching their tent in Gaza, Mohammed, Zarefah's father fell into a coma, dying shortly after. He left my great-grandmother Mariam, who refused to remarry and took care of her children by herself.

While my grandparents, Zarefah and Mohammed, were laid to rest many years ago, much of the Baroud family remained in Gaza, being forbidden by the Zionist entity from returning to their ancestral village, but spending their lives dreaming of the day Palestine

would be liberated, and they would return home. This piece of paradise that they were forced to leave behind, adorned with green rolling hills and pastures, vineyards and fragrant citrus groves and almond orchards, would become but a fantasy for the us, the young generation.

The story of the Baroud family is not unique. Approximately 80 percent of Gaza's population consists of refugees from the Nakba, the majority of them made refugees once again by the US-backed Israeli-executed genocide. The Nuseirat and Bureij camps where my grandparents had spent their childhoods, fell in love, and raised their families, were largely decimated. And just as the people of Beit Daras resisted, the people of Gaza today have also risen up against this attempted Zionist settler conquest.

As we witness the genocide unfolding in Gaza, our ancestors' lived experiences of the Nakba feel that much closer. Seventy-six years later, we face the imminent threat of colonial erasure just as they did all those years ago. While we mourn the loss of many members of our family, our commitment and dedication to our grandparents' dream of returning home grows infinitely stronger. Though Beit Daras has remained uninhabited since our last Palestinian warrior fell, the remnants of its homes, and two lone pillars of the Grand Mosque where my grandfather used to pray as a boy remain, eagerly awaiting our return.

When that sweet reunion finally takes place, we will rebuild Beit Daras's masjid with its original white pillars, resurrect its houses, and replant its orchards and fields with its native trees and crops. Though the lives of so many Beit Daras villagers and their children and grandchildren were violently taken, we will embed their spirit in every mud brick that is laid, as we rebuild the village.

# The heroism of Ukraine and nihilism of Johnson

LATE morning Monday, from Occupied Crimea, the Russians launched two hypersonic ballistic missiles at Kyiv. Our friends heard the explosion and the air raid sirens simultaneously – which is unusual. Hypersonic missiles are faster than the speed of sound.

Fragments hit the Academy of Decorative and Applied Arts and Design, where the students, with no time to get to the shelter, lay down on the ground. Kyiv is dependent on air defense. In turn, air defense is dependent on American aid, and that aid is currently hostage to House Speaker Mike Johnson, who is at the moment among Russian President Vladimir Putin's most powerful allies.

We are American Slavacists and have just returned from Kyiv. It's not easy to get there these days. The trip takes at least 36 hours from New York. We took an overnight flight from JFK to Warsaw – where the war does not feel far away. From Warsaw we rode four hours by train to the Polish border city of Chelm. And from Chelm we rode another 13 hours to the Ukrainian capital, in a Ukrainian train that arrived precisely on time.

Neither of us had been to Kyiv since shortly before Covid shut down the world. "Did you hear how Covid ended?" – goes the Ukrainian joke. "Boom! Boom! Boom!" Our colleagues at the Kyiv School of Economics wanted us to feel safe, so they hired Andrii, a tall, retired police officer, to be our security consultant. He advised us to install two air-raid apps, and to keep track of missiles' location on Telegram.

On Sunday evening we were on our way back to Kyiv from Bucha, the Kyivan suburb where Russian forces carried out a massacre in March 2022, when the first alert showed up on our phones. "It's OK," Andrii texted, "the missile is on the other side of the city. Text me when you're home safely."

In Ukraine the air raid alerts are incessant. The missiles keep coming. Everyone has lost someone. But Kyiv is thriving in its own way. In the center of the city a new bookstore called Sens has a large Ukrainian literature section and a well-lighted cafe serving quinoa salad with avocado. There are chic coffee houses, and a Crimean Tatar restaurant with fabulous beet meze and babaganoush. There are two retrospective exhibits featuring the late Ukrainian New Wave painter Oleksandr Roytburd. One of them has a constant line winding out of the Pinchuk gallery and across the street towards the Bessarabka market. Roytburd succumbed to cancer, complicated by Covid, in 2021.

The monumentalist painter Alla Horska was killed in 1970, most likely by the KGB. Her first retrospective is now open at the Ukrainian House, a cavernous Soviet-era exhibition hall near the city center. When an air raid siren went off, the exhibit guide encouraged the visitors to relocate to the bomb shelter: "There is a concession stand and bookstore on the basement floor. Please go down and have a cup of coffee." At the Kyiv School of Economics, Tymofiy Mylovyanov, the school's president and Ukraine's former trade minister, showed us the underground lecture rooms to which we would relocate in case of an air raid alarm. In public sessions at KSE, Amelia spoke with the poets Ilya Kiva and Olena Huseinova about the untranslatability of war, and the urgency of translating despite its impossibility.

Marci spoke with the philosophers Tetyana Ogarkova and Volodymyr Yermolenko about Grenzerfahrungen – "boundary experiences." What happens when the edge becomes the center? In academic discussion death was once a metaphor – the death of metaphysics, the death of the author. Now death is no longer a metaphor. The overflowing audience stayed for over two hours to think about philosophy and war. This February, Putin bragged to Tucker Carlson about the 1654 Pereiaslav Treaty between the Cossack leader Bohdan Khmelnytsky and Moscow. This treaty, he claimed, gave Russia the right to control contempo-

rary Ukraine. Even Carlson seemed surprised at the anachronism.

Khmelnytsky is a Cossack leader remembered as a nation-builder in Ukraine, as a unifier in Russia, as a traitor in Poland. Jews remember him as an instigator of pogroms. In a discussion at the Kyiv Fulbright offices about Khmelnytsky's disparate legacies, the historian Oleksandr Halenko thought Amelia, a Jewish studies scholar, had glossed too quickly over the pogroms. "Were you just being polite?" he wanted to know. Ukraine, fighting for its survival, is also rethinking its historical icons.

In Kyiv, everyone is used to the war. They do not – cannot – ignore it, but they are habituated to a rhythm of life shaped by curfews and air raids that can interrupt everything at any moment. They know that debates about whether

Hamill – alias Luke Skywalker – has been doing outreach for Ukraine. A woman at a kiosk asked what we thought of the barrage. "I waited in the bathroom," she said. "The metro's too far and I don't have a basement."

That morning Ukrainian air defense shot down all 31 Russian cruise and ballistic missiles. Andrii showed us photos, taken from his apartment window, of the defense rockets reaching their targets. Over a dozen people were injured on the outskirts of Kyiv, when shards of the intercepted missiles fell; some buildings were damaged and there are large craters in the ground. Kyiv has the best air defense in Ukraine; the country lacks the resources to defend other cities this way. These other cities have not fared as well.

Before dawn on Thursday alone, Russia – a country where millions of citizens are too impoverished to have indoor

**The air raid siren came at 3:21. We put on our shoes, grabbed our jackets and phones and went down to the underground parking garage repurposed as the hotel's bomb shelter. Phones lit up the garage. Everyone was following the Telegram channels with crowd-sourced news. Marci's former student, Sergii, texted on a group chat: "sitting in the corridor, between the walls." His friend responded: "please go to the bomb shelter." There are levels of choice: stay in bed; go into the bathtub, or the corridor, or the basement bomb shelter, or the metro stations - which are deeper.**

the West could have pacified Putin by reassuring him that NATO would never expand or whether Ukraine should now raise a white flag and negotiate make little sense. Putin and his allies have embraced a practice of destruction seemingly for the sake of destruction.

And Ukrainians know that neither negotiation nor surrender is possible. They are determined to keep living.

At 12:49 a.m. on Thursday March 21, Andrii texted us a message prefaced with a red exclamation point: "Reconnaissance groups report the taking off of 10 Tu-95s from the Olenya air base. Do not ignore the air raid alarm!" Two minutes later he texted again: "Most likely between 5 and 6 am there will be a massive rocket attack. In the event of an alarm, go to the shelter."

The two of us are humanities professors, not security specialists. We googled Tupolev, or Tu-95: it was a large turboprop-powered bomber, designed in the 1950s to carry multiple missiles at once across great distances. Russia used them in Syria in 2016. Now they were being launched from the Olenya airbase, south of the Russian city of Murmansk. The air raid siren came at 3:21. We put on our shoes, grabbed our jackets and phones and went down to the underground parking garage repurposed as the hotel's bomb shelter. Phones lit up the garage. Everyone was following the Telegram channels with crowd-sourced news.

Marci's former student, Sergii, texted on a group chat: "sitting in the corridor, between the walls." His friend responded: "please go to the bomb shelter." There are levels of choice: stay in bed; go into the bathtub, or the corridor, or the basement bomb shelter, or the metro stations - which are deeper. Built in the 1950s with the intention of doubling as shelters in the event of a NATO attack, they are the safest option. Sergii sent screen shots from the Telegram channels he followed: "don't relax, a second wave is coming in fifteen minutes." Sergii's sister heard the explosions at 5:00 a.m. and then went back to sleep. She had decided to take her chances. "healthy sleep=healthy psyche," she texted.

We stayed in the bomb shelter while 31 missiles reached Kyiv oblast. The alert ended at 6:10 a.m., after 2 hours and 49 minutes. Everyone's apps then announced in unison: "ATTENTION! THE AIR ALERT IS OVER. MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU!" All air raid alerts end with "May the force be with you!" Mark

plumbing — spent some \$390 million firing missiles at Ukraine, according to Agiya Zagrebelska, head of sanctions policy at the National Agency on Corruption Prevention. The nihilism of it is staggering. "How many schools could you build with the equivalent of the money...?" Arad Benkő, the Austrian ambassador to Ukraine, texted us.

"Pessimists don't win wars," Admiral Rob Bauer, chair of the NATO military committee, said to the audience at the Kyiv Security Forum a few hours later. He noted that Ukrainian air defense had done a spectacular job that morning intercepting every single missile launched at Kyiv. "There is nothing you cannot do," Bauer told Ukrainians, "the only thing you need is our help."

But renewed help has not been forthcoming. The United States has essentially cut off Ukraine, and Ukrainian air defense is quickly running out of ammunition. It is a matter of weeks - or days - before it will be gone. "I'm glad you came when you did," the literary translator Iaroslava Strikha told us. "In a couple of weeks we may not have the defense missiles to keep Kyiv safe."

Mike Johnson, beholden to Donald Trump, who has praised Putin, is holding 42 million people in Ukraine hostage. Across Ukraine children are continually buried under rubble, killed by the Kremlin's barrage of missiles. Ukrainians know their lives depend on whether or not Johnson brings the National Security Supplemental to the House floor. Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians know that their lives, too, depend on this: they know that the war could cross their borders at any moment, and that the Ukrainians are fighting for them as well. And the French and Germans, too, are slowly coming to understand that we are a hair's breadth from the third world war.

At the opening of the Security Forum former Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk addressed Johnson: "The world is watching you. And you're a devout Christian, Mr. Speaker, so God is watching you, too." Putin, with his oil money, has many more military resources than Ukraine does. He has, moreover, no qualms about running through the entirety of Russia's national wealth - or bleeding through the entirety of its population. When other people's lives mean nothing to you, you have a free hand. After we landed back in JFK, we turned off the air raid sound on our phones. But we haven't deleted the app.

# Moscow attack means more Tajiks will suffer for alleged actions of a minority

TWO days after the horrific attack on Crocus City Hall which has left over 130 dead, the bloodied suspects, showing visible signs of torture, were paraded in front of the media at Moscow's Basmanny Court. All four men, Saidakrami Rachabalizoda, Mukhammadasobir Faizov, Shamsidin Fariduni, and the alleged ring-leader Dalerjon Mirzoyev, are from Tajikistan.

The Russian government's track record of politicizing extremism to crackdown on opposition, and the documented use of torture against the suspects, will make it difficult for us to know what really happened. But that the four Tajiks took part in an attack the Islamic State claims to have perpetrated is certainly plausible given the recent past.

Between 2012 and 2018, over 2,000 Tajik citizens joined terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq, making Tajikistan the third highest sender of foreign fighters to the war on a per capita basis. Most joined Islamic State, with some taking up key positions, including the group's War Minister Gulmurod Halimov, who used to serve as head of Tajikistan's OMON paramilitary police force.

Most were killed, detained, or returned to Tajikistan during a government amnesty introduced in 2015. But ISIS's demise did not spell the end of the threat. As the group lost territory some moved to Europe. At the same time, the group's affiliate in Afghanistan, the Islamic State of Khorasan Province

(ISIS-K) had emerged in 2014, and was waging a war against both the Afghan government and its NATO allies, as well as the Taliban. The group targeted Central Asians, and Tajiks in particular, in its recruitment efforts.

Although never as successful as in its heyday a decade ago, a steady trickle of Tajik citizens joined the group, playing a key role in its operations. Citizens of Tajikistan were involved in an attack in Kerman, Iran on Jan. 3, that killed at least 95 people commemorating the death of Qassem Soleimani. In December, at least three Tajik citizens were arrested for plotting an attack on a Christmas celebration in Austria.

But these incidents should not be blown out of proportion. The vast majority of Tajiks, some 99.98% of the population, have not joined terrorist groups. Violent extremist social media channels have tiny audiences, numbering in the low hundreds of people. Many more Tajiks have suffered from heavy-handed counter-terrorism measures at the hands of their autocratic government than have joined those organizations.

Tajikistan is the poorest and one of the most authoritarian countries in Eurasia. Its president, Emomali Rahmon, has ruled since 1992. His government orchestrated a brutal crackdown on all forms of opposition, including religious communities. Using the specter of extremism and terrorism, the regime has arrested hundreds of journalists,

opposition activists, religious individuals, and civil society representatives, banning the only opposition party with representatives in parliament in 2015.

While the country's young population is increasingly taking an interest in Islam, the government is waging a campaign of control over religious expression. Citizens were banned from studying religion abroad without government permission in 2011. Children were banned from praying in mosques that same year. All madrassas in the country had been closed by 2013.

In 2023 alone, 300 cases of illegal religious education were reported by the government. Such a controlled environment not only generates grievances that can be capitalized on by terrorist groups, but also limits levels of religious literacy, making the simplistic narratives of groups like Islamic State more appealing.

Against this backdrop, over one million Tajiks have moved to Russia in search of work according to official statistics from 2023. The true figure is much higher, as many migrants are undocumented. Last year, remittances made up a staggering 48% of the economy, the highest share in the world.

Life for migrants is already tough, with harsh working conditions, low pay, problems with police, and widespread xenophobia a part of daily life for most. After the attack, life for the country's already beleaguered Tajik commu-

nity, as well as others from Central Asia, looks set to become much worse.

In the day following the attack and arrests a string of incidents have already taken place. A market owned by Tajiks in Blagoveshchensk in the far-east Amur region, was torched. Three Tajik migrants were beaten by unidentified assailants in Kaluga. Mediazona reports at least 30 similar cases of violence against migrants since Friday's attack.

One NGO working with migrants reported over 2,500 complaints in the first two days following the attack. Tajiks have reported being evicted without reason. Screenshots have circulated on social media showing taxi riders on apps like Yandex refusing to travel with Tajik drivers. Law enforcement has launched raids across the country to find and detain illegal immigrants. Viral videos are circulating on social media calling for Tajiks to be deported, claiming they are all "terrorists" and calling for the death penalty to be reintroduced.

The Tajik Embassy in Russia has called on migrant workers not to leave their homes for their own safety. But many do not have that luxury. While we may never have the full story of what happened at Crocus City Hall, what looks certain is that Tajiks and other Central Asians will unfairly bear the brunt of Russian society's justified anger. Once again, the majority suffer for the alleged actions of a tiny minority.

The Moscow Times

# Taiwan must come clean on vessel capsizes

MORE than a month has passed since the tragic capsizing of a Chinese mainland fishing vessel near Kinmen Islands, but representatives from the two sides of the Taiwan Strait are yet to reach a consensus on what caused the vessel to capsize. Not only has the investigation into the incident been delayed, but also tensions across the Strait have increased.

The rigid stance of Taiwan is not conducive to resolving the issue, especially because the mainland's intensified countermeasures and declaration of routine enforcement in the Kinmen maritime area have taken the ruling Democratic Progressive Party on the island by surprise.

The unfortunate event has morphed from individual narratives into a political issue between the "blue" and "green" camps in Taiwan. The blue camp, represented by Kuomintang, aims for eventual reunification with the motherland, whereas the green camp, represented by the DPP, propagates "Taiwan independence". The DPP's indifferent and ever-changing stance and treatment of the incident as a political issue suggest it is concealing the truth. The DPP should stop dragging its feet over the incident. And Taiwan's judicial authorities must swiftly make public the investigation results, and offer apologies for the incident, if needed, and admit to any law enforcement errors or excesses. The failure to do so will further escalate tensions across the Strait and have repercussions far beyond

imagination.

The root causes of the incident are the Taiwan authorities' unilateral demarcation of "restricted waters" off islands such as Kinmen and Matsu and conducting "patrols" around the islands. After Tsai Ing-wen's inauguration as the island leader in May 2016, patrolling by the island's maritime vessels increased in "prohibited, restricted waters", and continues even after Lai Ching-te was chosen the new island leader in January. Worse, the island's maritime officials have been using expulsion, detention, fines, confiscation and other means to "deal" with mainland fishermen "trespassing" into the "restricted" waters.

On Feb 14, a Taiwan "coast guard" vessel pursuing a mainland fishing boat in the waters off Kinmen caused four crew members to fall overboard, with two of them drowning. Initially, the island's "coast guard" claimed the fishing vessel capsized accidentally while evading inspection, and thus denied the use of force but failed to provide any video evidence to back its claim.

However, subsequent investigations revealed multiple collisions between the Taiwan "coast guard" vessel and the mainland's fishing boat, with the surviving fishermen testifying that they were repeatedly hit by the Taiwan vessel, strengthening the belief that the DPP was trying to conceal the truth. The Taiwan "coast guard's" initial silence on the collisions only to

Pan Hsi-tang

admit later that there were "multiple contacts" between the vessels, and misreporting the capsizing time as well as saying they didn't have enough equipment to record the incident, have damaged their credibility. The Taiwan "coast guard's" actions and statements raise serious doubts. Besides, the statements from the ocean affairs council of Taiwan often lack depth and are issued prematurely, raising suspicion and intensifying tensions across the Strait, which could have negative consequences.

The unfortunate capsizing of the mainland fishing vessel has cast doubts on the Taiwan "coast guard's" transparency. Despite multiple affirmations by Kuan Bi-ling, head of Taiwan's ocean affairs, that the truth cannot be hidden, Taiwan's narrative has shifted repeatedly, oscillating between acknowledging and denying the collisions.

Regrettably, communications between Taiwan and mainland representatives have yielded no results. The DPP's inconsistent statements may well be the main cause of communication crisis. If the DPP wishes to resolve the incident swiftly, it should reveal all the facts about the collision of the vessels. But the DPP keeps emphasizing the "illegality" of the mainland vessel's entry into the waters off Kinmen and the need for "law enforcement", without producing any crucial video evidence of the incident. The contradiction in Taiwan's statements and its attempt



# Envoy: Pak-Iraq trade via Gwadar, Basra seaports to further boost bilateral ties

ISLAMABAD (INP): Ambassador of Iraq to Pakistan, Hamid Abbas Lafta has trade between Pakistan and Iraq through Gwadar and Basra seaports would be further strengthened bilateral relations between the two countries taking them to new heights. “The two sides are committed to foster their multi-lateral relationship and that Pakistani manpower has a vast spectrum in the fields of agriculture, medical and petro-chemical in Iraq.” He said that the two countries also enjoy exemplary ties in the field of defence and that Iraq has recently procured a complete package of Super Mushahk from Pakistan. The Ambassador was talking to a delegation of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) led by its President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari which called on him here

on Saturday. Envoy Hamid Abbas Lafta said that both the countries always demonstrate complete harmony at regional and international forums, adding that Iraq is a country of opportunities with strong economy, having annual budget of \$110 billion and wants to promote ties with all the countries. Although both Pakistan and Iraq were bonded in strong relationship yet the trade relations were at the lowest level which needed to be enhanced and for this purpose the Chambers of both the sides can play a significant role, he mentioned. The envoy further said that the Iraqi government has unveiled its national action plan for the investments and the Pakistani businessmen have to come forward to avail these opportunities.

Hamid Abbas further said that the doors of his embassy are open for the business community of Pakistan in particular for the ICCI and that the Embassy will feel pride in sharing the Iraq’s business opportunities with the Chamber for the benefit of the business community. Speaking on the occasion, President ICCI Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that despite having a huge potential by both the sides, the trade volume was not upto the mark and to overcome the problem direct connectivity between the two brotherly countries was much needed. He said that along-with other multiple investment opportunities in different areas Pakistan also enjoys the tourism potential especially the northern areas, thereby the Iraqi side must grasp this opportunity also. The business leader said

that the ICCI will chalk out a plan for its participation in the Trade Exhibition to be held in Najaf in the month of June to showcase its products in Iraq to boost business ties between the two countries. Ahsan Zafar further said that the ICCI was determined to play its role in the promotion of business relations between the two countries. Secretary General UBG Zafar Bakhtawari expressed the hope that the Ambassador being a dynamic figure will continue to play his role in furthering the ties between the two countries and that in this connection the bilateral visits of highest leadership of both the sides will be a momentous. Executive member Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ch. Mohammad Ali was also part of the delegation.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif acknowledging Pakistan Tobacco Company as one of Pakistan’s leading taxpayers by giving away prestigious Tax Excellence Award to MD and CEO PTC Syed Ali Akbar.

## SCCI VP condemns terror attack

SIALKOT (APP): Vice President Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Amer Majeed Sheikh vehemently condemned the heinous terror attack targeting Chinese nationals in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In a statement, Vice President SCCI Amer Majeed Sheikh expressed his deepest condolences to the families of the victims and said that the business community of Sialkot stood in solidarity with the Chinese nation during this difficult time. He further said that the attack, which claimed the lives of five Chinese nationals and a Pakistani driver, is a reprehensible act of violence that not only undermines the safety and security of foreign investors and workers in Pakistan but also threatens the longstanding friendship and cooperation between Pakistan and China. On behalf of the industry of Sialkot that is deeply invested in fostering economic ties with China, the Vice President recognized the invaluable contributions of Chinese companies and workers to the development and prosperity of Pakistan. “Such cowardly acts of terrorism only serve to disrupt the progress and prosperity that we collectively strive to achieve,” Sheikh said. The Vice President SCCI called upon the authorities to swiftly investigate this incident and bring the perpetrators to justice. It is imperative to ensure the safety and security of all foreign nationals working on projects in Pakistan, he added. Amer Majeed Sheikh reaffirmed the Sialkot chamber’s unwavering support for the Chinese nation and reiterated its commitment to further strengthening bilateral relations and promoting mutual prosperity.

# NTUF and RR agree to revolutionize T2T recycling industry

FAISALABAD (APP): National Textile University Faisalabad (NTUF) and Reverse Resources (RR) in collaboration with KnowTex have agreed to revolutionize Textile-to-Textile (T2T) recycling industry in Pakistan. According to a spokesman for NTUF, both institutions would strive to establish a structured framework for managing textile waste besides ensuring transparency and enabling verifiable traceability in the recycling process. He said that the project would have very beneficial impact for local industry. It would also help address various legislative requirements of Pakistani textiles importing countries besides solving the biggest challenges of textile waste recycling of Pakistan in addition to providing many

opportunities. It would help harness untapped potential as despite the growth of Pakistan’s textile recycling industry, significant untapped market potential remains and by scaling recycling initiatives we could unlock economic and environmental benefits. Similarly, this project would target quality textile waste in addition to handling informal waste of textile sector. He said that a substantial amount of high-quality textile waste still ends up in low-value applications while high-end recyclers actively seek feedstock. The brands lack visibility into the fate of their discarded textiles. Similarly, the information waste handling sector faces numerous challenges due to critical link between textile waste sup-

ply and recycling destinations. Leakage within this sector poses a significant obstacle in supply chain compliance and transparent T2T recycling, he added. He further said that both institutions would struggle to create a formalized structure for the demand and supply of textile waste by establishing a digitally verifiable trace to T2T recycling. He said that RR was also implementing a custom waste mapping program for brands, enhancing recycling process visibility which would offer a vital data to kick start a circular supply chain and help in identifying textile waste volume, location, composition and recycling potential. It would also facilitate the establishment of KPIs for scalable circularity, he added.

# FFBR to launch Tajir Dost Scheme registration

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has devised new strategy to charge income tax from five categories of retailers through the Tajir Dost Scheme from April 1, 2024. According to a report on Saturday, the five major categories included wholesalers, dealers, retailers, jewelers and cosmetics stores, grocery, medical and hardware stores as well as shops of meat, vegetables and fruits in selected six cities. The FBR will kick-start registration in Tajir Dost Scheme in four cities — Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Islamabad and Rawalpindi — in the first

phase and the tax collection will be made effective from July 1. The notification regarding the mandatory registration of retailers has been issued. Under the scheme, the traders who pay their tax before 15 of every month will get 25pc concession. The traders will be charged tax on the yearly rental value of the shop and every shopkeeper has to at least Rs1200 income tax on yearly basis. On the Tajir Dost Scheme, an official said that the registration drive would be launched in six cities — Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Karachi, Quetta, Lahore and Peshawar. All non-filers and un-registered traders and shopkeepers would apply for registration under Section 181 of the Income Tax Ordinance 2001. They would register themselves through Tajir Dost scheme in Tax Asaan App through their mobile phones or through FBR’s web portal or by visiting FBR’s tax facilitation centres. Last date of registration is April 30, 2024. Failure in registration would result in imposition of monetary penalties under section 182 of the Income Tax Ordinance 2001.

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## Wanda sells 60% of mall unit in \$8.3b

HONG KONG (Reuters): A group of investors led by private equity firm PAG on Saturday announced an investment of \$8.3 billion for a 60% stake in Chinese property giant Dalian Wanda’s mall unit. Dalian Wanda will retain 40% in Newland Commercial Management, the holding company of Zhuhai Wanda Commercial Management Group Co, the statement said. CITIC Capital, the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, Mubadala Investment Company and Ares Management Corporation were also joint investors in the deal. “We like the competitive edge and first mover advantage that Newland has built and we think these advantages will allow it to generate stable and growing cash flow to investors,” said David Wong, partner and co-head of private equity at PAG. Newland manages 496 large shopping malls across China, the statement said. In December last year, PAG and Dalian Wanda Commercial Management Group jointly announced the signing of an investment framework to restructure Zhuhai Wanda Commercial Management. The agreement signed on Saturday, implements this agreement, the statement said.

# Key industrial chain projects inked

SHANGHAI (APP): A conference to attract global investment was held on Friday in Shanghai, with 21 key industrial chain projects worth a total of 52.4 billion yuan (7.4 billion US dollars) concluded during the event. These projects introduced to Shanghai involve not only the three leading industries of integrated circuits, biomedicine and artificial intelligence, but also subdivision sectors such as new energy and energy storage equipment, and civil aviation. A policy package was also unveiled at the conference, which includes reducing costs for enterprises by 100 billion yuan, adding 2 trillion yuan of investment and financing credit, and

At the Shanghai Global Investment Promotion Conference 2024, subdivision investment opportunities in 10 key industrial chain projects, including large-scale models, humanoid robots, meta-verse, large cruise ships, commercial aerospace, new materials and hydrogen energy, were released. A policy package was also unveiled at the conference, which includes reducing costs for enterprises by 100 billion yuan, adding 2 trillion yuan of investment and financing credit, and

setting up 100 billion yuan of industrial investment funds. Shanghai is an important window through which the world observes China. In 2023, the foreign direct investment in actual use in the city reached a record high of more than 24 billion US dollars. By the end of January this year, the number of regional headquarters of multinational companies and foreign-funded R&D centers in Shanghai had reached 962 and 563, respectively.

# Banks need to ensure lending to priority sectors’ SMEs: FRIA

LAHORE (INP): Senior Vice Chairman Ferozepur Road Industrial Association (FRIA), Shahbaz Aslam has asked the banks for lending to priority manufacturing sectors of SMEs to stimulate economic growth and development in the country. In a statement issued on Saturday, he said that we need to set our primary agenda to strategize and enhance financing and lending to priority sectors to stimulate economic growth and development in Pakistan. Shahbaz Aslam pointed out the government’s ongoing efforts to promote economic stability, fiscal discipline, and sustainable growth. He emphasized the critical role of the banking sector in supporting the government’s development agenda and urged the banks to increase financing and lending to priority sectors, namely agriculture and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). The SVC FRIA requested the Pakistan Banks to lead a task force comprising representatives from

the banking sector, government, and relevant stakeholders, with the primary objective to accelerate financing in the priority sectors and devise actionable strategies to overcome the existing challenges and bottlenecks hindering the growth of these vital sectors. He reiterated the FRIA’s commitment to working closely with the banking sector to address the financing needs of priority sectors and ensure the effective implementation of the proposed strategies and initiatives. Shahbaz Aslam highlighted the SBP’s role in providing regulatory support, policy guidance and financial incentives to encourage banks to expand their financing activities in alignment with the government’s priorities. He said that despite the significant importance, over 5 million SMEs have been facing a huge credit gap, receiving only 7 percent of private sector credit, far below than neighboring countries like Bangladesh (25 percent) and India (18 percent), with the State

Bank committing to increase SME credit share to 17 percent by 2023. To achieve this, we must advocate for targeted and fixed SME allocations in concessional financing schemes, particularly those aimed at the export-oriented sector. He proposed the SBP to allocate at least 25 percent of concessional financing, including the Export Finance Scheme, exclusively to SMEs in the export sector. This strategic allocation will not only boost SME sector’s growth but also promote a more inclusive and resilient economy. The SVC FRIA suggested the central bank to review its credit policies by fixing a special quota to finance the small and medium enterprises, as only the large industries have been availing government’s all major concessional export loaning facilities, with very limited financing is left for the SMEs which are the backbone of the economy, contributing around 40 percent to the national gross domestic product (GDP). He said that the State

Bank of Pakistan has launched various policies for the promotion of SME finance, but the required results were still awaited. It was unfortunate that banks were always reluctant to provide financing to SMEs as their financing continued to show negative growth. Shahbaz Aslam said that the government with a view to help grow the businesses will have to take solid measures to strengthen the industry, especially the SMEs, saving the livelihood of millions of workers associated with the small industries. The government will have to make a visible reduction in markup rate to help grow the businesses, particularly the SME sector, as Pakistan needs millions of jobs annually. We need to highlight the critical role of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in driving sustainable economic development in Pakistan. With an estimated 5.2 million businesses, the SME sector is a cornerstone of our economy, fostering employment, growth, and export diversification, he added.

# Global real estate market hits \$365.51 trillion in 2023

ISTANBUL (APP): A Turkish real estate firm, Trem Global, announced that the global real estate and infrastructure market hit a record high of \$365.51 trillion in 2023. The real estate sector, which has defied global economic fluctuations, continues to maintain its strength this year, according to the company’s statement Thursday, based on Precedence Research results. The increase in the market was achieved in an environment full of geopolitical tensions in the residential segment. Murat Meric, deputy general manager of sales at Trem Global, said Türkiye is an attractive destination for foreign and domestic investors with its dynamic economy and rich real

estate options. “Türkiye is a bridge in international real estate markets and its competitive advantages are increasing,” he added. Meric stated that between 2022 and 2023, investors from 52 nationalities pioneered their investments in Türkiye, and “in 2024, the demand started to come mainly from western countries and this situation will provide diversity in Türkiye’s real estate markets and will pave the way for both Türkiye’s economy and innovative approaches in the real estate sector.” The firm expected that 2023 will see significant transformation for the real estate sector toward a smart, sustainable and diverse future. While tourism and infra-

structure investments in the Middle East support the growth of the real estate market, trends such as the rise of co-living spaces, increasing digitalization in real estate transactions and sustainable development come to the fore, according to the statement. The company said factors such as Saudi Arabia’s mega cities, Dubai’s rising trend and Istanbul’s topping the list of the world’s most visited cities last year are increasing the daily interest of international investors in those countries. International investment trends continue to play an important role in real estate markets, it noted. While factors such as wars and natural disasters cause population loss, issues such as economic

opportunities, education and quality of life increase the demand for migration to developed and developing countries, it said. The US, Germany, Canada, Australia, Australia, Türkiye and the United Arab Emirates are among the countries expected to receive the most immigration in 2024, it asserted. It stressed that while this trend increases the demand for real estate in immigrant countries, it leads to a decrease in demand in immigrant countries. Türkiye continues to attract the attention of international investors in 2024 with its strategic geographical location, increasing tourism statistics, diversity in the real estate ecosystem and climate advantages, it added.

# UAE, Saudia ranked as leading global entrepreneurial ecosystems

RIYADH (Arab News): The UAE and Saudi Arabia have been ranked first and third respectively in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor report for 2023-2024. The report, which assesses the entrepreneurial ecosystems of countries worldwide, is highly regarded by international bodies such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and various UN organizations. Saudi Arabia showed significant progress in its entrepreneurial environment, with its National Entrepreneurship Context Index score increasing from 5.0 in 2019 to 6.3 in both

2022 and 2023. This reflected the country’s successful efforts to diversify its economy and foster a supportive climate for entrepreneurship, said the report. A notable highlight was increased female entrepreneurship, with eight women starting new businesses for every 10 men in 2023. The country also has the highest proportion of adults who know an entrepreneur, perceive ease in starting a business, recognize good business opportunities, and believe they possess the necessary skills and experience to start a business. However, despite high acknowledgment of oppor-

tunities and capabilities, there remains a considerable fear of failure, the report concluded. Additionally, a significant percentage of Saudi entrepreneurs are expected to leverage digital technologies and focus on minimizing environmental impacts and maximizing social impacts, indicating a readiness for future challenges. Meanwhile, the UAE set a record with its National Entrepreneurship Context Index score of 7.7, the highest in the report’s history. The report also positioned the UAE as the best environment in the world

for starting and conducting new business ventures, surpassing many advanced economies. It also ranked third globally in terms of physical infrastructure. Significant strides have been made in entrepreneurship education within schools, emphasizing skills like creative thinking, problem solving, opportunity recognition and risk assessment. The country ranked among the top five out of 49 in this aspect. Meanwhile, Saudi e-commerce sales using Mada cards reached SR14.11 billion in February – an annual increase of 25 percent, the Kingdom’s central bank has revealed.



In brief

Naqvi to visit fitness camp

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan Cricket Board Chairman and interior minister, Mohsin Naqvi, is all set to visit the fitness camp of national players in Kakul on Saturday (today). Sources said the PCB chief is expected to hold meetings with players and join them at Iftar dinner during the visit. He will be flanked by members of the selection committee during the visit. Naqvi, who are managing two key responsibilities simultaneously, review the matters related to the cricket board in the night as he has to handle the matters related to interior ministry in the day. A day earlier, he held various meetings regarding PCB affairs. It was decided in the meetings that matters related to captain and coaches of the team. The camp, organised in collaboration with the Pakistan Army, is strategically designed to prepare the players for the upcoming series and tournaments, including the home T20I series against New Zealand, the away T20I series against Ireland and England, and the forthcoming ICC T20 World Cup in USA and West Indies. The camp is scheduled to conclude on April 8. The camp will focus on team building and aims to enhance the physical and mental strength of the players, ensuring they are in the best condition to face the challenges ahead. Under the guidance of experienced trainers and coaches, the players will undergo a comprehensive training regime tailored to elevate their fitness levels, agility, leadership and strategic thinking and overall performance on the field.

Netball Federation elections on Sunday

ISLAMABAD (APP): The elections for the new office bearers of Pakistan Netball Federation for the term of next four years would be held at Karachi on Sunday. According to the details, the general council meeting of Pakistan Netball Federation would be held on Sunday in which new office bearers of the Federation will be elected for a term of next four years. A report will also be presented in the meeting, on the performance of the federation of previous years and the activities of the federation. Meanwhile the national men's and women's youth, junior, senior and national inter-schools netball indoor championships, beach championships, coaching courses, seminars, schedule of participation of national teams in international tournaments would also be announced.

France beat Scotland in Six Nations

EDINBURGH (Agencies): France overcame valiant Scotland in a fascinating Women's Six Nations contest at Hive Stadium in Edinburgh. The Scots led 5-3 at the break and threatened an upset with Elis Martin marking her first start with a try. Kelly Arbey went over for the first French try early in the second half but missed kicks kept the hosts in touch. Bryan Easson's side could not overturn the score and missed out on a losing bonus point when Emeline Gros crossed on 80 minutes. After a strong start to the championship last week with their first victory on Welsh soil in 20 years, Scotland's seven-match winning run comes to an end. Gaëlle Mignot and David Ortiz's team move on to two wins out of two in this year's championship, but without emulating their bonus-point win against Ireland last week.

Army, Wapda move in Basketball tournament semis

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Army and Wapda moved into the semifinals in the departmental category of All Pakistan 3x3 Ramadan Cup Basketball Tournament here at outdoor basketball courts of Pakistan Sports Complex on Saturday.

The tournament was organized under the umbrella of Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF) in collaboration with Pakistan Sports Board (PSB).

Army Greens, who were having the services of some young players, recorded victory against the Navy by 21-8 points and qualified for the semi-final round. Army's Shiraz Aslam scored nine points while

Muhammad Usman scored six points. In the second quarterfinal match Wapda (A) overpowered Police Greens in another one-sided game by 22-10 points. Zain ul Hasan scored 10 points and Ali Raza scored 7 points for Wapda A. In the third quarter final, Wapda Greens defeated Police Blues by 22-9 points while Army (A) won against Wapda Red by 21-17 points.

In the women's category quarterfinals, Army players were far better against AK Club leading with 9 points as the match was concluded with 17-8 points. Army player Aamina Mohsin scored 10 and Aiman Riaz scored 5

points. In the second quarter-final, Lions C defeated Night Blues by 4-13 points. Madiha Nawaz scored six points while Maria Khan scored five points in the match. In the second quarter-final, Lycans C defeated Knight Blues by 13-4 points. Madiha Nawaz scored six points while Maria Khan scored five points in the match while Lycans A defeated Lycans D by 16-5 points and Lycans B defeated AK White by 5-0 points in the quarter-final matches.

Wapda Greens would face Pakistan Army A while Wapda A will face Army Greens in the semifinals of the tournament.

Barnes brace caps Newcastle fightback to sink West Ham

LONDON (AFP): Newcastle staged a sensational fightback to beat West Ham as Harvey Barnes' late double sealed a dramatic 4-3 win at St James' Park on Saturday.

Eddie Howe's side trailed 3-1 after Alexander Isak's early penalty was erased by goals from Michail Antonio and Mohammed Kudus before half-time. When Jarrod Bowen scored West Ham's third immediately after the break, Newcastle looked set for another dispiriting defeat in a troubled campaign.

But Isak converted a second penalty to give the Magpies hope and Barnes came off the bench to equalise before snatching the winner in the 90th minute. Newcastle's Anthony Gordon was sent off for a second booking in stoppage-time, but the hosts clung on for a much-needed victory.

After coming under fire from frustrated fans during their recent swoon, Howe's relief was clear to see as he sprinted down the touchline in celebration of Barnes' second goal. Newcastle's Saudi owners would have expected their team to be much higher than their current mid-table berth after finishing in the top four last season.

But Newcastle's second win in their last seven games in all competitions, and the spirited revival

that inspired it, offered hope that Easter might serve as a rebirth for Howe and his spluttering team. Seventh-placed West Ham are just one point ahead of Newcastle after a result that will only lead to more criticism of boss David Moyes from the club's demanding fans. Newcastle grabbed the lead in the sixth minute with a helping hand from West Ham defender Vladimir Coufal. Coufal's rash challenge on Anthony Gordon conceded a penalty that Isak fired past Alphonse Areola. Already without players worth £250 million (\$315 million) due to injuries or suspensions, Newcastle's injury-plagued skipper Jamaal Lascelles limped off in the 17th minute of his first league start since December.

Newcastle fightback Antonio took advantage of the uncertainty caused by Newcastle's defensive reshuffle, piercing their creaky offside trap in the 21st minute. In acres of space after accelerating onto Lucas Paqueta's lofted pass, Antonio's clinical finish from 12 yards gave Martin Dubravka no chance.

Deep into first half stoppage-time, Bowen ran onto a quick free-kick and teed up Kudus, unmarked inside the area, for a powerful strike that Dubravka could only push into the top corner. Newcastle were furious that play

wasn't stopped for an injury to Fabian Schar, but the goal stood.

Adding insult to injury, Bowen netted West Ham's third goal in the 48th minute. Kudus ignited an incisive counter-attack with a superb long pass to Bowen, who scampered to the edge of the area before drilling low past Dubravka for his 15th league goal this term. Tino Livramento, Emil Krafth and Miguel Almiron were all forced off with injuries to add to Newcastle's woes.

But Newcastle were handed a lifeline by Kalvin Phillips when the hapless West Ham midfielder's nightmare loan from Manchester City took another turn for the worse.

Lunging into a needless foul on Gordon, Phillips conceded a 77th minute penalty that Isak stroked home for his 14th league goal this season. With West Ham suddenly looking anxious, Newcastle equalised six minutes later when Barnes surged clear to slot a cool finish past substitute keeper Lukasz Fabianski.

And the spectacular comeback was complete in the 90th minute as Barnes took a turn on the edge of the area and turned to curl a brilliant strike into the top corner. Gordon's late red card for kicking the ball away ensured a tense finish, but Newcastle's nerve held.

Victor Wembanyama scores 40 points in San Antonio Spurs victory



LOS ANGELES (Agencies): Victor Wembanyama hit a career-high 40 points, including a big three-pointer with one minute and 12 seconds to play in overtime, as the San Antonio Spurs held off the visiting New York Knicks.

The Spurs came through 130-126 despite New York's Jalen Brunson hitting 61 points - a career high.

He missed the Knicks' single-game scoring record, held by Carmelo Anthony since 2014, by one point.

Wembanyama also had 20 rebounds and seven assists.

The 20-year-old Frenchman's haul saw him become the first rookie to record a 40-point, 20-rebound game since Shaquille O'Neal had 46 and 21 in 1993.

He hit a pair of free throws with 24 seconds left

to tie the game and send it to overtime.

His overtime three-pointer made it 128-124 and although Mitchell Robinson cut the gap to two, Brunson missed a three-pointer with five seconds left and the Knicks threw away the rebound before two Tre Jones free throws extended the winning margin.

Elsewhere, Bam Adebayo managed 21 points, 12 rebounds and nine assists in just three quarters to lead hosts Miami Heat to a comfortable 142-82 victory over the Portland Trail Blazers - their largest-ever winning margin.

Miami had 26 points and 11 rebounds from reserve Thomas Bryant while Jimmy Butler managed eight points and eight assists in 25 minutes after missing the previous game

because of illness.

Anthony Edwards had 25 points while Rudy Gobert finished with 21 points and 12 rebounds as the Minnesota Timberwolves beat the Denver Nuggets 111-98 to move into a tie for first place in the Western Conference.

Mike Conley scored 23 points and Jaden McDaniels 17 for the Timberwolves, who have won four in a row despite Karl-Anthony Towns' absence after surgery on his left knee.

Nikola Jokic had 32 points and 10 rebounds and Aaron Gordon and Michael Porter Jr scored 14 each for the Nuggets, who have lost two in a row at home for the first time this season and slip to third in the West, behind Minnesota and the Oklahoma City Thunder.



LONDON: Heung-Min Son of Tottenham Hotspur celebrates scoring their teams second goal during the Premier League match between Tottenham Hotspur and Luton Town at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium on March 30, 2024 in London, England.

Top-order blitz puts Sri Lanka 314-4 in Bangladesh Test

CHATTOGRAM (Agencies): A top-order batting blitz brought Sri Lanka to 314-4 and left the tourists firmly in command of the second and final Test against Bangladesh on Saturday.

Kusal Mendis top-scored with 93 in Chittagong while openers Dimuth Karunaratne (86) and Nishan Madushka (57) helping power the innings.

Dinesh Chandimal was batting on 34 alongside skipper Dhananjaya de Silva on 15 at stumps.

Bangladesh struggled to make an impact after being put in to bowl, with Sri Lanka batting through the morning session without losing a wicket.

Madushka was run out attempting a double shortly after lunch but Karunaratne and Mendis drove the tourists forward with a 114-run stand.

Hasan sent back Karunaratne, who chopped a delivery into the stumps, before the tea break.

He struck eight fours and a six in his 129-ball innings, surviving a run-out scare on 18 after a mix-up with Madushka while taking a single off Hasan Mahmud.

Shakib Al Hasan denied Mendis his 10th Test century, forcing an edge to Mehidy at second slip.

Hasan picked up his second wicket when Mehidy caught Angelo Mathews (23) from the same spot in the first over after the second new ball.

Chandimal struck two sixes to move past his early shakiness before helping Sri Lanka pass the 300-run mark with a four off Hasan.

Sri Lanka lead the two-match series 1-0 after winning the opening Test by a resounding 328 runs.

Veteran all-rounder Shakib returned for Bangladesh after a long Test absence, and the hosts also handed a debut to Mahmud.

Sri Lanka brought Asitha Fernando in for injured Kasun Rajitha in their only change to the squad from the opening Test.

Sinner thrashes Medvedev to reach Miami Open final

MIAMI (Agencies): Jannik Sinner needed only 69 minutes to breeze past defending champion Daniil Medvedev and reach the Miami Open final.

Second seed Sinner dominated a one-sided semi-final and swept aside Russian Medvedev 6-1 6-2.

The match was a repeat of January's Australian Open final, which Italian Sinner, 22, won in five sets. He will face Grigor Dimitrov in the final after the Bulgarian beat Alexander Zverev 6-4 6-7 (4-7) 6-4.

Sinner has only lost one match so far this season, falling to a last-four defeat at Indian Wells two weeks ago to eventual winner Carlos Alcaraz, and if he wins in Florida he will move up one place in the world

rankings to number two - replacing the Spanish double Grand Slam champion. "I felt great on court," Sinner told Sky Sports. "I served very well, especially in important moments."

"I handled the situation well in the beginning of each set. [Medvedev] had some break chances - if he makes them then it's already much different, so I'm very happy."

World number four Medvedev - who beat Sinner last year to lift the Miami title - made 22 unforced errors during the match and was jeered by the crowd inside the Hard Rock Stadium after two wild mistakes in the second set.

Dimitrov's win over fourth-seeded German Zverev, which follows his

victory over Alcaraz in the last eight, is set to see him climb back into the world's top 10 for the first time since 2018. "I think the consistency of beating top players, that to me is a bigger success than anything else," said the 32-year-old.

"If you do that, you get the ranking. If you do that, things are just getting better for you. I think the discipline brought me to this moment. There is nothing else. I didn't kind of deviate from my target. "I had small targets throughout - every single week I had a target, and also to be able to put my body through all that on a daily basis was also very important for me. When you start putting all that together, I think it's what I'm most proud of."

West Indies unveil squad for white-ball tour to Pakistan

ANTIGUA (Agencies): The Cricket West Indies (CWI) Women's Selection Panel on Saturday, announced a 15-member squad for the white-ball tour to Pakistan in April-May.

West Indies are scheduled to arrive in Karachi on 14 April to feature in eight white-ball matches, including three ODIs, which are part of the ICC Women's Championship 2022-25.

The three ODI matches will be played at the National Bank Stadium (NBS) in Karachi on 18, 21 and 23 April.

The ODI series will be followed by five T20Is, to be played at the same venue, starting from 26 April.

The ODIs are set to begin at 330pm PKT, while the first ball in the T20Is will be bowled at 730pm PKT.

Right-arm medium pacer Kate Wilmott earned her maiden call-up to the national senior team on the back of remarkable performances in the domestic circuit.

Qiana Joseph and Chedean Nation forced their way back into the team by putting on sensational performances in the domestic tournaments, having missed out on the last tour to Australia in 2023.

Lead Selector for West Indies Women's Cricket Ann Browne-John termed the upcoming white-ball series against Pakistan "extremely important" as the side they return to international competition after almost six months.

"The upcoming series against is extremely important for the team as they return to international competition after almost six months, the last series being against Australia," said Browne-John. "Apart from the three ODI, the team will get some much-needed T20 matches as

they prepare to participate in the T20 World Cup later this year," she added. Browne-John added that the return of experienced player Nation will strengthen the team's batting unit. "The return of experienced player Chedean Nation will strengthen the batting and 19-year-old Fast Bowler Kate Wilmott will be making her debut.

"The players have just completed the regional tournament where some of the experienced players had encouraging performances, and it is hoped this will continue into the Pakistan series."

Hayley Matthews (c), Shemaine Campbelle (vc), Aaliyah Alleyne, Shamilia Connell, Afy Fletcher, Cherry Ann Fraser, Jannillea Glasgow, Chinelle Henry, Zaida James, Qiana Joseph, Chedean Nation, Karishma Ramharack, Stafanie Taylor, Rashada Williams, Kate Wilmott.

Series schedule:

- 14 Apr - West Indies women's team arrival in Karachi
- 18 Apr - First ODI at National Bank Stadium (NBS), Karachi (330pm local time) (ICC Women's Championship)
- 21 Apr - Second ODI at NBS (330pm local time) (ICC Women's Championship)
- 23 Apr - Third ODI at NBS (330pm local time) (ICC Women's Championship)
- 26 Apr - First T20I at NBS (730pm local time)
- 28 Apr - Second T20I at NBS (730pm local time)
- 30 Apr - Third T20I at NBS (730pm local time)
- 2 May - Fourth T20I at NBS (730pm local time)
- 3 May - Fifth T20I at NBS (730pm local time)

Tottenham edge out Luton to move into top four

LONDON (Agencies): Son Heung-min scored a late winner as Tottenham recovered from a goal down to beat Luton and move into the top four of the Premier League.

Son collected half-time substitute Brennan Johnson's clever pass before beating Hatters goalkeeper Thomas Kaminski with a low shot, which took a deflection off Daiki Hashioka on its way in. Tahith Chong's well-worked goal had given the Hatters an early lead, but Spurs responded well and equalised early in the second half when Johnson's cross was turned into his own net by Issa Kabore.

Spurs laid siege to the Luton goal after restoring parity, but a series of crucial last-ditch challenges kept Ange Postecoglou's team at bay - and Alfie Doughty somehow prevented Johnson's close-range effort from rolling over the line.

However, there was nothing Luton could do about Son's 15th goal of the season, which means Tottenham have come from behind to win four of their

past five home Premier League matches. Aston Villa will reclaim fourth place with a draw at home to Wolverhampton Wanderers later on Saturday. Luton, meanwhile, drop into the relegation zone.

Spurs come from behind again Tottenham's 3-0 defeat at Fulham before the international break was described by Son as a "big wake-up call", but it took Postecoglou's team a while to hit their stride against Luton.

The opening goal was a sloppy one to concede, with Son dispossessed on the edge of the Luton area and Yves Bissouma beaten far too easily by Andros Townsend in the build-up to Chong's crisp finish.

But Spurs were left cursing their luck when Son's shot rattled the inside of the near post, rolled across the goaline, struck the other post and bounced clear - moments after Timo Werner had dragged a shot wide from an excellent position. In the same move, Werner's follow-up effort was blocked by Kabore before Teden Mengi blocked Pape

Sarr's goalbound shot on the line.

Tottenham have now failed to score a first-half goal in six consecutive games, but they were level early in the second half when Johnson - who replaced the ineffective Dejan Kulusevski at half-time - drilled a low ball across the face of goal and Kabore slammed it into his own net.

It seemed only a matter of time before Spurs' relentless pressure would pay off, but when Doughty's last-gasp intervention denied Johnson, Tottenham fans could have been forgiven for thinking it might not be their day. When the second goal did arrive there was an element of luck about it, but it was a slice of good fortune Son and his team-mates deserved after going agonisingly close on more than one occasion.

Luton's luck runs out Luton took less than three minutes to extend their club-record scoring run to 18 successive top-flight fixtures, but once again they were unable to retain their advantage.



## In brief

### Mahfil Shabeena to start at Faisal Masjid

ISLAMABAD (APP): Mahfil Shabeena would start at Faisal Masjid from Sunday organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony. According to the Ministry's Spokesperson Muhammad Umar Butt, Mahfil Shabeena would continue for seven consecutive days from Isha prayer to midnight. He said Mahfil Shabeena would continue from 21st to 27th Ramazan in the last Ashra of sacred month. The completion of the Holy Quran in Mahfil Shabeena would take place on the 27th night of Ramazan, he added. Umar Butt said the winners in the competition would serve as ambassadors for their respective provinces in the Mahfil Shabeena, alongside the Huffaz of Dawah Academy, who would also be accorded the honor of reciting the Holy Quran during the event.

### Japan hires 32 teachers

ISLAMABAD (INP): The embassy of Pakistan Tokyo was constantly exploring employment opportunities for Pakistani youth in Japan. In this context, Borderlink, a Japanese human resort company, has hired 32 Assistant Language Teachers from Pakistan in collaboration with the Embassy of Pakistan Tokyo and Overseas Employment Corporation. On Saturday, a welcome event for teachers was arranged by the embassy. Ambassador Raza Bashir Tarar advised the teachers to exhibit exemplary performance to open more doors for Pakistanis. He also urged them to promote a soft image of our beloved homeland.

### Death anniversary of Lakhnavi observed

ISLAMABAD (APP): The twenty-second death anniversary of renowned poet, writer and editor Sehba Lakhnavi was observed on Saturday. Sehba Lakhnavi, whose real name was Syed Sharaft Ali, was born on December 25, 1919, in Bhopal state. After the establishment of Pakistan, he settled in Karachi and started "Afkar" magazine in 1951 that was published continuously for 57 years without any interruption. Sehba Lakhnavi's poetry collections were published under the names of "Mah Paray" and "Zir Asman", while her prose books included "Meray Khwabon ki Sarzameen", "Iqbal Aur Bhopal", "Majaz Aik Ahang", "Armaghan e Majnu", "Rais Amrohavi Fun o Shaksiat and "Manto Aik Kitab". Sehba Lakhnavi died in Karachi on this day in 2002.

### Int'l Day of Zero Waste observed

ISLAMABAD (APP): The International Day of Zero Waste was observed globally including Pakistan on Saturday. On 14th December 2022, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution to proclaim 30th March as International Day of Zero Waste. The day highlighted both the importance of bolstering waste management globally and the need to promote sustainable consumption and production patterns. The waste pollution significantly threatens well-being of humans and their economic prosperity. It accelerates the triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution.



ISLAMABAD: Women purchasing bangles and henna for upcoming Eid ul Fitr Festival. —APP Photo

## ANF recovers over 1750 kg drugs in nine operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting nine operations across the country managed to recover over 1750 kg drugs and 25000 intoxicated tablets and arrested eight accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Saturday.

He informed that 25,000 intoxicated tablets were recovered from a Jeddah-bound female passenger netted at Islamabad Airport.

In another operation, 2.2 kg Ice was recovered from

a parcel being sent to Greece from Sialkot Courier Office.

1425 kg hashish was recovered from Toba Achakzai in Qilla Abdullah.

225 kg hashish was recovered from two suspects arrested near Western Bypass Quetta.

100 kg opium was recovered from Nokundi Chagai area and 45 kg hashish was recovered from Gwadar.

3 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of an accused rounded up near

RCD Road Hub.

1.5 kg Ice was recovered from three suspects arrested on Sakhi Sarwar Road in Dera Ghazi Khan.

The spokesman further informed that 300 grams Ice was recovered from an accused nabbed from National Highway Hyderabad.

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

## Rain, thunderstorm cause tripping

ISLAMABAD (APP): Stormy winds, thunderstorm, and rain on Saturday evening in jurisdiction of Islamabad Electric Supply Company caused tripping and faults on over 80 feeders in various circles of the company.

The affected feeders were included I-10/2, Bari Imam, Khana Dak, G 10/3, H-8, Lohi Bhair, Shahdara, Scheme 2, F 10/3, Peshawar Mor, Racecourse, Muslim Abad, Fatah Jhang, Hassan Abdal, Radio Pakistan and Siadpur, said spokesperson of IESCO.

He said that faults and tripping were also reported from Sadiqabad, Shams Colony, Muammadi Chowk, Dhok Syedian, Kashmir Road Chakri, New Rawat etc. He said operation teams have been alerted and soon restoration work would be started after rain. IESCO Chief Dr Amjad and operation director would personally supervising the restoration work from the central control room, the spokesperson said.

## Steps being taken to reduce prices of daily use items

RAWALPINDI (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rawalpindi, Hassan Waqar Cheema has said that the administration was taking solid steps to reduce the prices of daily use items. He informed that 50 magistrates were monitoring the prices of food items in Rawalpindi district.

Over 175 shopkeepers involved in profiteering were arrested during March, he informed. The DC said that 21 cases were registered and 19 shops were sealed on the sale of substandard items.

Fines amounting to over Rs 4.2 million were also imposed on the retailers found involved in profiteering, he said adding, in nearly 36,000 inspections conducted and nearly 1665 violations were checked.

Hassan Waqar Cheema informed that the price of onion in Rawalpindi is Rs 100 less than Islamabad.

There is a big wholesale market in Islamabad which is controlled by the Islamabad administration, he said and informed that a market had recently been established in Rawat where the prices of vegetables and fruits were being monitored to provide relief to the citizens.

## Pakistan, Uzbekistan agree to boost bilateral trade

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Pakistan and Uzbekistan have agreed to elevate economic relations between the two countries and bolster bilateral trade.

The understanding came during a meeting between Uzbekistan's Ambassador to Pakistan, Aybek Arif Usmanov with Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan in Islamabad, according to a statement on Saturday.

Stressing the longstanding friendly ties between Pakistan and Uzbekistan, the Uzbek ambassador emphasized the necessity of bolstering economic cooperation across various sectors through Business to Business and Government to Government agreements.

He said Uzbekistan's foreign minister and deputy trade secretary plan to visit Pakistan soon for

B2B and G2G discussions aimed at boosting trade.

Highlighting the potential in sectors like agriculture, pharmaceuticals, building materials, textiles, and leather, Usmanov underscored the importance of tapping into these opportunities.

Jam Kamal Khan emphasized the need for improved connectivity and new trade routes to enhance trade volume.

## 3,000 cops to be deployed on Youm-e-Ali (AS)

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have finalized the comprehensive security plan for Youm-e-Hazrat Ali (RA) to be observed on March 31.

According to security plan more than 3,000 police officials and cops would perform duty to guard the processions of Youme Ali. According to police spokesman, Police have chalked out comprehensive security plan following the instructions of City Police Officer (CPO) Khalid Mehmood Hamdani.

The police force would also be assisted by Muhafiz Squad, Elite Force, officials of Special Branch and

reserve force, he added.

He said that three layers of security would be provided to the participants of processions and all the streets and roads leading towards procession route would also be sealed. Well equipped policemen would also be deputed on the rooftops while people would not be allowed to stand on rooftops, he said adding that the routes of processions would be clear and walk through gates would be installed.

Police have set up pickets at all the entry and exit points of the city and all the suspicious vehicles were being checked, he said.

SSP Operations Hafiz Kamran visited and reviewed security arrangements of Markzi procession. He also instructed the police officials to remain alert while performing duties.

He made it clear that negligence will not be tolerated at any cost and strict action will be taken who were found negligent.

City Traffic Police (CTP) has completed all the arrangements to check the traffic on the day. The traffic police have imposed a complete ban on parking any vehicles or handcarts on the routes of the processions and near imam-barghas.

## Envoy hosts Iftar for 'Freinds of Ethiopia'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ethiopian Ambassador to Pakistan Jamal Beker Abdula has hosted an Iftar banquet for Parliamentarians, government officials, diplomatic corps, ambassadors, Ethiopian Diaspora and many prominent figures from the civil society and media of Pakistan.

Prominent guests including Senator Mushahid Hussain, Senior Parliamentarian Romina Khurshid Alam, Africa-Pakistan Association President Zafar Bakhtawari, High Commissioner of Mauritius in Pakistan, Rashidally Soobadar and COMSATS Executive Director Nafees Zakaria graced the Iftar dinner.

Ambassador Jamal Beker Abdula accorded a warm welcome to the guests upon their arrival at his residence in Islamabad.

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Jamal Beker Abdula congratulated the Muslims in Ethiopia, Pakistan and all over the world on the holy month of Ramadan that brought blessings for everyone in this globe. He said Pakistan was a country of generous people who loved to share with others around them in a deep sense of compassion, affability and affection.

The ambassador also spoke about Ethiopia and its linguistic, social, religious and cultural diversity. Addis Ababa, the Capital of Ethiopia, witnessed a grand street Iftar on a regular

basis giving a festive look during the holy month of Ramazan, he noted. The Ambassador also spoke about social, cultural, political and economic similarities between the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

He said both countries were heirs of ancient civilizations and shared the values of peace, justice, equality and democracy.

The Ambassador expressed gratitude to all the guests for gracing the Iftar dinner with their esteemed presence and stressed that such gatherings were meant to further strengthen the already flourishing bilateral relations between the two countries.

## Neelum Jhelum HPP achieves peak generation of 969MW

ISLAMABAD (INP): In a significant achievement, the Neelum Jhelum Hydroelectric Project (NJHPP) reached its peak generation capacity of 969 MW.

This milestone comes after the project resumed full operation earlier this month, following the successful inspection and remedial works in the tail race tunnel (TRT), Gwadar Pro reported on Saturday.

Before the resumption, an international panel of experts inspected the TRT and described the rehabilitation work carried out by China Gezhouba Group Company (CGGC) as "satisfactory".

NJHPP is continuously in operation as per the availability of water and contributing electricity to the National Grid, especially during Sehr and Iftar of the holy month of Ramadan, according to an official statement of WAPDA issued on Friday.

The operation of NJHPP was halted on January 10, 2024 for the inspection of the rehabilitated TRT.

The detailed inspection was successfully carried out prior to the resumption of generation from the project early this month.

Neelum Jhelum is a unique hydropower project with 90% being under-

ground under high mountains overburden.

The project, completed in 2018 on River Neelum in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, comprises a Dam at Nauseri, an underground waterway system consisting of 52-Km long tunnels and an underground powerhouse at Chattr Kalas with four power generating units of 242.25 MW each.

With an average annual energy generation of 4.6 billion units, NJHPP has so far generated 19,562 billion units of green and clean electricity, thus significantly contributing to meeting the electricity requirements of the country, according to WAPDA.

## Navigating Carbon Market pathway to Pakistan's sustainable development

ISLAMABAD (APP): The concept of carbon trading is not just a buzzword in the global environmental discourse; it is a critical mechanism for countries like Pakistan to address the challenges posed by climate change while sustaining economic growth.

A training workshop on understanding carbon market mechanisms, held in collaboration with the Embassy of Denmark and the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), signifies a pivotal step towards integrating Pakistan into the global carbon economy.

Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director SDPI, emphasized the novelty of carbon marketing within Pakistan's climate change dialogue. The unsuccessful attempt to implement a carbon tax in 2010 and ongoing negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) highlight the complexities and the urgent need for effective policy instruments in this domain.

The primary goal of carbon trading is to incentivize the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, thereby mitigating the impact of carbon dioxide on the environment. Dr. Suleri poignantly noted that our very existence, ecology, food security, and livelihoods hinge on our collective efforts to preserve the environment. The transition to renewable energy, while technologically feasible, faces significant hurdles in terms of infrastructure development, necessitating a phased approach.

The United States' implementation of an emissions trading system, with its cap-and-trade policies, serves as an illustrative model. It sets a precedent for establishing emission quotas and allows industries with surplus allowances to sell them, creating a market-driven approach to environmental conservation.

Pakistan's journey towards establishing a robust carbon market is

underway, with policies under review and discussions at the Climate Change Council. The private sector's existing mechanisms provide a foundation upon which to build. The integration of such market-based approaches into Pakistan's policy framework can catalyze sustainable development, ensuring that the nation's exports remain competitive in the face of the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM).

Member National Assembly and founding chair of the Parliamentary Climate Change Caucus, Former Convener SDGs Taskforce, and SAPM, Romina Khurshid Alam presented participation certificates and appreciated for taking up a much-needed initiative in a convincing manner.

She said the country is facing serious climate catastrophes that have been triggered due to global GHG emissions leading to a climate crisis.



ISLAMABAD: Heavy machinery being used to expand Chak Shahzad Road in the Federal Capital. —APP Photo

### Improving crop conditions

KABUL (Ariana News): Good precipitation is improving crop conditions and residual soil moisture in Afghanistan, with the upcoming winter wheat harvest expected to be near average, a specialist US-based agency said. Average to above-average precipitation in March has reduced cumulative precipitation deficits across most of the country. Cumulative precipitation is largely average, but precipitation is 75 to 90 percent of the 40-year average in parts of the south, west and northern highlands.

## The Frontier Post

# AFGHANISTAN

Ramazan 20, 1445 — Sunday, March 31, 2024

### Water dam completed

FARAH (BNA): A water dam construction project in Balablok was completed. Costing six million Afghanis, the dam was built with the support of the UNDP in collaboration with Islamic Relief Organization and Farah Agriculture and Irrigation Department. Eng. Abdul Ahad Hamidi explained that the purpose of this irrigation dam is to store rainwater and floodwaters for agricultural use while also serving as a protective measure against potential flood-related agricultural damage.

## Kabul Municipality: 165 projects to be implemented in 1403

KABUL (TOLONews): The Kabul Municipality has stated that it will implement 165 projects worth 6.4 billion Afghanis in the current solar year in the capital.

These projects include the reconstruction and development of roads, construction of canals, and creation of green spaces.

Nematullah Barakzai, a representative of the Kabul Municipality, stated that the work on the reconstruction and development of several roads in the capital has begun, saying: "For the solar year of 1403, the Kabul Municipality has considered about 165 projects in various sectors, ranging from road construction to the section of canal construction and other areas, on which 6.4 billion Afghanis will be

spent, paid from the Kabul Municipality's own revenues."

The second part of Kotel Road, which is currently under construction, the Qasaba to Charahi Shahid Road, Badam Bagh Road, Qala-e-Shanan to Qala-e-Zaman Khan Road, the expansion of the Dehmazang to Kote Sangi Road, Dogh Abad - Gul Bagh Road, and the Charahi Maidan to Gumruk Road are among the roads whose reconstruction and development are expected to be completed by the end of 1403 solar year.

Residents of the capital welcome the reconstruction and development of roads in Kabul; however, some shopkeepers whose shops have been demolished due to road development are

demanding the creation of a suitable location.

Noor Rahman, a resident of Kabul, told TOLONews: "The construction of these roads, if it does not eliminate congestion, will at least reduce it."

Mohammad, one of the shopkeepers in Kabul, said: "Our demand is that a new commercial center be established in this area to provide job opportunities for the people. Right now, shopkeepers whose shops have been demolished in this area have stored their goods in warehouses and are unemployed."

The Kabul Municipality had also previously announced the commencement of work on six major road construction projects worth close to one billion Afghanis in Kabul.

### 1m women malnourished last year

KABUL (Khaama Press): The UN World Food Programme revealed that 1.2 million women in Afghanistan were malnourished last year, the organization announced.

Mona Sheikh, Head of Nutrition at the World Food Programme in Afghanistan, said in a video posted on the organization's account on its social media platform X, this year, expects this number to rise.

Shaikh also mentioned that the number of malnourished children is expected to reach 3 million this year. However, WFP will only be able to assist 1.6 million of them.

WFP highlighted a concerning trend: following cuts in foreign assistance last year, there was an increase in children's admissions to malnutrition clinics in Afghanistan.

According to the United Nations, more than 23 million people in Afghanistan need humanitarian assistance this year. Among them, over half are children.

Since the Taliban assumed power, Afghanistan has plunged into a severe humanitarian crisis, compounding existing challenges. The instability and limited access to necessities have intensified widespread suffering, especially among women and children.

Additionally, the decrease in funding from international bodies has greatly impeded relief operations, leaving millions vulnerable to famine and depriving them of crucial aid, thus exacerbating the country's humanitarian plight.

### Several Artifacts discovered

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Ministry of Information and Culture of Afghanistan claims to have acquired some ancient artifacts discovered by locals in the Kalman Valley of Alingar district in Laghman province eastern Afghanistan.

According to the ministry's statement, these artifacts include a statue, a lion, and a ceramic jug, dating back thousands of years. After the discovery of these artifacts, Abdul Noor Rasouli, the head of information and culture in Laghman, accompanied by the tourism and culture officer, the security deputy of Alingar, and the director general of historical sites, visited the site.

The statement, citing the head of information and culture in Laghman province, states that the historical artifacts discovered at the site have been obtained, and people have been prohibited from further excavation until further notice.

He added that considering the significance of the discovered artifacts, the site will be registered by the guidance of the Ministry of Information and Culture. Amidst such developments, concerns have been raised regarding the Taliban administration's indifference towards preserving and protecting Afghanistan's rich historical and cultural heritage.

The lack of attention to such matters risks the loss of invaluable artifacts and landmarks that hold significant historical importance for the country.

## School building shortage challenges education

FARYAB (TOLONews): Hafizullah Motasim Billah, the head of Faryab's education department, stated during a foundation-laying ceremony for a school in Chehel Gazi district that 174 schools across Faryab province lack standard buildings.

Motasim Billah referred to the absence of standard buildings as a serious challenge for the education sector in this province. According to him, thousands of students are currently studying in open spaces or in rented houses.

The head of Faryab's education department said at the event: "Out of the land given to education, six schools have been constructed, and in this academic year, 17 more schools will be built on these lands."

Meanwhile, the foundation stone of a school was laid in Chehel Gazi district at a cost of about three million Afghanis by a humanitarian foundation. The official of this foundation said



that 68 girls' and boys' schools will be built in 34 provinces of the country by this foundation.

Ebrahim, the head of a charity foundation, said: "We plan to establish two schools in each province. We will continue this process because the cost of these schools comes from our own personal funds, which the Qais Argandawal Foundation pays from its own budget."

A number of residents of Chehel Gazi district are asking officials to construct standard buildings for all the schools in this district.

Hamidullah, a resident of Faryab, requested the officials: "The construction of this school is a good facility for teachers and students, and it will also encourage people, and moreover, it allows students to study calmly." Said Faizullah, another

resident of Faryab province, said: "We are very happy about the construction of this school building because now our children can study in peace."

Previously, residents of remote districts of Faryab province had complained about their children's lack of access to education. They had asked local, central authorities, and humanitarian agencies to establish schools in their areas.

## 2,000 police posts allocated to Panjshir youths this year: Governor

KABUL (Ariana News): A total of 2,000 posts in the ranks of the national police, 600 posts in the army, and hundreds of civil posts have been allocated to the youths of Panjshir by the leadership of the Islamic Emirate, its governor Mohammad Agha Hakim announced.

Speaking at an event under the theme Urban Dialogue, Hakim emphasized that security prevails all over the province and there is no bullying.

"After the takeover of the Islamic Emirate around two and a half or three years ago, the administrative framework of the Islamic system has been adjusted in all provinces, and efforts have been made to appoint people who are committed and honest to the Islamic system in various positions," he said.

Meanwhile, Ahmadullah Badr, the police chief of Panjshir, emphasized that it is the duty of every citizen

to cooperate with government institutions in ensuring security.

Local municipality officials considered the holding of such events to be effective in bridging the gap between the people and the government.

"The municipality and the citizens are like two sides of the same coin, one cannot exist without the other," said Rahmatullah Mohammadi, the mayor of Bazarak city in Panjshir.

In the event, Panjshir residents shared their problems with the government officials and demanded to solve them.

Local officials of Panjshir emphasized that in order to solve the problems of the people of this province on time, a complaints hearing commission consisting of the governor and the security institutions will be formed, and the problems of the people will be addressed seriously.

## UNHCR funding hospital construction in Zabul province

QALAT (BNA): Construction has commenced on a new hospital in the capital of Zabul province, located in the Babagak area of Qalat city.

The hospital is set to include internal wards dedicated to pediatrics, gynecology and obstetrics, surgery, and emergency patient care.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has allocated \$300,000 towards the construction of this hospital. The head of Public Health Department in Zabul mentioned to BNA that once completed, this medical facility will serve thousands of families residing



in the region and the nearby areas. This hospital will

eliminate the need for these families to travel

elsewhere to address their health-related needs.

## Taliban claim of combatting ISIS disputed following Kandahar bombing

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Australian research institution added that despite the Taliban's claim to combat ISIS, the group remains formidable, demonstrated by bombings in Kandahar, the Taliban's power center, and an attack on a concert hall in Moscow.

The institute emphasized that the Taliban has remained loyal to its long-standing alliance with Al-Qaeda, and Al-Qaeda has managed to establish active cells throughout Afghanistan.

A section of the report states that with the Taliban's rise to power in Afghanistan, the regional landscape has significantly favored violent extremist groups. According to the report, 21 other violent

extremist groups have found regional and operational footholds in Afghanistan under Taliban control.

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute also noted that the Taliban has maintained its relationship with the Pakistani Taliban (TTP) and has even sought conflict with this group, known as a designated terrorist organization, over its main supporter, Pakistan.

The Australian institution warned that the threat of terrorism is increasing

both in Afghanistan and the region. It added that the Taliban has returned to its despot government of the 1990s centered around the Pashtuns.

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute stated that recent attacks by ISIS in Kandahar and Moscow should motivate regional and global powers to fight terrorism. According to the institute, geopolitical rivalries have allowed ISIS, Al-Qaeda, and the Taliban greater opportunities for future proliferation.



## Water and energy projects: Turkish company interested in investing in Afghanistan



KABUL (BNA): Mujib Rahman Omar Akhundzada, the Deputy Minister of Water and Energy, held a meeting with representatives from the Calcedon Holding Company of Turkey at his office. The Water and Energy Ministry released a

statement detailing that during the meeting, officials from the Turkish company expressed their interest in investing in water and energy projects in Afghanistan.

The Deputy Minister of Water and Energy welcomed the company's inter-

est in contributing to the water and energy sector in Afghanistan. He assured the company officials that the ministry would provide them with the necessary project information to facilitate coordination and progress on the related initiatives.

## City taxi color change begins in Northern Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): taxis from yellow to Changing the color of city



begun in the country's northern zone, starting from the center.

Haseebullah Mokhtar, the General Director of Traffic in Afghanistan, recently stated during a special ceremony in Balkh province that this process has commenced in the northern zones of Balkh, Sar-e Pol, Faryab, and Jawzjan provinces.

Mokhtar added that the color of all city taxi vehicles will change from yellow to turquoise and white while surrounding taxi vehicles will transition to turquoise.

Moreover, Norullah Abidris, the Deputy

Governor of Balkh, recently stated during a ceremony marking the initiation of changing the color of the city and surrounding vehicles in northern Afghanistan that the level of insecurity and kidnappings will decrease upon completion of this process nationwide.

It's worth noting that this process has been approved by the General Director of Traffic Police and the cabinet.

Changing the color of taxis from yellow to turquoise initially began from the center and is now underway in the northern zone.



GAZA STRIP: A Palestinian man inspecting the rubble in a house following Israeli bombardment in Maghazi camp for Palestinian refugees.

## Imran appoints focal persons after inking pact with Adiala authorities

**F.P. Report**

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan Saturday appointed three focal persons after inking an agreement with Adiala jail authorities on the SOPs for holding meetings in the facility.

As per the document, which bears the signature of the ex-prime minister as well as the superintendent of Adiala Jail, Khan has appointed PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Khan, Sher Afzal Marwat and Barrister Umair Niazi as his focal persons. According to the agreed-upon SOPs, each focal person will provide two names for holding a meeting with the incarcerated party founder each week, who will be allowed to meet family members and his lawyers on Tuesday and Thursday.

The development comes after both sides reached a consensus on holding

meetings inside the jail facility in light of the relevant court order. Furthermore, the time of meetings will be between 30 to 45 minutes with maximum number of visitors in each session limited to six.

Also, the "trend of individual petitions in the courts will be discouraged," the agreement reads while seemingly referring to the PTI's move to reach out to courts on the issue of holding meetings with the incarcerated party founder. Earlier this month, the Punjab government barred the prisoners — including the PTI founder who's been imprisoned at the said facility since September 26, 2023, and is serving an accumulative sentence of 31 years in various cases — from holding meetings inside the jail owing to security concerns.

Despite resulting in strong criticism from the party, the moves, as per

Punjab's Information Minister Azma Bukhari, were not aimed at hindering Khan's meetings but in fact was simply due to "a serious threat alert". The restriction came after the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) arrested three terrorists and recovered a map of Adiala Jail, a hand grenade and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) from their possession.

According to Rawalpindi City Police Officer (CPO) Khalid Hamdani, police recovered automatic weapons and ammunition from the terrorists. The CPO said the terrorists hailed from Afghanistan, adding that further investigation from them was underway. Earlier on November 7, 2023, police found a suspicious bag laden with an explosive device near Adiala Road in Gorakhpur, Rawalpindi, just one kilometre away from the Adiala jail.

## Zelenskyy fires aides in reshuffle

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy dismissed a longtime aide and several advisers in a continuing reshuffle on Saturday, while Russia unleashed new attacks overnight. Zelenskyy dismissed top aide Serhiy Shefir from his post of first assistant, where he had served since 2019.

The Ukrainian president also let go of three advisers and two presidential representatives overseeing volunteer activities and soldiers' rights. No explanation was given immediately for the latest changes in a wide-reaching personnel shake-up over recent months.

It included the dismissal on Tuesday of Oleksii Danilov, who served as secretary of the National Security and Defence Council, and Valerii Zaluzhnyi as head of the armed forces on February 8. Zaluzhnyi was appointed Ukraine's ambassador to the United Kingdom earlier this month.

Ukraine's air force said on Saturday that Russia launched 12 Shahed drones overnight, nine of which were shot down, and fired four missiles into eastern Ukraine. Russia unleashed a barrage of 38 missiles, 75 air raids and 98 attacks from multiple rocket launchers over the last 24 hours, Ukraine's armed forces said in social media posts.

Two people were killed and one wounded in Russian shelling in Ukraine's partially occupied Donetsk province, regional Governor Vadym Filashkin said on Saturday. Ukrainian energy company Centrengo announced that the Zmiiv Thermal Power Plant, one of the largest thermal power plants in the eastern Kharkiv region, was completely destroyed following Russian shelling last week.

Power outage schedules were still in place for approximately 120,000 people in the region, where 700,000 people had lost electricity after the plant was hit on March 22. Russia has escalated its attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure in recent days, causing significant damage in several regions.

Officials in the Poltava region said on Saturday that there had been "several hits" to an infrastructure facility without specifying whether it was an energy facility. Meanwhile, the toll of Friday's mass barrage of 99 drones and missiles hitting regions across Ukraine came to light on Saturday, with local officials in the Kherson region announcing the death of one civilian. — Aljazeera

## US approves bombs, jets for Israel

WASHINGTON: The United States has green-lighted the transfer of billions of dollars worth of bombs and fighter jets to Israel, The Washington Post reported, even as it publicly expresses concerns about the long-threatened Israeli invasion of Gaza's Rafah and the rising civilian casualties in the enclave.

The new arms package includes more than 1,800 MK84 2,000-pound bombs and 500 MK82 500-pound bombs, according to Pentagon and Department of State officials, the Washington Post reported. The 2,000-pound bombs, which can inflict damage to people up to 1,000 feet (300 metres) away, have been "linked to previous mass-casualty events throughout Israel's military campaign in Gaza", the report said. The US gives \$3.8bn in annual military assistance to its longtime ally.

Reporting from Washington, DC, Al Jazeera's Kimberly Halkett said the transfer "amounts to about \$2.5bn", adding that "this is taking place despite a growing rift between both the Israeli and US governments". The US continues to provide weapons packages to Israel while pushing for an end to

hostilities in the five-month war and on Monday did not veto a United Nations Security Council resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and the release of captives.

While Washington is publicly pressuring Israel to "dial back" its war in Gaza, its policy moves are sending an entirely different signal, Marc Owen Jones, associate professor of Middle East studies at Hamad Bin Khalifa University, told Al Jazeera. In the face of widespread international condemnation, including from Washington, Israel has said it will soon launch a ground invasion of Rafah, the southernmost city in the Gaza Strip that borders Egypt and where about 1.5 million forcibly displaced Palestinians are sheltering.

On Saturday, the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs criticised the US, posting on X that "demanding [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu to stop killing civilians and supplying him with weapons is an unprecedented principled and moral contradiction". The ministry expressed regret at the "ongoing failure" on the part of the UN Security Council and of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to bring Israel

to respect their decisions.

US senators have urged President Joe Biden to cut military aid to Israel until it ensures access to humanitarian aid for Gaza. Many countries and rights groups have called for Israel to obey an ICJ order to allow the unimpeded delivery of aid into Gaza, where famine has set in. US Senator Bernie Sanders slammed the move as "obscene".

"The US cannot beg Netanyahu to stop bombing civilians one day and the next send him thousands more 2,000-pound bombs that can level entire city blocks," he said in a post on X. "We must end our complicity: No more bombs to Israel." Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi called on the international community to stop supplying Israel with weapons.

"UN agencies are telling horror stories of suffering in Gaza. Over 30,000 killed. Over two million people starved. These facts shame the world," he posted on X. "Weapons must stop flowing to Israel. Israel must be forced to end this catastrophe. This is what international law, what human values, demand," he said. The White House declined to comment on the weapons transfers. — Aljazeera

## Nearly 400 tonnes of food depart Cyprus for Gaza

CYPRUS: A three-ship convoy has left Cyprus's Lamaca Port headed for the Gaza Strip with nearly 400 tonnes of food and other supplies as people continue to die from hunger in the enclave amid Israel's ongoing war.

The aid that departed on Saturday will be taken to Gaza by a cargo ship and a platform towed by a salvage vessel. The shipment comes as several NGOs and rights organisations accuse Israel of deliberately blocking aid to Gaza, amid warnings of imminent famine in the besieged strip.

Charity, World Central Kitchen (WCK) said the vessels were carrying ready-to-eat items like rice, pasta, flour, legumes, canned vegetables, and proteins, enough to prepare more than one million meals. Dates, which are traditionally eaten to break the daily fast during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, were also on board. An aid ship operated by the Spanish NGO Open Arms delivered 200 tonnes of food aid on March 16,

which WCK distributed. During that mission, a makeshift jetty was constructed from rubble to enable offloading in the enclave, which does not have any port facilities. The mission was financed mainly by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and received the support of the Cypriot authorities. Saturday's dispatch includes two forklifts and a crane to assist with future marine deliveries.

Separately, the United States plans to construct a floating pier off Gaza to receive aid. Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides said late on Friday that the target completion date is May 1, but it could be ready by around April 15. Israel's war on Gaza has displaced more than 80 percent of Gaza's population and pushed hundreds of thousands to the brink of famine, the United Nations and international aid agencies have said.

Israel's military said it continued to attack dozens of targets in Gaza, days after

the UN Security Council issued its first demand for a ceasefire. The US military said during an airdrop on Friday that it had released more than 100,000 pounds (45,000kg) of aid that day and almost a million pounds (453,000kg) overall, part of a multicountry effort. But the aid is not sufficient, and aid groups have criticised the drops as "symbolic" as Israel continues its war on Gaza.

In some cases, the drops have proven lethal, with one killing five people in an incident when a parachute failed to open, and 12 people drowned as they attempted to get aid dropped in the sea. Humanitarian officials say deliveries by sea and air are not enough and that Israel must allow far more aid by road.

Speaking to reporters in Egypt on Saturday, Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said that the state of near-famine in Gaza can be dealt with in a short time if Israel opened the land crossings for aid to enter. — Aljazeera

## PTI rejects commission formed to probe IHC judges' letter

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has demanded the formation of an inquiry commission into the Islamabad High Court (IHC) judges' letter similar to commissions that probed the Memogate scandal and Election 2013 rigging allegations.

Speaking to a private TV channel, PTI leader Barrister Gohar Ali Khan said that his party rejects the commission that will be headed by a retired judge. He called for the formation of an inquiry commission comprising serving judges, saying that the former judges enjoy power equivalent to that of a civil judge.

Earlier today, the federal government formed an inquiry commission headed by former CJP Justice (retired) Tassaduq Hussain Jilani to investigate the allegations of intelligence agencies' interference in the judiciary levelled by six IHC judges. The announcement of the formation of the committee was made by PM Shehbaz Sharif while addressing the federal cabinet session. As many as six serving judges of the IHC had penned a letter to the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) on March 26, urging it to summon a judicial convention to review the matter of "interference of intelligence agencies with judicial functions".

## 18 Senators elected unopposed

ISLAMABAD (INP): Eighteen candidates of a total of 147 aspirants who deposited their nomination papers for the 48 vacant Senate seats have been elected unopposed as Senators.

The final list of candidates from Returning Officers shows that out of 18 elected unopposed, seven are from Punjab's general seats. Similarly, in Balochistan, Senators for seven general seats, two women seats, and two Ulama/technocrat seats have won without any opposition.

A spokesperson for the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) announced that preparations have been completed for conducting elections on April 2 to fill 30 vacant seats. Ballot papers have been printed, and transportation of election materials to returning officers has also been finalized. The elections would be held on 29 General, eight women, nine technocrat/ Ulama and two non-Muslim seats.

The elections are underway for 30 seats, which include one general and one technocrat seat from the federal capital, two women seats, two technocrat/Ulema seats, and one non-Muslim seat from Punjab. Similarly, Sindh will see elections for seven general, two women, two technocrat/Ulema, and one non-Muslim seat. Additionally, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will hold elections for seven general, two women, and two technocrat seat on April 2. In total, 59 candidates are vying for these seats.

## Nawaz's picture on Kisan Card challenged

LAHORE (INP): The decision to emboss former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's picture on Kisan Card in Punjab has been challenged in Lahore High Court (LHC).

The applicant Mashkooor Hussain in his plea stated that CM Maryam Nawaz has okayed to emboss the picture of Nawaz Sharif on a Kisan Card but the public funds cannot be used for personal publicity. Using the national treasury for personal publicity is a violation of the Supreme Court's verdict, the plea stated and urged the court to stay the decision until a decision on the plea.

Punjab Chief Minister (CM) Maryam Nawaz gave approval to the 'Nawaz Sharif Kisan Card Project' aimed at uplifting the agriculture sector and socio-economic condition of farmers in the province. The chief minister presided over the meeting related to agricultural reforms here. She said that under the Kisan card 500,000 small farmers would be given loans on easy terms.

# Murad, Aurangzeb agree to attract foreign investment

**F.P. Report**

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister (CM) Syed Murad Ali Shah and Federal Minister for Finance Muhammad Aurangzeb have agreed to collaborate to attract foreign investment and boost exports, enhancing the financial stability of the province in general and of the country in particular.

This emerged in a meeting between the two here at CM House on Saturday. The meeting was attended by Principal Secretary to CM Agha Wasif, Additional Secretary Ministry of Finance Amjad Mahmood, and Provincial Secretary Finance Fayaz Jatoi, according to a CM's spokesman.

The CM pointed out that his government has always paid its electricity bills on time, and if any outstanding bills needed to be reconciled, the federal government should have brought the issue to their attention instead of making at-source deductions. The CM also said that the FBR after reading a news item of the cars registered in Sindh from 1948 to 2015 had deducted Rs6 billion of the province at source. Despite the resolution of the issue still the amount has not been refunded.

The Federal Finance Minister told the chief minister that he was working to develop a proper professional working relationship between the federal and

provincial organizations. "The federal and provincial organizations and institutions have to work together, learn from each other's expertise, support each other for growth and cooperate for collective uplift and development," he said.

Mohammad Aurangzeb assured the chief minister that the at-source deduction issue would be resolved amicably. The CM and the federal finance minister also discussed the price escalation of industrial gas. The chief minister said that the industrialists were quite upset with the increase in industrial gas prices. The Federal finance minister said that during his meeting with the industrialists, they also complained to him. Therefore, they agreed to discuss the matter with the federal minister for petroleum to resolve the issue.

The chief minister said that in the federal Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP), the provincial government has not been given any new scheme for the last eight years. Compared to Sindh the other provinces have been given new schemes in the federal PSDP. Aurangzeb and Shah agreed that the issue of PSDP's new schemes would be discussed with the federal minister for planning & Development.

It was also agreed that the federal and provincial governments would work together to develop the agriculture sector on scien-

tific and modern methods. It was pointed out that there was ample potential to cultivate export-quality crops, vegetables, fruits, and dairy products so that they could be exported to earn foreign exchange. The CM told the federal finance minister that he was working to introduce new technologies to improve crop yield and measures being taken to ensure the provision of certified seed in the market.

Discussing the reconstruction of flood-devastated infrastructure, the CM told the federal finance minister that houses, school buildings, and roads were being reconstructed. He said that the donor agencies have extended a helping hand in the reconstruction of flood-affected infrastructure, but the funds have not trickled down as was pledged by the international community. The chief minister also agreed to attract foreign investment in different sectors for which investment procedures would be made simple and automated.

The federal finance minister appreciated the Sindh Chief minister's efforts in establishing one of the best Public Private Partnership units. He said that the provincial government has evolved an effective public-private partnership in Sindh and its fruits are being reaped by the public and the private partners. The CM thanked the federal minister for his visit and support.

## Zulfi withdraws senate candidacy, puts party first

**F.P. Report**

ATTACK: In a surprising turn of events, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Zulfi Bukhari has withdrawn his candidacy for the upcoming Senate elections. This decision comes amidst legal challenges surrounding the confirmation of his nomination papers.

Bukhari alleged that his nomination faced "false and illegal hurdles," despite possessing the necessary legal documentation. While his lawyer, Salman Akram Raja, expressed confidence in a legal victory, Bukhari grappled with the potential consequences of contesting the confirmations of his fel-

low PTI nominees, Allama Raja Nasir Abbas and Hamid Khan.

"Challenging their notifications could create internal friction within the party," Bukhari explained during a press conference in Lahore. "My loyalty to PTI is unwavering, and the party's unity remains paramount." Bukhari, a long-standing PTI member, emphasized that personal gain paled in comparison to the party's success. "Senate seats or any positions hold little meaning compared to serving our nation and achieving freedom," he declared.

Withdrawing his candidacy, Bukhari extended his congratulations to Allama

Nasir Abbas, who will now fill the Senate seat. He praised Abbas's unwavering support for Prime Minister Imran Khan, expressing confidence in his ability to effectively represent the party in the Senate.

Bukhari's decision underscores the importance of party unity within PTI. By prioritizing the party's well-being over personal ambition, Bukhari exemplifies the party's dedication to its core principles. While this development necessitates strategic adjustments for the upcoming elections, Bukhari's actions demonstrate the unwavering commitment within PTI's ranks.



PESHAWAR: A man pushing out of order auto rickshaw at flooded road during heavy rain in the City.

## Washington consistently betrayed Pakistan: Baloch

**F.P. Report**

LAHORE: Acting Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Liaqat Baloch contends that despite Islamabad's sacrifices, Washington consistently betrayed Pakistan on strategic priorities, essentially stabbing it in the back. Responded to US President Joe Biden's letter to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, he highlighting Pakistan's significant sacrifices in maintaining relations with the United States, pointed out Washington's opposition to Pakistan's nuclear program and America's favoritism towards India in every situation from 1971 war to spread of terrorism and Kashmir issue.

Therefore, he urged a closer examination of the motives behind the letter,

citing historical instances. Liaqat Baloch criticized America's utilization of Pakistan to further its interests in Afghanistan, only to sow seeds of animosity against Pakistan after the withdrawal of American and NATO forces. He lamented that instead of pressuring India to address the Kashmir issue in accordance with UN resolutions, US is silent and India has escalated its oppression and atrocities against Kashmiris with impunity.

Regarding vital projects like the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline and the Pak-China Economic Corridor, he condemned US interference, which he deemed detrimental to Pakistan's national interests. He highlighted the IMF's stringent conditions, which have exacerbated Pakistan's economic woes,

while America remains unsupportive.

The JI leader warned against Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif succumbing to American pressure, referencing General Pervez Musharraf's surrender under similar circumstances. He emphasized Pakistan's need to assert itself as a dignified, self-respecting nation by addressing internal security and restoring public trust, particularly following concerns of election rigging.

Meanwhile, during a telephonic conversation between Baloch and PTI leader Asad Qaiser, both leaders pledged to maintain political contacts between their respective parties. Qaiser expressed a commitment to avoid confusion between the parties in the future.