

Raiisi congratulates Shehbaz

ISLAMABAD (APP): President of Iran Seyed Ebrahim Raiisi Sunday congratulated Shehbaz Sharif on his election as the new Prime Minister of Pakistan. In a message, the President expressed his confidence that the two countries, in the light of the deep historical and cultural links, will work harder to strengthen and expand cooperation in order to achieve the desired and befitting level of the relations between the two great nations of Iran and Pakistan.



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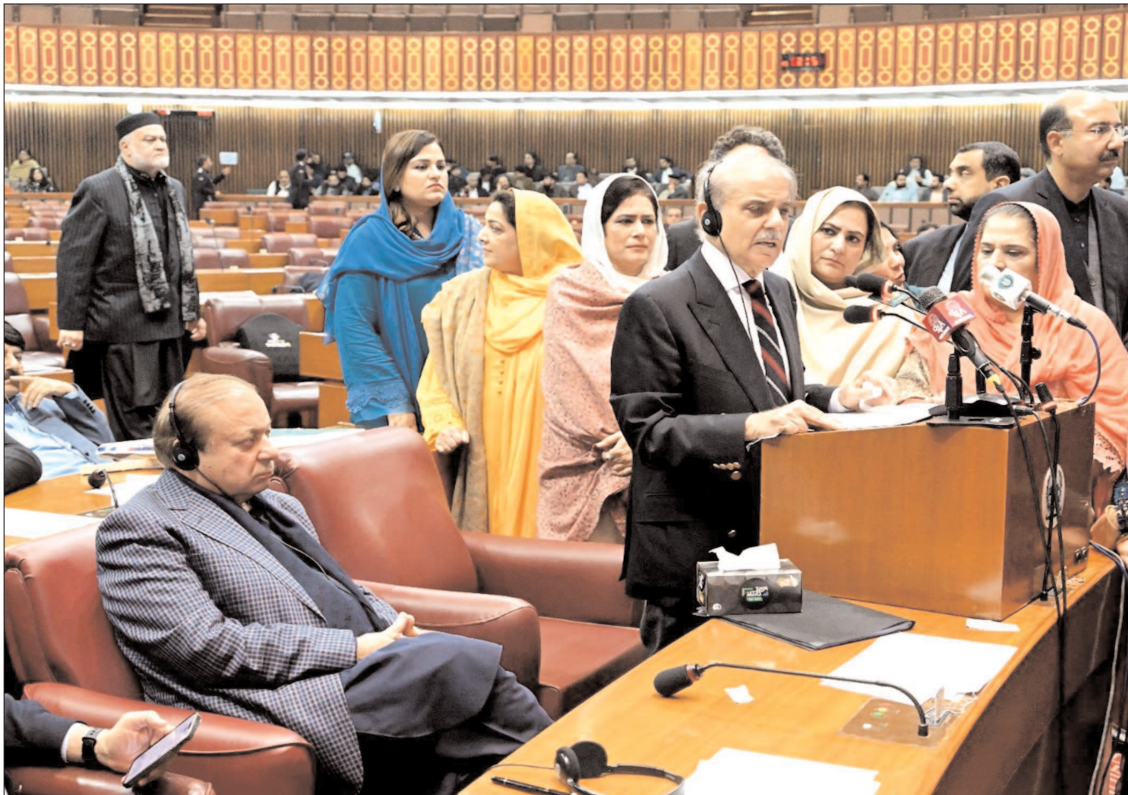
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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister elect Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif addressing the National Assembly.

## More than 30 killed in heavy rain in Pakistan

PESHAWAR (INP): More than 30 people have died in rain-related incidents in Pakistan during days of heavy downpours, with thousands of schools closed, officials said Sunday. Widespread heavy rain since Thursday has caused severe disruption in some areas of the country, including the closure of all schools in Balochistan province until Thursday.

Eighteen children were among 26 killed in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province as a result of collapsed buildings.

"As a result of continuous rainfall over the past four days in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a total of 27 individuals have lost their lives," said Taimur Ali Khan, the spokesperson for the Provincial Disaster Management Authority in

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Another person was killed in a landslide and more than 150 houses were also damaged.

In southern Balochistan province, five people were killed when buildings collapsed on Thursday and Friday, said Jahanzain Khan, head of the disaster management agency.

Damaged roads, floods and landslides have cut villages off from main towns in Balochistan, while major roads were blocked in Gilgit-Baltistan, local media reported. Pakistan's Meteorological Department anticipates further rainfall and snowfall across the region on Sunday.

Meanwhile, The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) has said that the recent rains

in Balochistan claimed five lives besides damaging 237 houses across province. According to PDMA report, five people including three children and a woman were killed in separate rain related incidents in Barkhan and Kharan while another was injured. The rains also completely demolished 82 houses while 155 houses were partially damaged, the report added.

The PDMA further said that walls of 25 houses collapsed, four highways and a bridge was damaged due to rain.

PDMA, district administration, Pakistan Army and concerned departments were engaged in rescue operations in rain hit areas of Balochistan. The affectees were being provided tents, blankets and other daily necessary items.

### Senate By Election

20 candidates get nomination papers in Balochistan

QUETTA (INP): Around 20 candidates including former chief minister Abdul Quddus Bizenjo, have received forms for three Senate vacant seats from Balochistan.

Today is the final day for filing nomination papers for three Senate vacancies from Baluchistan.

People's Party's seven candidates and PML-N's five candidates including Mir Dostain Domki have received nomination papers. Moreover, BAP's four candidates including Kehda Babar and Bushra Rind, ANP's three and one independent candidates have received nomination forms but no candidate has submitted nomination papers. The nomination papers can be submitted upto 4:00pm today. The candidates list will be released this evening.

Nomination papers' scrutiny will be conducted till March 05, while appeals can be filed in tribunals till March 07. The appeals will be decided by March 09 and revised lists of candidates will be issued on same day. The candidates could take nomination papers back on March 10. The three Senate seats of Balochistan were vacated after Sarfaraz Bugti, Prince Ahmed Umar Ahmedzai and Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haidery tendered resignations from the upper house.

## PN performs rescue operation in coastal villages

RAWALPINDI (PPI): Pakistan Navy has conducted relief and rescue operations to various small coastal villages of Balochistan affected by recent flash flooding. According to a PN information, Pakistan Navy has expedited rescue and relief operations by stationing helicopters in flood-affected areas of Gwadar District. Pakistan Navy helicopters undertook multiple hops from Gwadar to the flood affected villages of Pishukan and Kappar. Relief teams delivered ration bags, clean drinking water and food items near people stranded in their villages.

Moreover, ration and relief goods distribution conducted by Pakistan Navy per-

sonnel amongst flood affectees of Gwadar city. In addition, large numbers of medical supplies and ration bags have also been dispatched to different other flood-affected villages through road where land connectivity is restored.

Further, in assistance to civil administration, Pakistan Navy troops are wholeheartedly undertaking rescue and relief operations utilizing all available equipment and resources. In this regard, de-flooding operations are being conducted on various localities of Gwadar city to clear flood water. Pakistan Navy is resolutely committed to supporting our flood-affected brethren during this difficult time.

## CM announces relief package for rains affected families in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur on Sunday announced compensation package for the affected families due to rains in the province. The Chief Minister directed the Relief Secretary to compile reports on the affected and the damages incurred due to rains.

Detailed information about the life and property losses across the province should be collected, the Chief Minister's instructed.

He announced relief checks of Rs1 million for the killed, Rs 300,000 for severely injured and Rs 50,000 for those who received moderate injuries.

Financial compensation will also be provided for property damages caused by the rains. The Chief Minister has instructed the concerned Divisional Commissioners to coordinate efforts and promptly provide relief to the affected. Immediate relief measures are to be taken on an emergency basis, focusing on essential needs such as temporary shelter, food, and other necessities for owners of damaged homes.

Ali Amin Gandapur directed urgent provision of medical assistance to the injured. He also directed to restore the closed roads due to heavy snowfall and rain. The Chief Minister has stressed the utilization of

all available resources for this purpose.

In light of any emergency situations, preparedness measures should be in place to tackle the challenges effectively, Ali Amin Gandapur asserts.

He emphasizes that the provincial government stands with the affected and ensures that every possible assistance will be extended to them.

Acknowledging the shared grief with the families of the deceased, Ali Amin Gandapur expresses solidarity, reaffirming that no effort will be spared in providing support to those affected by the calamities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

normal life was restored in the area. The intensive rainy spell has wreaked havoc in Gwadar, with flash floods inundated several villages on Saturday.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfaraz Bugti on Sunday reached Gwadar to review the situation caused by heavy rains in the coastal city and the measures being taken for the rescue of affected people. He was accompanied by Members of Provincial Assembly (MPAs) including Zahoor Ahmed Buledi, Ali Madad Jattak, Maulana Hidayat ur Rehman, Mir Obaid Girgij and Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan on his one-day visit to Gwadar.

# The Frontier Post

5000 Afghanis return to homeland

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Over five thousand Afghan nationals returned to their country over the last one week as repatriation of illegal foreign nationals to their homeland continued on Sunday. According to the latest statistics, 5033 illegal Afghan nationals returned to their country from February 25 till March 2, taking the total number of returned immigrants to 503,261.

## Shehbaz Sharif returns as prime minister for second time

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday took over the premiership for the second time after he bagged 201 votes in the National Assembly, becoming the country's 24th prime minister.

Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has been elected prime minister with 201 votes. While Omar Ayub obtained 92 votes," announced National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq amid protest by the SIC lawmakers. The speaker then invited Shehbaz to sit in the prime minister's seat and invited him to address the house. The session, which is being chaired by NA Speaker Sadiq, began with the oath-taking of PML-N's Jam Kamal. However, the House soon began echoing with slogans and chants raised by the SIC members in favour of incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and alliance backing Shehbaz Sharif. As Speaker Ayaz Sadiq announced the results, former premier and his elder brother Nawaz Sharif congratulated him. Later, Khawaja Asif and PPP leader Asif Zardari hugged him. Addressing the House, Shehbaz thanked his elder brother for nominating him for the office of prime minister. He said the country progressed by leaps and bounds under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif.

Earlier, the assembly session was due to begin at 11 am but started after almost an hour's delay. Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) candidate Omar Ayub Khan are the two contestants for the top slot of the country. Shehbaz is the favourite candidate to become prime minister as he has the backing of eight parties.

Shehbaz is the member of the powerful Sharif family which has been in Pakistan's political arena for almost 40 years as his elder brother and three-

time prime minister Nawaz was inducted in the Punjab as finance minister during General Zia-ul-Haq regime in 1981. Omar Ayub, on the other hand, is the grandson of Field Marshal General Ayub Khan who imposed first martial law in the country in 1958. His father Gohar Ayub Khan has been active in politics and remained member of the National Assembly from the platform of the PML-N.

Both the candidates submitted their nomination papers to the National Assembly Secretariat, which were declared valid by Speaker Ayaz Sadiq after the scrutiny, conducted in the presence of the leaders from both sides. Omar Ayub had raised an objection against Shehbaz's nomination, saying the PML-N leader was 'gifted' his seat through manipulation in Form-47. He said he could not contest the PM election because he had lost as per Form-45. He has been wrongly administered the oath as MNA and thus cannot be a candidate for the prime minister's position, Mr Ayub said in a tweet. The objection was rejected.

Besides the PML-N, Shehbaz has the backing of the PPP, MQM-P, PML-Q, BAP, PML-Z, IPP, and the NP having a total of 205 members. Two MNAs-elect from the MQM-P and PPP have yet to take oath. In order to become the leader of the house, a candidate requires 169 votes in the 336-member house.

It may be recalled that 304 members have taken oath while the ECP has withheld the notification of reserved seats for women and minorities as it has not yet decided on the plea of PTI-SIC for their quota of reserved seats. At the start of the session, Speaker Ayaz Sadiq administered oath to the members who could attend the opening meeting of the assembly. Later, the speaker read the procedure to be adopted for the election and asked the members who favoured Shehbaz to go to the right of

him and those who would vote for Omar to his left side.

**Mounds of socio-economic challenges exist; but surmountable: PM-elect Shehbaz:** Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, the newly-elected prime minister, on Sunday spelled out a number of initiatives to net the runaway inflation, high cost of living, price hike, circular debt in the energy sector and foreign debts, and expressed the optimism that though the mounds of challenges existed, but were not insurmountable. In his maiden speech in the National Assembly, the prime minister-elect also offered an olive branch to the protesting opposition members with a 'charter of reconciliation', besides reiterating his insistence on pursuing a 'charter of economy'.

Shehbaz Sharif was, earlier, elected as the prime minister for the second time in a 201-vote count by the newly formed National Assembly about three weeks after the conclusion of general elections, leading to formation of a coalition government.

He said that after the general elections, they had two options ahead of them; either to protect their politics or to save the country, but the allied parties' leadership preferred interests of the country and resolved to play their role for the bright future of the countrymen. Shehbaz said that Pakistan was blessed with immense natural resources and talented young people who could steer it out of the difficulties. All the segments of society and political leadership should play their part in those endeavours, he stressed.

He said the economic and social challenges were myriad but at the same time, there was an opportunity, if they decided collectively to face them. The PM-elect said that as per estimates, the budget revenues stood at Rs12,300 billion and after the NFC (national finance Commission) Award distribution, the Federal Government was left with only

(Continued on Back Page)

### Presidential elections

Parliament's joint session summoned on March 9

ISLAMABAD (INP): The joint session of Parliament summoned on March 9 for the presidential elections with National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq in chair. According to details, the joint session was summoned by NA Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Saturday, March 9 at 10:00 am.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) earlier announced the schedule for the presidential elections

According to the ECP schedule, polling for the presidential election will be held on March 9 from 10 am to 4 pm.

The electoral college for indirect presidential election comprises of the members of the Senate, National Assembly and four provincial assemblies.

In the election, the Senate and National Assembly's members votes are counted as single votes.

The votes cast by the provincial assembly legislators are adjusted so as to give each province an equal share in the election.

Therefore, each provincial assembly has 65 votes equivalent to the strength of Balochistan Assembly, which has minimum number of members.

The weightage of the total members of other provincial legislatures will be decided according to fixed number of 65. It is penitent to mention here that the coalition comprising PML-N, PPP, PML-Q, MQM-P, IPP, BAP, PML-Zia and National Party nominated Asif Ali Zardari for the president's office.

Meanwhile, PTI and Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) nominated Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party chief Mahmood Khan Achakzai for the slot. Out of 336, the alliance has 209 seats in the National Assembly so far while the opposition parties have 104 members with the PTI-backed Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) being the largest party in the lower house.



GWADAR: Pakistan Navy helicopter loading ration for distribution amongst flood affectees of Gawadar district.

## Israel reported to boycott ceasefire talks in Cairo over Hamas' rejection of hostage list

CAIRO/RAFAH (Reuters) : Israel boycotted Gaza ceasefire talks in Cairo on Sunday after Hamas rejected its demand for a complete list naming hostages that are still alive, an Israeli newspaper reported.

A Hamas delegation arrived in Cairo for the talks, billed as a possible final hurdle before an agreement that would halt the fighting for six weeks. But by early evening there was no sign of the Israelis.

"There is no Israeli delegation in Cairo," Ynet, the online version of Israel's Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper, quoted unidentified Israeli officials as saying.

"Hamas refuses to provide clear answers and therefore there is no reason to dispatch the Israeli delegation," Washington has insisted the ceasefire deal is close and should be in place in time to halt fighting by the start of Ramadan, a week away. But the warring sides have given little sign in public of backing away from previous demands.

After the Hamas delegation arrived, a Palestinian official told Reuters the deal was "not yet there". From the Israeli side, there was no official comment.

One source briefed on the talks had said on Saturday that Israel could stay away from Cairo unless Hamas first presented its full list of hostages who are still alive. A Palestinian source told Reuters Hamas had so far rejected that demand.

In past negotiations Hamas has sought to avoid discussing the wellbeing of individual hostages until after terms for their release are set. A U.S. official told reporters on Saturday: "The path to a ceasefire right now literally at this hour is straightforward. And there's a deal on the table. There's a framework deal."

Israel had agreed to the framework and it was now up to Hamas to respond, the U.S. official said.

An agreement would bring the first extended truce of the war, which has raged for five months so far with just a week-long pause in November. Dozens of hostages held by the militants would be freed in return for hundreds of Palestinian detainees.

Aid would be ramped up for Gazans pushed to the verge of famine. Fighting would cease in time to head off a massive planned Israeli assault on Rafah, where more than half of Gaza's 2.3 million people are penned in against the enclave's southern border fence abutting Egypt.

Israeli forces would pull back from some areas and

let Gazans return to abandoned homes.

But the proposal appears to stop short of fulfilling the main Hamas demand for a permanent end to the war, while also leaving unresolved the fate of more than half of the more than 100 remaining hostages - including Israeli men not covered by terms to free women, children, the elderly and wounded.

Egyptian mediators have suggested those issues could be set aside for now, with assurances to resolve them in later stages. A Hamas source told Reuters the militants were still holding out for a "package deal". At a morgue outside a Rafah hospital on Sunday morning, women wept and wailed beside rows of bodies of the Abu Anza family, 14 of whom were killed in their home in airstrike overnight. Relatives opened a black plastic body bag to kiss the face of a dead schoolgirl in a torn sweatshirt and pink unicorn pyjamas.

Later, the bodies were brought to a graveyard and buried, including two infant twins, a boy and a girl, passed down in white bundles and placed in the ground.

"My heart is gone," wailed their mother, Rania Abu Anza, who also lost her husband in the attack. "I haven't had enough time with them."

## Sarfraz Bugti directs to continue rescue, relief operation in Gwadar

GWADAR (APP): Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Ahemd Bugti on Sunday directed the administration to continue the operation for the rescue and rehabilitation of the people and ensure early drainage of rainwater from the affected areas.

Chief Minister Bugti issued the directives while chairing a high level meeting to review the damages caused by rains and flood in Gwadar and its surrounding areas.

He said that the incessant rains had created an unusual situation in Gwadar and the government would all necessary assistance to the victims. He ordered the departments concerned to

expedite the rehabilitation and relief activities in the rain-affected areas to protect precious lives and properties.

Commissioner Makran Division Saeed Ahmed Umrani and Deputy Commissioner Kech Aurangzeb Badini informed the meeting that in the recent spell, about 187 rainfall had been recorded in the area.

They further informed that the families affected by the torrential rain were immediately shifted to safe places. They were being provided all necessary assistance, including ration. The chief minister appreciated the authorities for their timely relief actions and directed them to continue the activities till the



# Govt to take measures to protect wildlife: CM

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has said that provincial government would take comprehensive and effective measures to protect wildlife in Punjab.

In her message on World Wildlife Day 2024 on Sunday, the CM said the importance of wildlife in maintaining ecological balance cannot be underestimated. Realizing the importance of biodiversity, the Punjab government would take effective measures to bring environmental balance. Conservation of all kinds of wildlife from wild sheep found in Salt Range to 'talurs' of Cholistan and to the dolphins, is our top priority. Like entire Pakistan, nature has blessed Punjab with beautiful wildlife, the protection and promotion of which is our responsibility. "On World Wildlife Day, I pay tribute to the workers and organizations serving in this field" she concluded.

**Maryam Nawaz congratulates Shehbaz Sharif on being elected as PM:** Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif congratulated Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif on being elected Prime Minister of Pakistan for the second time.

In her message issued on Sunday, the CM said, "I also congratulate the people of Pakistan as they have got a Khadim." The CM expressed good wishes for the success of elected Prime Minister of Pakistan, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. She said, "A new era of service will begin in Pakistan under the leadership of Muhammad Nawaz Sharif. Nation's servant and Nawaz Sharif's soldier Shehbaz Sharif's election as Prime Minister will bring prosperity and development."

The chief minister said, "Shehbaz Sharif's speed, hard work, efficiency and honesty are world-renowned. His past is witness to his hard work, efficiency and merit." She said that the election of Shehbaz Sharif as the Prime Minister of Pakistan is a victory of true democracy, adding that Shehbaz Sharif's leadership is indispensable for solving economic, social and political problems of Pakistan.

**CM Maryam seeks plan to upgrade, construct BHUs, RHCs:** Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz chairing a meeting directed the authorities concerned to ensure availability of doctors, paramedical staff, medicines and required medical equipment at hospitals in the Punjab province, has approved phase-wise reforms in health system.

According to a report on Sunday, she directed official to form a health advisory council to ensure transparency. The health advisory council will include government officials, professionals and public representatives. The chief minister also called for a plan to upgrade, construct and rehabilitate BHUs and RHCs. She directed for ensuring uniformity in the external and internal design of BHU and RHC.

The CM directed for installing Urdu signboards and proper floor lining in hospitals to guide the public. She approved immediate provision of free medicines to patients. She called for a field hospital plan to bring health facilities to the doorsteps of people. She directed to send mobile health units to suburban areas and vil-

## Uzma felicitates Shehbaz, says era of prosperity to continue under his leadership

LAHORE (INP): Spokesperson Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Punjab, Uzma Bukhari felicitating Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif from his election as 24th Prime Minister of Pakistan has said that the era of progress and prosperity will continue again under his leadership.

In her felicitation message on Sunday, she highlighted that PM Shehbaz Sharif had saved Pakistan from default and it was his biggest credit.

Uzma Bukhari further stated, "PM Shehbaz Sharif would steer Pakistan out of the economic vortex and vicious circle as his first and foremost priority is to ensure the revival of the national economy and elimination of the price hike."

Those who are destined to wait will continue to do so for the next five years,

## PHA opens floral, gift shop at Racecourse Park

LAHORE (APP): The Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) has opened a decorated flower shop at Racecourse Park in Lahore, marking a strategic move to expand its commercial footprint and transform the local floral industry.

A brainchild of Director General Muhammad Tahir Wattoo, the PHA Flower Shop, as it is called, stands just around the entrance of Racecourse Park to enable visitors and passersby to collect elegant floral gifts.

The PHA spokesperson told media that the shop offers not just bright bouquets and boxed flowers but also a variety of related gift products.

The pricing structure is designed with inclusivity in mind, ensuring affordability for individuals across various societal strata. He was of the view that in addition to events such as weddings, people buy flowers to stay connected to family members and friends.

PHA also operates arguably the largest government-owned commercial nursery in the provincial metropolis, located at the strategic location of Gulberg. Opened in September of last year, the project aims to make horticulture more accessible, intending for the nursery to offer everything under one roof.

The department, under its incumbent director general, Tahir Wattoo, has gone on an aggressive plantation drive, planting over half a million saplings throughout the city in the past calendar year alone.

It also developed two Miyawaki forests in Johar Town and Mehmood Booti, each spread over an acre, and several smaller urban forests.

The Miyawaki technique, originating from Japan, aims to intensify green coverage within confined spaces.

This year, the spokesperson said, the PHA intends to increase the number by planting an even larger number of saplings to mitigate the threat of environmental degradation.

Meanwhile, PHA has also mobilised resources within its jurisdiction to contribute to the cleanliness campaign ordered by the chief minister, he mentioned. Teams have been deputed for the daily washing of trees, green belts, and other green assets. The horticulture staff has been directed to ensure the extensive cleaning of public parks assigned to them.

## Free medical, dental camp held at LPC

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Press Club on Sunday organised a free medical camp for members and their families with the support of Private Nursing Colleges Federation.

In the medical camp, general check-up, gynecological problems, dental diseases, eye examination, nutrition issues, free sugar check, and free blood pressure was checked.

Specialist General Physician Dr. Jameel Baloch, Dr. Shumaila, Dr. Saba, Dr. Osama Asif, Dr. Abdul Rahman, Dr. Ayman and paramedical staff participated in the medical camp and examined the patients, participating in the medical camp for prescribed treatment and provided medicines.

LPC President Arshad Ansari, Vice President Amjad Usmani, Secretary Zahid Abid, Member Governing Body Iman Sheikh, Rana Shehzad, Fatima Mukhtar welcomed doctors, members of Lahore Press Club and their families who participated in the camp.

The LPC members and their families expressed their satisfaction over the conduct of the camp and expressed hope that the elected governing body would continue to take such measures so that the members of the LPC can benefit more.

President Arshad Ansari and Secretary Zahid Abid thanked the members and their families who participated in the medical camp and thanked their general secretary Sania Kherra for organising the medical camp on behalf of the Private Nursing Colleges Federation and presented her with a memento shield from the club.

They appreciated the efforts of Vice President Amjad Usmani and Council Member Muhammad Abdullah for the excellent organisation of the camp.

Sania Kherra, while talking to APP said that staying on the front foot to serve the patients is their faith, adding relationship of humanity is the top priority of their commitment. She also expressed her commitment in serving the suffering humanity and assured all possible cooperation with the media community.

## Five of a family injured in house fire

LAHORE (APP): Five persons of a family were injured in a fire at a house at Venus Society, Ferozpur Road, here on Sunday.

Police said that five persons were present in the house when a fire broke out. On information, six Rescue 1122 vehicles rushed to the spot and started an operation.

The firefighters rescued the injured and shifted them to Jinnah Hospital.

The injured have been identified as Shahzaib Umer (22), Sidra Umer (24), Abdullah Umer (15) and Nawaz Umer (45).

Death toll from pneumonia rises to 456 in Punjab

LAHORE (INP): Five more children died of pneumonia across Punjab on Sunday taking the death toll in about three months to 456, reported on Sunday.

However, no death was reported in Lahore during the last 24 hours. As many as 464 new cases of pneumonia have been reported in Punjab during the last 24 hours while 98 new cases were reported in Lahore during one day.

MILITARY ENGINEERING SERVICES

NOTICE OF TENDER

GE (Air) Asghar Khan Risalpur Letter No. 6000-AdvT/92/E-6, Dated: 01 Mar 2024

1. The office of GE (Air) Asghar Khan invites sealed tenders for the following works in the light of PPRARule 13 (1) of 2004

|   |  |     |              |
|---|--|-----|--------------|
| 2 | Provision of certain facilities at PAF | (Q) | Rs.3.000 (M) |
|   | Provision of certain facilities at PAF | (Q) | Rs.3.000 (M) |
|   | Provision of certain facilities at PAF | (Q) | Rs.3.000 (M) |
|   | Provision of certain facilities at PAF | (Q) | Rs.2.350 (M) |
|   | Provision of certain facilities at PAF | (Q) | Rs.2.350 (M) |
|   | Provision of certain facilities at PAF | (Q) | Rs.3.000 (M) |
|   | Provision of certain facilities at PAF | (Q) | Rs.2.000 (M) |
|   | Provision of certain facilities at PAF | (Q) | Rs.2.000 (M) |

3. The contractors are required to submit their applications for issuance of tender documents alongwith their complete credentials as shown at (serial 9). The applications shall be scrutinized and the tender documents will only be issued to the firms who have sufficient experience in the relevant field and satisfy other special conditions required for the job and area. Tender will be issued to the scrutinized contractors. The tender must be received in the accepting office by 1130 Hrs on 22 Mar 2024 and will be opened at 1200 Hrs on the same date.

NOTE:- Contractors shall provide certificate that they are not involved in any type of litigation with Government Department in the Court of Law and that no special report of Directorate of Inspection and Evaluation (E-in-C's Branch GHQ) is outstanding against them.

4. All contractors will certify in writing that they are registered with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) and will submit a copy of their registration. Contractors not registered with PEC are ineligible to apply.

5. Contractor born on approved list of MES in category 'A' 'B' 'C' 'D' & 'E' and also having experience of this type of work may only apply.

6. Contractors who desire may present at the time of opening of tenders.

7. The accepting officers reserve the right to accept or reject the tender. Rejected tender will be dealt with as per Para 33(i) of PPRARules.

8. The interested parties can contact GE (Air) Asghar Khan / CMES (PAF) Peshawar for further detail from 0730 to 1420 hours on all working days.

| Sl No. | Name of the work Executed during the Last 2 Years and in Hand | Agency | Amount of Work | Time allowed (Months) | Date of Commencement | Date of Completion | Percentage Progress of work in hand | Department performance Report on each work by the Engineer in Charge |
|--------|---|--------|----------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
|        |   |        |                |                       |                      |                    |                                     |  |

PID(P)# 064/2024



LAHORE: Children are enjoying on jumping castle during Jashan Baharan Festival at Jilani Park. —APP Photo

## LESCO detects 350 power pilferers in 24 hours

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) has detected a total of 350 connections from where customers were pilfering electricity in all its circles of five districts -- Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara, on the 172nd day of the anti-power theft campaign.

A LESCO spokesman told the media here on Sunday that the company also submitted FIR against electricity thieves, out of which 137 FIRs had been registered in respective police stations.

On the 172nd consecutive day of the anti-power theft campaign, the spokesman added, large commercial consumers were also found involved in electricity theft and all of them were also disconnected and charged with detection units. Among the seized connections 09 were commercial, 01 industrial, 02 agricultural and 338 domestic, and all these connections were disconnected and charged with a total of 241,388 units as detection bill amounting to Rs 8,588 million.

Apprising the media about some major power pilferers, he explained that LESCO charged Rs 300,000 detection bill to an electricity pilferer in Shafiqabad area; Rs 254,700 detection bills to a power pilferer in Phool Nagar, Rs 200,000 detection bill to an electricity thief in Akbari Gate area, and Rs 150,000 fine in the form of detection bills to a customer stealing electricity in an area around

## Governor, CM felicitate newly elected PM Shehbaz

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and Governor Kamran Khan Tessori on Sunday congratulated Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on being elected as Prime Minister.

In their separate messages, they said the election of the Prime Minister is proof of the successful progress of the democratic process in the country.

They said Shehbaz Sharif is a senior parliamentarian and experienced politician and it is hoped that the country will progress during his tenure.

Earlier today, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif was elected prime minister of Pakistan for the second time on Sunday.

Shehbaz, who served as prime minister for 16 months after ouster of the PTI founder in April 2022, polled 201 votes as against 92 of his rival PTI-SIC candidate Omar Ayub Khan.

As Speaker Ayaz Sadiq announced the results, former premier and his elder brother Nawaz Sharif congratulated him. Later, Khawaja Asif and PPP leader Asif Zardari hugged him.

Addressing the House, Shehbaz thanked his elder brother for nominating him for the office of prime minister.

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and Governor Kamran Khan Tessori on Sunday congratulated Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on being elected as Prime Minister.

In their separate messages, they said the election of the Prime Minister is proof of the successful progress of the democratic process in the country.

They said Shehbaz Sharif is a senior parliamentarian and experienced politician and it is hoped that the country will progress during his tenure.

## NTDC energises another 160-MVA transformer

LAHORE (APP): The National Transmission and Despatch Company Limited (NTDC) teams have successfully installed/added 160 MVA 220/132kV auto-transformer (T-4), make Jiangsu Huepang China, along with complete 220 kV Dia at 220 kV grid station at Daud Khel. The said 160 MVA auto-transformer has been energised, the company's spokesman disclosed this to the media on Sunday. He added that in its commitment to ensure smooth power supply.



**FAZAIA DEGREE COLLEGE, PAF BASE PESHAWAR**

**VACANCY FOR PRINCIPAL**

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**Postal Address:** Base Education Squadron, PAF Base, Peshawar  
**Email Address:** baseedusqn@gmail.com



# CM initiates polio eradication drive

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur on Sunday launched polio eradication campaign in the province.

In a brief ceremony at the Chief Minister's House, he administered polio drops to children, marking the commencement of the second phase of the initiative.

During this phase, the polio eradication campaign will continue from March 3 to March 7 in the province. The goal is to administer polio drops to 740,000 children, emphasizing preventive measures against the disease.

For the successful execution of the polio vaccination plan, 35,000 teams have been formed. 55,000 security personnel have been appointed to ensure the safety of the polio eradication teams.

Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur expressed gratitude to the security personnel and polio workers who have sacrificed their lives during previous campaigns.

Gandapur affirmed the commitment to make KP polio-free, stating, "Clearing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa of polio is our determination and priority."

He appealed parents to ensure their children receive the polio drops and urged against boycotting the campaign due to a lack of facilities.

Highlighting the importance of the initiative for the safe future of children, Chief Minister Gandapur emphasized that compromises should not be made on this critical issue.

He held the government responsible for providing facilities. The newly elected provincial government is determined to continue the fight against this infectious disease.

Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur appealed to parents, teachers, religious scholars, elected representatives, and the media to collaborate with government efforts in this crucial endeavor.

## Muqam grieved over loss of lives

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial President Pakistan Muslim League (N) KP Amir Maqam on Sunday expressed grief and sorrow over the loss of precious lives and property due to the incidents caused by rain and snow across the province.

In a statement, Maqam prayed for forgiveness of the deceased, patience for the bereaved, and early recovery of the injured.

He assured that the victims of the natural calamity would not be left alone and all possible support would be provided.

He appealed to the district administrations to provide the best treatment facilities to the people injured in accidents and to use all the resources for relief works.



PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur administering polio drop to a child to launch anti-polio campaign.

# Mouthwatering Chappli Kabab attracts Peshawarties in rainy weather

PESHAWAR (APP): Chappli Kabab, a delectable food of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa here Sunday attracted food lovers in droves following heavy torrential rain lashing the province since last Thursday night.

Chappli Kabab's outlets at Firdus, Warsak Road, Ring Road, Qissa Khwani, Fawara Chowk in cantonment, board bazaar and Namak Mandi in Peshawar are flooded with foodies on Sunday, enjoying the mouthwatering spicy cuisine of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with different sauces, salad, yogurt and Qehwa (green tea) amid cold breeze that turned weather chilly in the province.

So many customers are seen taking its parcels to keep their loved ones warm at homes during rainy weather.

"In a rains and snow-falls weather, Chappli Kabab is my favourite food as it keep me warm and healthy," said Riazul Haq, a former PST teacher while talking to APP at Qissa Khwani bazaar where he was enjoying the delectable cuisine with traditional Qehwa along with friends.

In spite of significant increase in its prices in Peshawar, great rush of buyers are being witnessed on shops of Chappli Kabab at Qissa Khwani where its sale continued till late night.

Against fixation of Rs550 per kilogram official rate, the commodity is being sold on Rs800 to Rs900 per KG that needed to be checked by the district administration, he added.

Chappli Kabab's history dated back to Mughals era as they had great influence on culture, art, architecture and foods in subcontinent.

Derived its Chapli name from Pashto word Chaprikh means 'flat', this key dish of Peshawar-origin had gradually expanded to other provinces of Pakistan even beyond borders. This traditional food item figures high on hotels and restaurants' menus in south Asian countries including Pakistan.

The hotels and restaurants' business dealing with food services of Chappli Kabab, grilled fish, Peshawari Polao, Chikens Achar, Haleem, Nehari, Panchay, Baryani and others shined in Peshawar where people are being seen in front of these shops in substantial numbers to enjoy these delicious traditional food with their loved ones at homes.

In Peshawar, there are about 300 famous outlets of Chappli Kabab mostly located in Firdus, Nothia, Sikandarpura, Warsak Road, Bakhshi Pul, Taru Jaba and Qissa Khwani which are catering the requirements of people.

New myriad shops were opened to attract foodies in these areas tasting the tantalizing aroma of Chappli Kabab, grilled fish, Peshawari rice polao, Paye and others dishes in a relaxed environment.

More than 1,500 small chappli kebab shops in and around Peshawar city are also existed fulfilling needs of the shoppers.

"Since my childhood, my first choice is chappli kabab because it is simple and cost-efficient dish with lots of taste, flavor and spiciness," Ehtisham Khan, a lecturer of Urdu Literature told APP at Namak Mandi.

Enjoying the mouthwatering food with family, he said the south asian countries has over dozens of popular kabab recipes such as shami, boti, seekh, Behari, Delhi, Lahori and Kashmirs but none of them can compete with the world famous Peshawari Chapli kabab in taste and deliciousness.

Arif Ahmed, owner of famous Jalil Kabab house at Firdus Peshawar told APP that the business of Chappli Kabab get upward boom in Peshawar in rainy days as most people prefer to take these popular dish of subcontinent to home.

"We used minced meat in our Chappli Kabab and once it is rightly crushed by experienced labourers, tomatoes, red chili powder, onions, dry coriander leaves, eggs, ginger, lemon juice, salt, masala and pomegranate seeds go into marinated meat making it more spicy and delicious."

Arif said It takes only 10 to 15 minutes to make a complete Chappli Kabab served with chutney, kachup, salad, yogurt and naan to our customers followed by the famous Peshawari Qehwa.

He said its demands has also increased manifolds during weddings, engagements and haqeeqa parties of the new borns.

Arif demanded of the Provincial Government to provide loans on easy term and condition to traders associated with Chappli Kabab business keeping in view of their financial difficulties following Coronavirus pandemic.

He linked increase of prices of Chappli Kabab with the hike in prices of meat and other necessary ingredients in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

# Inflation continues to rise in KP, citizens worried

PESHAWAR (APP): The inflation continued to rise in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in general and Peshawar in particular as citizens are worried about the increase of prices of various food items in the vegetables and fruits markets.

According to details, during a visit to the vegetables and fruits markets, the prices of various food items increased with every passing day including Onion Rs 200 per kg, tomato Rs 140, white potato Rs 80 and red potato Rs 110 per kg.

The prices of Peas Rs 170, okra Rs 240, garlic Rs 580 and ginger Rs 600 per kg, Lemon 120, cauliflower 90, capsicum 220 and eggplant 120 per kg are being sold per kilogram in the market.

As far as the rates of the fruits are concerned the price of fruits including Kabuli apple 380, golden apple 280 and Iranian apple 310 rupees per kg are being sold without following the official rate issued by the district administration.

Malta Punjabi 280, Malta Swat 450 while Kino Rs 330 dozen are being sold, besides Guava Rs 280, Pomegranate Rs 400 and Banana Rs 110 to Rs 180 per dozen. There is no decrease witnessed in the price of live live chicken per kg, the price of live chicken has increased to Rs 480 per kg. The price of the Eggs has also been increased to Rs 440 per dozen, which is beyond the reach of the common people.

"We are in the markets of the vegetables and fruits but no one is selling food items according to the government rates," a house wide Mrs. Farhat Amin. There should a constant check on every one so that they could sell various food items according to the rates issued by district administration but no one is following the rates and selling their things according to their own choice, Mrs. Farhat said.

"We could not afford such inflation," she added.

The government should punish all those following their own rates otherwise it is very difficult to live, she said.

## Rescue 1122 handles 650 emergencies

PESHAWAR (APP): The district emergency service Rescue 1122 on Sunday issued a monthly performance report, featuring a total of 650 emergencies tackled with average of 07:30 minutes response time during the last month.

Sharing the report, the Rescue 1122 spokesman said, the service provided first medical aid to about 641 patients and subsequently shifted them to hospitals while tackling different emergencies in February under the leadership of District Emergency Officer, Awais Babar.

Giving details, the spokesman added the emergencies included 495 medical, 128 road traffic accidents, 15 fire eruptions, seven bullet injuries or fights, one cylinder blast, and eight recoveries-related emergencies.

He said a total of 49760 calls were received by the emergency service, but 40322 of them were fake or irrelevant.

During this period, rescue 1122 handled several referral-related emergencies, benefiting 77 patients including 69 within the district, and eight were shifted to hospitals in big cities including Islamabad, Peshawar, and Multan.

During this period, he said that rescue teams also arranged training sessions on first aid or tackling other emergencies for educational institutions and other organizations in the district.

# KPCTA arranges Safari Train trip to Takhtbhai



PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) arranged first ever safari train trip to Takht Bahi

welcomed at the station with traditional Pipe band.

A total of 140 passengers visited the site through the train safari, during which they were briefed about the historic places of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, its culture, traditions and the history of Takht Bahi relics.

The train safari departed from Saddar Cantt Railway Station at 9:00 AM and reached Takht Bahi Railway Station after sight-seeing stops at City Railway Station, Nasirpur, Pabbi, and Mardan.

Upon arrival, Manager Events, Hassina Shaukat, welcomed visitors, distributed traditional items, and adorned them with garlands.

She said that KPCTA is keen to promote Rail tourism and added that tour of such kind would be arranged in future as-well

for promotion of heritage and archeological tourism.

These tours would give insight to people about rich history of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, attract foreigners to enjoy diverse culture and traditions of the province, she added.

Upon reaching Takht Bahi, visitors were taken to the Takht Bahi relics monastery, where they were briefed by the Curator Directorate of Archaeology.

The curator highlighted the grandeur of the Buddha era and the historic significance of the UNESCO World Heritage site.

Visitors were informed about the traditions, culture of the Buddha era and the religious importance of these relics to Buddhism followers who often visit here for prayer and meditation.

They were also informed

about KPCTA efforts to promote the rich history, culture, and traditions of the people living in this area for centuries.

## Cold weather, rain, snow likely at hilly areas in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Cold weather, rain and snow at the hilly areas are likely in most districts of the province, an official of the Meteorological Department said here Sunday. Giving details about the unforeseen weathers, the official said that snowfall on the mountains while there is a possibility of hailstorm in some districts as well and warned of landslides and road closures may occur in Chitral, Dir, Swat, Shangla, Kohistan, Mansehra and Abbottabad due to rain and snowfall.

During the last 24 hours, the highest rainfall has been recorded in Timaragarh with 138 mm while in Dir it has recorded 131 mm, according to the Meteorological Department official.

He said 115 mm of rain was recorded in Malam Jabba, 102 mm in Takhtbhai, 110 mm in Saidu Sharif, 110 mm in Chitral and 90 mm in Peshawar. The maximum snowfall was 26 inches in Kalam, 27 inches in Chitral and 17 inches in Malam Jabba, the official disclosed.

He said the lowest temperature was recorded in Kalam and Meer Khani at minus 4 and minus 1 in Dir, Malam Jabba, Darosh and Chitral recorded zero, Parachinar 2, Saidu Sharif 6 and Peshawar 10 centigrade.

# Youth Empowerment: Education vital for economic prosperity

PESHAWAR (APP): Devoted her life for an educational empowerment of underprivileged children, Sidra Qaiser (30)—an academician wakes up early in the morning, packs students' papers in bags and prepares breakfast for family before leaving for primary school at Pabbi Nowshera district.

Graduated from the University of Peshawar, the motivated educationist has opened her own school "Alsufa Model School" at village Khush Maqam in 2018 to support out-of-school children (OSC) established in memory of her mother-in-law who passed away of cardiac arrest.

"The idea of opening of own school was clicked in my mind after came to know that over 4.7 million children were out-of-schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Today, I have more than 300 students including 100 OSC and teaching them gives her inner happiness," she told APP.

"Prior to opening of my own school, I applied many times for PST, CT and lecturer posts through different testing agencies but could not find a suitable job in education department due to tough competition," she said.

"I was suffering from depression after my applications were rejected due to lack of professional experience. However, my father and husband supported me to open my own school enabling to overcome the psychological problems besides fulfilling my dream of educating the poor segments of society."

Like, Sidra Qaiser, thousands of graduates and post-graduates students were being confronted with unemployment in the province due to widening gap between curriculum of educational institutions and industries' needs besides socioeconomic imbalances and poor investment in education sector despite population bulge growing with nearly two percent rate.

The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) report has revealed that the rate of unemployment among universities' graduates have increased by 10pc' which exposed the outdated curriculum, poor investment on research and higher education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

More than 31% of educated youth were unemployed in Pakistan including KP, while women constitute 51% of the total unemployed population, which should be a matter of great concern for the newly elected governments.

It said the unemployment rate for graduates in 2020-21 had increased to 16.1% as compared to 14.9% in 2018-19 while the unemployment rate for engineers and architects were doubled from 11% to 23.5% in two years in the country including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Likewise, the unemployment rate for computer science graduates had jumped from 14.2% to 22.6% and grew from 11.4% to 29.4% of agriculture science students in these two years.

Out of total 34 public sector universities in KP including 24 general and 10 specialized in engineering, technology, agriculture, medical, animal husbandry and management sciences for 40,856,097 population with 1,298,278 persons per university, seven public sector universities including UET Peshawar, Gomal University DI Khan, Agriculture University Peshawar, University of Science and Technology Bannu, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University Peshawar and University of Shangla were facing financial crunch due to pension liabilities, depleting budgets' balances and predominantly expenditures, and that recovery of its financial health would be a big challenge for the Gandapor's government.

The KP Universities 2021-24 Report has also disclosed that the initial balances of budgets of 34 public sector universities and HEI's, which was Rs 6,560 million in 2021-22 has been decreased to Rs 5,316 million in 2022-23, and it was further slashed to Rs 4,740 million in 2023-24.

During the last three-years, the provincial grant to public sector universities which was Rs 3,962 million in 2022-23 was slashed to Rs 3276.125 million during 2023-24 and only Rs 1231.897 million recorded during 2021-22.

The financial crisis in most public sector universities in KP has further deepened after nonpayment of the promised annual provincial grants of Rs 3,000 million, impacting negatively on the universities' abilities to maintain infrastructure, support academic programs, research

studies and ensure quality in education disciplines.

Moreover, University of Engineering and Applied Sciences Swat, University of Chitral, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology Haripur and Gomal University DI Khan had received no provincial grants during 2021-22.

Despite provision of Rs 20 billion grants to old universities in KP, the situation was still dismal and regular support of Higher Education Commission was required to stand the newly established universities on own feet in KP.

It said despite reforms and interventions, KP's universities saw only modest revenue growth of Rs 7 billion in 2021 and Rs 2 billion in 2022, thus falling short of the mandatory progressive targets.

Under the umbrella of the Prime Minister's Youth Development Initiatives, as many as 15 programs were

launched including 'Teleschool Pakistan App, Google for Education and Digital Continuous Professional Development' to revolutionise the formal education system in Pakistan.

The package includes 60,000 paid internships, technical and vocational trainings for 100,000 youth, distribution of 100,000 laptops, provision of 5,000 scholarships for the students of Balochistan and erstwhile tribal areas.

Around 1,000 PhD scholarships at top 100 universities in the United States and 75 scholarships at top 25 universities of the world, establishing 21 university campuses in remote districts and 250 sports complexes, are also part of the landmark package.

The package also envisages youth peace and development student councils in 80 universities, 75 leadership awards, 500 innovation grants worth Rs5-20 million each, grants

for research, 12 Seerat chairs, seven centres of excellence and uplift of 20 poorest districts and its trickled down effects started visible in KP.

Feroz Jamal Kakakhel, former caretaker Information Minister said that under youth training and employment program of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, over 100,000 youth would be trained to facilitate their placement in both local and international markets.

He said seven MoUs were inked between different provincial government departments and private sector for skills development of youth under Khushal Pakhtunkhwa youth skills development program.

These MoUs were signed among Institute of Management Sciences Peshawar, Department of Youth Affairs and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa IT Board for empowerment of youth, he concluded.





## In brief

### Man guns down brother

NOWSHERA (INP): A man gunned down his elder brother and nephew over personal grudge here late on Saturday, police said. According to details, the incident took place in Sattar Colony of Nowshera where accused Nasir opened fire at his elder brother and his son. As a result of firing, Bahadur and his son were killed on the spot and the culprit fled the scene. The bodies were shifted to hospital for postmortem and police after case against accused started raids for his arrest.

### School closed in Lower Chitral

LOWER CHITRAL (APP): District Administration Lower Chitral, keeping in view the safety of students and teachers under the prevailing weather conditions and heavy snowfall extended closure of public and private schools till March 9, 2024. The decision was made after consultation with education department, said a notification issued here on Sunday.

### Two killed, two injured

KASUR (INP): At least two people were killed and two others injured in separate incidents in different localities of Kasur, police said on Sunday. According to details, armed men of rival group gunned down 65-year-old Ish-faq and injured Ibrahim and Ilyas in suburban village Maloki. The culprits fled the scene of crime. A 14-year-old boy was killed due to head injury in hit and run accident at Dhang Shah Adda of Kasur. The bodies and injured were shifted to different hospitals and police after registering separate cases at respective police stations started efforts to arrest culprits.

### Man killed in accident

SHEIKHUPURA (INP): One person was killed and 17 others injured in collision between passenger coaster and a trailer here on Sunday. According to details, a passenger coaster got of control due to over speeding and rammed into a trailer at Lahore near Bawiyi Da Kata area of Sheikhpura. As a result of accident, one person identified as Mudasir 30, was killed on the spot while 17 passenger injuries. The police and rescue teams reached the scene and shifted the body and injured to hospital. A case was also registered into the incident and investigations were kicked off.

### Teenager drowns in pond

TOBA TEK SINGH (INP): A teenager drowned in pond while making TikTok video here on Sunday, rescue sources said. According to details, an 18-year-old TikToker Ahmed s/o Abbas hailing from Garden Town Jhang Road Toba Tek Singh along with his friend Nisar Ali s/o Muhammad Sarwar visited a pond near Divisional Public School and College. The teenager asked his friend to shoot video when he will jump into the pond. Ahmed 18, jumped into the pond but could not come out and after passage of 20 minutes Nisar Ali made an emergency call to control room of rescue.

### Families verified: DC

KHANEWAL (APP): DC Wasim Hamid Sandhu said that the verification process for Rashan bags eligibility has been completed and over 216,000 deserving families have been verified for the Rashan bags. He that arrangements have been finalized for offering free Rashan to deserving families.

# Relief activities continue in Mardan

MARDAN (APP): The district administration Mardan Sunday directed to contact the district administration immediately in case of any kind of damage or any emergency in any area due to recent rains across the district.

In a statement issued by Deputy Commissioner Mardan Muhammad Fayyaz Khan Sherpao, the affected people are advised to contact the district administration control room number 09379230048 or Assistant Commissioner Mardan on phone No. 09379230701, Assistant Commissioner Takhthai on phone number

0937553303. Assistant Commissioner Katlang on phone number 0937575500 and Assistant Commissioner Garhi Kapura has been asked to call the phone number 09379230326 to give the details so that immediate action will be taken on your call.

### AC Nowshera visits affected areas with Rescue 1122:

On the orders of Deputy Commissioner Nowshera Khalid Iqbal Khattak, Assistant Commissioner Nowshera Tanveer Ahmed along with Rescue 1122, Livestock Department,

TMA Nowshera and revenue staff.

The teams inspected the areas damaged due to recent heavy rains. Assistant Commissioner Nowshera Tanveer Ahmed provided tents and other relief materials to the victims and also assured all kinds of financial assistance as per the policy.

Inspected the incident site and ordered the TMA Nowshera and Livestock Department to dispose of the dead buffaloes in a safe place, while also giving orders to take all measures for the treatment of the injured buffaloes.

# Annual examination postponed in Upper Dir

DIR UPPER (INP): Annual examinations in government schools across Upper Dir district have been postponed due to adverse weather conditions, specifically heavy snowfall, according to the education department.

The decision prioritizes the safety of students, as emphasized by the authorities. District Education Officer Abdul Rahman Khan issued an audio message to all education officials, confirming the postponement

and citing the challenging exam conditions caused by the snowfall. The exams have been rescheduled for a week later.

This development comes amid ongoing weather-related emergencies in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Recent rain and snowfall have caused widespread devastation, claiming the lives of 27 individuals, including 18 children and 4 women, across several districts. Landslides and roof collapses were reported

as the primary causes of fatalities, with 37 people sustaining injuries, including 19 children and 6 women.

The postponement of school exams highlights the impact of the weather situation on various aspects of life in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. While ensuring the safety of students remains paramount, the disruption to education schedules underscores the broader challenges posed by these weather emergencies.

# Delivery of ration bags under begins

MULTAN (APP): The delivery of ration bags to the deserving people at their doorstep has been started across the Multan division under Punjab government's Nigehban Ramzan Package.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, Commissioner Multan division, Maryam Khan said that the ration bags would be delivered to over nine lac deserving people across the division. She said that the Punjab Food Authority has been given task for checking the quality of all food items.

The QR code on all ration bags will be scanned from the identity card and given to the concerned person. The people could contact Assistant Commissioner's office in case of any problem or absence of the concerned person.

The verification of deserving people has been completed through Benazir Income Support Progra-

me and Nadra data.

She further informed that the ration bags included 10 kg flour, 2 kg sugar, 2 kg flour, 2 kg and two kg rice. As many as 3,37138 people in Multan district, 216765 deserving people in Khanewal district 234169 people in Wahari district and 136840 people in Lodhran will be able to benefit from the scheme.

Maryam Khan stated that all record will be compiled in the Assistant Commissioner's office while third party audit of the entire scheme will also be conducted.

The district administration, food department, food authority will jointly carry out this noble cause.

A Ramazan Bazaar will be set up in Shamsabad in Multan, she concluded.

**Over 8.3m cotton bales reach ginneries across Pakistan, 72 pc increase recorded:** Seed cotton (Phutti) equivalent to over

8.3 million or exactly 83,93,090 bales have reached ginning factories across the country till February 29, 2024, recording an increase in arrivals by 72.16 per cent compared to corresponding period of the last year 2023.

According to a fortnightly report of Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association released on Sunday, over 8.3 million or 83,85,752 bales have undergone the ginning process i.e converted into bales. Cotton arrivals in Punjab were recorded at over 4.2 million or 42,78,312 bales, recording an increase in arrival by 42.79.

Sindh generated over 4.1 million or 41,14,778 bales with 118.99 percent increase recorded. Textile sector bought 78,92,085 bales while exporters purchased 2,92,726 bales and Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) didn't buy during the cotton season 2023-24.

# Bahawalpur police arrest suspects of viral video

BAHAWALPUR (APP): On the directions of District Police Officer (DPO) Bahawalpur, the police station Noshahra Jadid has arrested the suspects of a viral video case.

A spokesman for Bahawalpur police said here that a video had gone viral on social media, showing the suspects subjugating a man of torture and violence.

"DPO Bahawalpur, Syed Muhammad Abbas took notice of the video and directed the Station House Officer (SHO), Noshahra Jadid to arrest the suspects," he said.

The spokesman further said that Noshahra Jadid police have taken the suspects into custody and registered First Investigation Report against them while, further probe was underway.

### Food Authority Bahawalpur confiscates

### fake spices

Punjab Food Authority Bahawalpur has launched a crackdown against the mafia and confiscated fake spices besides machinery being used for its manufacturing.

According to a press release issued here, the team of Punjab Food Authority Bahawalpur Office has launched a crackdown against the mafia. "Acting on a tip-off, the officials of Punjab Food Authority conducted a raid in an area of Bahawalpur city and confiscated fake spices and machinery being used to grind, pack and mix them," it said.

It further said that a mafia was involved in packing fake spices, labeling them as a national brand, and selling it out in local markets.

Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has regis-

tered a case against the suspects while further probe was underway.

### Cold weather returns to Bahawalpur

A cold wind blew into Bahawalpur on Sunday, bringing back chilly weather to the city.

Earlier, people had been wearing warm clothes like jackets and hats, but on Sunday cold winds started blowing, dropping the minimum temperature to seven degrees Celsius.

Meanwhile, the local weather service forecast dry to partly cloudy conditions in the city for the next 24 hours.

The highest temperature of 19 degrees Celsius and the lowest of seven degrees were recorded in the last 24 hours.

Similar dry to partly cloudy weather was also forecast for the rest of the region.

# Urs ceremonies of Hazrat Sakhi Sarwar starts today

DG KHAN (APP): The annual Urs celebrations of the great saint of sub-continent Syed Ahmed Sultan, commonly known as Hazrat Sakhi Sarwar (RA) are set to kick off on Monday (March-4).

Thousands of the devotees from across the country will participate in the Urs ceremonies which locally called as "Sang Mela".

The tomb of the great saint was located some 35 kilometers away from Dera Ghazi Khan. The tomb was

constructed during 13rd century. However, later on, it was expanded by Mughal emperor Zahir ud Din Muhammad Babir.

According to Zonal Manager Auqaf Rana Abdul Haleem Khan, the celebration will continue by March 10, during 8 am to 5pm on daily basis.

Acknowledging the significance of this great occasion, Zonal Administrator Rana Abdul Haleem Khan, highlighted the substantial influx of pilgrims expected

from all corners of the country. In order to ensure their comfort, the department has arranged for amenities including lodging, water, and sanitation facilities.

Similarly, tight security arrangements will be made during the Urs ceremonies. He however, expressed unwavering confidence in the excellent execution of exemplary measures to ensure a safe and spiritually enriching experience for all attendees.



SARGODHA: A student applying henna on visitor girl hand on her stall during food expo at University of Sargodha.

## APCA Dir office bearers elected

DIR LOWER (APP): Saiduddin and Noor Ul Haq have been elected as President and General Secretary of the All-Pakistan Clerk Association Dir Lower in an election held here on Sunday.

In this regard, using the power obtained under the Constitution of Pakistan in 1991, Muhammad Sarer Khan, the Provincial President of APCA Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, organized a general body meeting of the Education Department of Lower Dir district.

After the approval, the cabinet was elected including Saiduddin President, Senior Vice President Abdul Dawood Jan, Junior Vice President Sohail Ahmad Abbas, General Secretary Noorul Haq, Deputy General Secretary Badshah Amir Khan, Finance Secretary Israr Ahmed, Press Secretary Isfandiyar and media coordinator Haleem Muhammad.

## Cleanliness drives launched

KOHAT (APP): On the special instructions of Deputy Commissioner Kohat, Dr. Azmatullah Wazir, WSSC cleaning staff completed the operation in Chakrakot Bala in the presence of social worker Esar Ali Bangash, Malik Sadat Hussain and other leaders and cleaned all the drains around the Government Girls Primary School.

The elders of the area and people from different walks of life, villagers and local leaders of various political parties thanked Deputy Commissioner Kohat and WSSC staff for launching cleanliness drives of Kohat areas and different boys and girls' schools by removing dirt and flit from the main drain.

The staff of WSSC also cleaned various drains for easy flow of rain waters.

## Culture Day celebrated

SARGODHA (APP): Pakistan Cultural Day was celebrated in Superior University Sargodha which aimed to highlight the rich culture of the country.

Director Dr. Chaudhry Muhammad Iqbal, Academic Director Muhammad Arif, Executive Director Pir Arslan Shah and Pir Usman Shah participated as the special guests.

Stalls of Pakistani food were also set up, including indigenous dishes, traditional culture, art exhibition, lab testing, exhibition of advanced physics projects, plant exhibition and gaming zone.

Under the supervision of Anam Khan, Madam Ayesha and other teachers, Punjabi regional and historical dramas were presented.

During the ceremony, students also presented tableaux, which the attendees enjoyed. Students represented all the provinces of Pakistan, and they marched past and wore traditional clothes.

A special performance was also organized for children to inform them about the culture of Pakistan. Director Campus Dr. Chaudhry M. Iqbal while addressing the event appreciated the services of the team and thanked the guests, saying that Pakistan has a rich culture heritage.

# Contract employees greets Chief Minister

SWABI (APP): All Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Universities Contract Employees Association (ACUSIA) while welcoming Ali Amin Gandapur as the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, has expressed the hope that he would ensure the permanent employment of temporary employees in the government universities of the province.

In this regard, a meeting was held in Peshawar under the Chairmanship of All Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Universities Contract

Employees Association BPS (1 to 16) Jan Alam Khan.

In which Peshawar University Contract Employees Focal Person Hameed Khan, Khushal Khan Khattak Karak University, Focal Person Ali Mohammad Jan, Bacha Khan University Charsadda Focal Person Bismillah Jan, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University Peshawar Focal Person and University Obaidur Rehman, Focal Person of Swabi University, Hussain Iqbal,

Focal Person of Malakand University and Focal Person of other universities of the province participated in large numbers.

In the meeting, President Jan Alam Khan and the focal person of the universities of the entire province welcomed and wished Ali Amin Gandapur for being elected as the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

It was demanded to fulfill the promise made to the contract employees of the universities.

# Relief activities continue in Dir Lower

DIR LOWER (APP): After a heavy rain and snowfall in Dir Lower, in the light of the directives of the Deputy Commissioner Dir Lower Wasil Khan, relief and rescue operations are going on in all the subdivisions of Dir Lower.

On Sunday, on the instructions of Additional Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Tariq Khan, the Revenue Field Staff distributed relief items (Tents, Kitchen Sets, Razai, Blanket, Bucket, matrices etc. among all those whose house either partially or completely damaged due to rain and snow in Dir

Lower. The Staff of the District Administration continues working and helping the people by providing protection to those who lost their houses. Medical teams are also deputed in various places in order to ensure quick relief to the people. The opening of roads would also continue as well.

Meanwhile, in the Berkley Khal area due to the recent rains, the three-room house of Hammad Mahmood son of Sultan Mahmood, of Berkley Khal completely collapsed. Apart from the financial loss, there has been no loss

of life.

In another incident a kitchen in a mud house, and a room collapsed suddenly due to torrential rain last night in Dir Lower. The kitchen, porch, and one room of the house of Muhammad Ali Jan, son of Jan Muhammad resident of Qila Munda, in Qila Munda limits of Munda Police Station, have completely collapsed due to the recent rains. Apart from the financial loss, there has been no loss of life reported, however, relief activities continued without any break, said an official of the District Administration.

# ATH receives Rs155.55m grant for flood prevention

ABBOTTABAD (APP): The 95th session of the Board of Governors (BoG) of Ayub Medical Teaching Institution (AMTI) Sunday held at the Ayub Teaching Hospital to address critical infrastructure needs by securing a grant of 155.55 million rupees.

The meeting was chaired by the BOG member Javed Turk. For the approval of this substantial amount the caretaker Chief Minister KP Justice (R) Arshad Hussain Shah played key role which was lauded by the AMTI board of director.

The allocated funds were reserved for vital projects

aimed at mitigating flood risks and strengthening infrastructure within the Ayub Teaching Hospital and Ayub Medical College areas.

Specifically, resources will be directed towards the construction of drainage systems to deter floodwaters.

During the meeting, the BOG outlined plans, including the launch of tendering processes through consulting bodies and committees, ensuring oversight for project implementation and timely completion.

The initiative underscores a concerted effort towards fortifying health-

care infrastructure and safeguarding against natural adversities, aligning with the institution's commitment to providing optimal care to patients and their families.

The meeting was attended by the BoD members including Asad Jadoon, Fawad Saleh, Jafar Shah, Iyaz Jadoon, Aftab Rabbani, and hospital executives. Deliberations focused on ongoing developmental endeavors, culminating in pivotal decisions geared towards enhancing patient services and facilities.

## Quetta records coldest night

QUETTA (INP): Balochistan's capital, experienced its coldest night of the ongoing winter season, recording a temperature drop to -5 degrees Celsius on Sunday.

Water in pipelines and roads started to freeze as a cold breeze was blowing across Quetta. The majority of Balochistan province's areas were under the grip of a coldwave. Meanwhile, the sky is now clear in Quetta and adjoining areas after heavy rainfall.

The weather on Saturday remained rainy with thunderstorms, and heavy snowfall across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Islamabad, northern Punjab, and Balochistan. Similarly, Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan braced for heavy rains and snow. Authorities advised citizens to remain indoors, avoid unnecessary travel, and stay tuned to weather updates from reliable sources.

# 35 power thieves nabbed

SARGODHA (INP): Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO), Sargodha Circle claimed to have caught 35 power pilferers and got registered 47 cases during the current drive against power pilferage.

FESCO spokesman said here on Sunday that FESCO teams on the direction of Superintendent Engineer raided various areas of the circle and caught the power pilferers.

He informed the authorities caught a barber in Sargodha City red-handed while stealing electricity through main electricity lines and tampering with meters.

He said that three consumers were booked in a single day in Shahpur area for electricity theft. He added that five power pilferers were also got arrested for electricity theft.

### 198 criminals held in Sargodha

Sargodha police arrested 198 criminals including 25 proclaimed offenders and 14 court absconders from various parts of the district during the month of February.

Monthly police report issued here on Sunday revealed that the police arrested 98 criminals, 25 proclaimed offenders, 14 court absconders, 7 accused of murder cases, 48 kite makers, 15 drug pushers, 9 illegal weapon holders across the District and recovered 4450 lifter liquor, 150 lifter wine, 17 kg hashish, 8 kg opium, 35 rifles, 22 pistols, 9 kalashnikovs, 22 rounds, 1189 bullets, 33 motorcycles, 12 cattle heads including two cows, four buffaloes, four goats and two calves from them.





# Swiss to vote on pensions, retirement age

GENEVA (AFP/APP): Switzerland, with an ageing population facing an ever-swelling cost of living, is holding referendums Sunday on two initiatives which would reshape pensioners' lives in different ways.

A proposal to gradually raise the retirement age from 65 to 66 looks set to fail, but a second proposal seeking to boost pension payments could squeak through. That proposal, put forward by Swiss trade unions and entitled "Better living in retirement", calls for a 13th monthly pension payment each year, similar to the "13th month" salary many employees receive in Switzerland and other European countries.

Opinion polls indicate that most Swiss voters favour the initiative, although the "yes" lead has dwindled, and the outcome remains unclear.

Monthly social security payments in Switzerland can rise to 2,450 Swiss francs (\$2,780) for individuals and 3,675 francs for married couples.

The payments do not go far in a country consistently ranked among the most expensive in the world.

Rent for a typical two-bedroom apartment in Swiss cities is at least 3,000 francs, and a coffee costs upwards of five francs.

If the Swiss approve the shift, they would not be the first in Europe -- neighbouring Liechtenstein, another pricey nation which uses the Swiss franc, has had a similar system in

place for years.

"There is a purchasing power crisis," said Pierre-Yves Maillard, head of the Swiss Trade Union Federation (SGB) and part of the "yes" campaign. "Retirees are seeing their living standards erode," he told AFP last week. "The cost of living just keeps soaring," agreed Jakob Hauri, a retiree quoted by the campaign.

Left-leaning parties support the initiative, but it is being fiercely fought by right-wing and centrist parties, and the Swiss government and parliament officially oppose it.

The government has said the proposed hike would cost more than four billion Swiss francs a year, warning it would require tax increases and could threaten the financial stability of the social security system.

It also maintains there would be limited social benefit from the proposed change, which would hand additional payments to all pensioners, regardless of their financial situation. "If the initiative passes, a lot of retirees will receive a 13th social security payment even though they don't really need it," it warned.

For the hard-right Swiss People's Party, the "irresponsible" initiative will allow freeloaders to deplete the social security system.

Switzerland's largest party has been striving to drum up opposition with adverts, including one showing 100-franc notes being sucked down a drain. That campaign seems to have

had an effect.

In the latest survey carried out by gfs.bern for public broadcaster SSR, 53 percent of respondents said they backed the initiative, while 43 percent opposed it.

The support is down from 61 percent in a similar poll less than a month earlier.

It is also increasingly uncertain whether the initiative will garner the double-majority needed to pass, by winning both the popular vote and a majority in most of Switzerland's 26 cantons. "We are hopeful," Maillard said. Switzerland's direct democracy system is also tackling Sunday a proposal from the youth branch of the right-wing Liberal Party to gradually raise the retirement age from 65 to 66 over the next decade to ensure full financing of the pension system.

The vote comes less than two years after Swiss voters narrowly opted to raise the retirement age for women from 64 to 65, to match the retirement age for men.

But the initiative appears dead in the water. Latest surveys indicate only 35 percent of those questioned favour such a move, while 63 percent oppose it.

Most people vote in advance in Switzerland, which holds referendums every few months.

On Sunday, polls will open for just a few hours before closing at noon, with initial results expected by mid-afternoon.

# Parties, cars, curtains: Kenyans upset by govt spending spree

NAIROBI (AFP/APP): Expensive curtains, lavish garden parties and jet-setting lifestyles: Kenya's cash-strapped government has been on a spending spree even as austerity measures take their toll on weary citizens.

A report released by the country's auditor general last month said the office of the deputy president spent 10.2 million shillings (\$70,000) on curtains while splashing out on furniture to the tune of some \$50,000.

The purchases, which were "in breach of the law" for flouting procurement rules, according to the report, have struck a nerve with an angry public. "They have squeezed my finances to the limit as they drink and dine," Kenyan teacher Moses Bett told AFP in the capital Nairobi.

The East African powerhouse -- where corruption is a hot-button issue -- raised taxes to shore up revenue for government debt repayments even as many citizens were already struggling with the high prices of basic commodities.

"I am living on negatives," Bett said, patting the front pockets of his charcoal grey trousers.

"Every day is becoming more difficult to fend for my family with what is left of my salary," the 32-year-old father of two said. President William Ruto, who served as the country's deputy leader from 2013 to 2022, had vowed to slash government spending, telling Kenyans in his inauguration speech that "we are living beyond our means". But the businessman-turned-politician, who campaigned on a platform to help the country's poor, is planning to spend more than 1.3 billion shillings (\$8.9 million) to spruce up his eight official resi-



dences. His offices at Nairobi's State House, built a century ago, will be renovated at a cost of more than 700 million shillings.

The cost of the facelift is equivalent to more than 800 houses under a tax-funded housing plan introduced by Ruto last year.

More than 800 million shillings (\$5.5 million) have also been earmarked for the purchase of cars for Ruto, his deputy and the prime cabinet secretary. The government has not commented publicly on the auditor general's report and has not responded to AFP requests. "It appears they forgot us... as soon as they got into power," hawker Sharon Mwaruma said.

In the first six months of his presidency, Ruto -- a teetotaler -- spent more than 1.49 billion shillings on receptions, parties and other hospitality supplies, according to treasury records. The president's foreign trips have also come under fire.

According to The Standard newspaper,

which nicknamed Ruto "the flying president", the 57-year-old has spent one in every five days outside Kenya, visiting over 38 countries since taking office in September 2022.

Ruto has defended the trips as central to his duties.

"I don't travel as a tourist. I have been going to plan the affairs of Kenya," he told a church service in December.

"I have been connecting Kenyans with employment and investment opportunities across the world."

But Kenyans are not convinced. "The leaders do not care about us. Yet we voted them to power," chef Judith Kamau said, sitting on a broken pavement in the upmarket business district of Kilimani.

For decades, Kenyan administrations have been accused of wanton embezzlement despite repeated promises of a crackdown on graft and waste.

Kenya was added last month to a "grey list" of

countries subject to increased monitoring by the global anti-money laundering watchdog the Financial Action Task Force.

Critics say Ruto's economic measures have done little to ease Kenyans' hardships.

Inflation has been running high, at 6.9 percent in January, and the International Monetary Fund has warned it would likely inch up in the first half of this year.

The country is sitting on public debt of more than \$70 billion -- equal to over 67 percent of gross domestic product.

And the shilling tanked to historic lows before gaining in recent weeks after the government raised \$1.5 billion in a Eurobond buyback plan.

Purity Mwende, who is unemployed, said she had few expectations from the government.

"In Kenya, politics is only a means to get rich quick," the 26-year-old told AFP.

"Only their families are benefiting."

# Artificial glaciers stave off drought in Kyrgyzstan

SYNTASH (AFP/APP): In the Tian-Shan mountains of Kyrgyzstan, villagers have made an artificial glacier to provide water for their drought-hit farms.

Standing on the ice hillock, farmer Erkinbek Kaldanov said he was optimistic about harnessing nature to counteract climate change.

"We won't have any more problems with water," said the farmer, who was worried for his sheep last year after some unusual temperature spikes.

"When the glacier melts, there will be enough water for the livestock and to water the land in Syn-Tash," the surrounding district, he said.

The glacier currently measures five metres (16 feet) high and about 20 metres long. At the height of winter it was 12 metres tall. Local residents made it over a period of two weeks in autumn by re-directing water from the peaks of Tian-Shan, which tower more than 4,000 metres high in northern Kyrgyzstan. Kaldanov and

others are being forced to adapt since natural glaciers in Central Asia -- the main water source for the region -- are slowly disappearing due to global heating.

A 2023 study in the journal Science predicted that the acceleration in the melting of the glaciers would peak only between 2035 and 2055.

The lack of snow, also due to higher temperatures, does not allow them to regenerate. The extent of the problem can be seen in satellite images of Central Asia and in the regular warnings issued by the United Nations.

The problem has a knock-on effect on the lowlands of Central Asia, in more arid countries like Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

This in turn feeds into existing tensions between the different countries, which still share water resources under a complex and obsolete scheme inherited from the Soviet era.

"There is less and less water every year. The water tables are emptying out, the

springs are drying up and we have problems with grazing," said Aidos Yzmanaliyev, a spokesman for the Syn-Tash farmers.

Finding solutions is urgent, particularly as farming represents around 10 percent of the fragile Kyrgyz economy and two thirds of its inhabitants live in rural areas.

In the north of Kyrgyzstan, a country accustomed to revolutions and uprisings, the lack of water has already stoked social tensions in previous periods of drought.

"Our main aim is to provide water for livestock since the majority of the 8,400 inhabitants of the Syn-Tash district are farmers," said district chief Maksat Dzholdoshev.

"We expect to create two or three additional artificial glaciers for farmland," he said. The idea and its implementation are relatively simple. Each glacier costs around 550,000 som (around \$6,200) to create.

"The water comes from a mountain source three kilometres away through

underground piping. It gushes out and freezes, forming a glacier," said Yzmanaliyev.

"Apart from providing water when it melts, the glacier also helps lower the ambient temperature and create humidity. "(That) helps the surrounding vegetation, which is grazed by cattle from spring to autumn," Yzmanaliyev said.

Artificial glaciers were first created in the Indian Himalayas in 2014 and have gone global -- cropping up in Chile and Switzerland.

In Kyrgyzstan, their introduction was spearheaded by Abdilmalik Egemberdiyev, head of the Kyrgyz association of pasture users.

Egemberdiyev pointed to an additional benefit. The glaciers allow farmers to keep livestock on spring pastures for longer before sending them to summer pastures, thus slowing soil erosion. "We now have 24 artificial glaciers around the country and more still to be created," he said.

# Ailing King Harald of Norway returning from Malaysia

OSLO (AFP/APP): King Harald of Norway was returning home from Malaysia on Sunday after falling ill on holiday and spending several days in hospital, the royal palace said. The oldest reigning monarch in Europe at 87 years old, Harald contracted an infection on a trip to the island of Langkawi and was admitted to hospital on Tuesday.

The palace said on Saturday that he had been fitted with a "temporary"

pacemaker, which his personal physician said would make his return safer.

The palace said in a statement on Sunday that Harald would "soon be on his way to Langkawi Airport for medical transportation", and would be joined by Queen Sonja.

Upon arrival in Norway, His Majesty will be admitted to the hospital Rikshospitalet" in Oslo, the statement continued.

"His Majesty will be on

sick leave for two weeks."

A medical plane believed to be transporting the king took off from Langkawi on Sunday afternoon, after police escorted a convoy that included an ambulance from the hospital to the airport, an AFP journalist saw.

Langkawi air traffic control earlier told AFP that a medical plane operated by Scandinavian airline SAS was due to depart on Sunday.

The flight is due to

land in Oslo at 2259 GMT, according to specialist website Flightradar.

Harald needs crutches to get around and has suffered a series of health issues in recent years.

He caught a respiratory infection in January, days after dismissing speculation that he might abdicate, following the lead of distant cousin Queen Margrethe II in Denmark.

In his absence, Crown Prince Haakon, 50, has stepped in as regent.

# Zurich steps up security at Jewish sites after possible antisemitic attack

ZURICH (Reuters): Police have stepped up security measures at Jewish sites in Zurich following a serious knife attack on an orthodox Jewish man in the Swiss city overnight, local police said on Sunday.

Police said they had taken action after a 15-year-old Swiss youth was arrested for inflicting "life-threatening" injuries on the 50-year-old Jewish man in central Zurich on Saturday night. A Zurich police statement said it was not clear what sparked the attack, but that investigations were "explicitly including the possibility of a crime motivated by antisemitism."

The extra security was put in place for "specific locations with a Jewish connection," police said, following discussions with local Jewish organisations. They gave no further



details. Jonathan Kreutner, general secretary of the Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities (SIG), told Swiss television that physical attacks on Jewish people in the country were rare.

"A case like this is really a new dimension," he said.

Concern about the risk of antisemitic behaviour in Switzerland has grown since the attacks by Hamas gunmen on southern Israel on Oct. 7 and subsequent campaign against the Islamist group by the Israeli government in Gaza.

Last month, the SIG raised concern about attitudes to Jewish people after local media reported police had opened an investigation into a sign in Hebrew displayed by a business in Davos which declared Jews were barred from renting ski gear.

# Gazans crowdfund thousands for uncertain escape

GAZA (BBC): As deadly Israeli bombardments and acute food shortages continue, and a threatened Israeli military operation in southern Gaza looms, more and more Palestinians are seeking a way out - if they can find the money for it.

This uncertain exit requires people to pay thousands of dollars and navigate scammers and misinformation to get their names onto a list of people approved to leave via the Rafah crossing to Egypt.

The crossing is closed to the vast majority of people under an Egyptian-Israeli blockade against Hamas. Only some foreign passport holders and their dependents have been able to leave, as well as some seriously wounded and sick people and those accompanying them.

However, a parallel system exists whereby Gazans pay Egyptian brokers to get on a list of people who can leave. Depending on who you talk to, prices range from \$6,000 (£4,800) per person to over \$12,000 -

exorbitant sums for most of Gaza's population.

Yet increasing numbers of people are trying to raise the money to flee, with the help of friends and family in the US and Europe. Among them are the Hammads, currently displaced along with more than a million others in Rafah next to the Egyptian border. Their 15-year-old son Ibrahim has Down's Syndrome. For him, the Israeli bombardment is particularly traumatic. Video posted by the family shows him shaking in distress after each thunderous boom from nearby airstrikes. His father Abed Alqader says they have had to artificially resuscitate him three times after he stopped breathing due to severe panic attacks.

He says Ibrahim has been begging for the family to leave, saying "Please father, I cannot continue."

For the last five months, all you hear are sounds of bombs, heavy bombing," Mr Hammad added. "You just sit home and pray you will not be

next." Their online fundraising page, like most, is being managed outside Gaza, in their case by another son Amjad, who lives in Europe. It is one fundraiser among thousands, appealing for donors to assist Gazans to "survive", "evacuate" and "escape genocide". Some campaigns have been successful, raising over \$100,000. However, the BBC spoke to several of these account holders who, even after achieving their fundraising goals, said their desperate attempts to help loved ones were mired in chaos and confusion.

In the words of one fundraiser, a New Jersey woman who asked to remain anonymous to avoid risking the chance of hindering her cousin's way out: "Every day is a toss-up."

The first challenge is determining the cost to leave. Fundraising account holders who spoke to the BBC said the most common price was \$6,000 per person, allowing people to

leave within 72 hours. Some people fundraise toward the goal of \$12,000 per person, the price said to get an exit within 24 hours.

Once enough money is raised, the next challenge becomes getting tens of thousands of dollars into Gaza. There are few wire services like Western Union left in the devastated territory, and the line to enter is days-long. Some people have used cryptocurrency exchanges. Others have relied on PayPal accounts registered elsewhere, as the firm doesn't provide services to people in Gaza or the occupied West Bank.

Most people, however, wire the money to someone outside of Gaza - a relative or friend in Europe - who then withdraws the cash, and travels to Egypt to wait in a separate days-long line at the offices of Hala Travel in Cairo, an agency that facilitates travel between Egypt and Gaza. Footage from outside the Hala offices shows crowds thronging the street.



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Sub standard leaders,  
low-caliber legislations

A resolution moved by PPP's Senator Bahramand Tangi, seeking a ban on mainstream social media platforms has been placed on the Senate agenda for the session scheduled today afternoon. The lawmaker stated that social media platforms are adversely affecting the young generation in the country; Acknowledging the fact that these platforms are being used for the promotion of norms against our religion and culture, creating hatred amongst the people on the grounds of language and religion. In the resolution, the senator called for bans on social sites, including Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, X formerly Twitter, and YouTube, underscoring the potential misuse against the national interest and saving the young generation from their negative and devastating effects.

Pakistan's social media has been in the global headlines over the past weeks because of the unannounced shutdown by the authorities and poor internet services in the country. Government leaders have time and again expressed concerns over the growing misuse of social media by political groups and miscreants to accomplish their nefarious anti-state and anti-society agendas. Meanwhile, there are certain social media platforms or users who spoil the social environment and have a negative impact on children and youth in the country, yet those mediums have multiple uses including communication, networking, public diplomacy, marketing, branding, education, and entertainment for individuals, groups, organizations and government institutions as well. Although, Pakistani society has grappled with the worst effects of social media in the post-May 9 violence and aftermath wherein various social media wings of certain political parties weighed online propaganda against their opponents, state institutions, and the government ruling the country. Given that, the authorities often use the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) rules and regulations together with multiple constitutional provisions to control and regulate social media as per the government's needs.

Driven by individual interests and parties' needs, Pakistan's political landscapes have always been highly controversial and sly throughout the past decades. Power politics not only gave birth to corrupt practices such as horse-trading, and change of political loyalty along with the use of illegal means including bribes, tempering, rigging, and harassment of election staff in the electoral process. Historically, the Senate members are chosen through an indirect method, wherein members of the Lower House/ National Assemblies and all four provincial assemblies elect senators purely on the party line, who might be a party worker or a third person nominated by the civic group purely on its choice, with no specific criteria. Hence, through the indirect method several billionaires, businessmen, feuds, and industrialists reach the upper house in pursuit of their communal or business interests or mere fame.

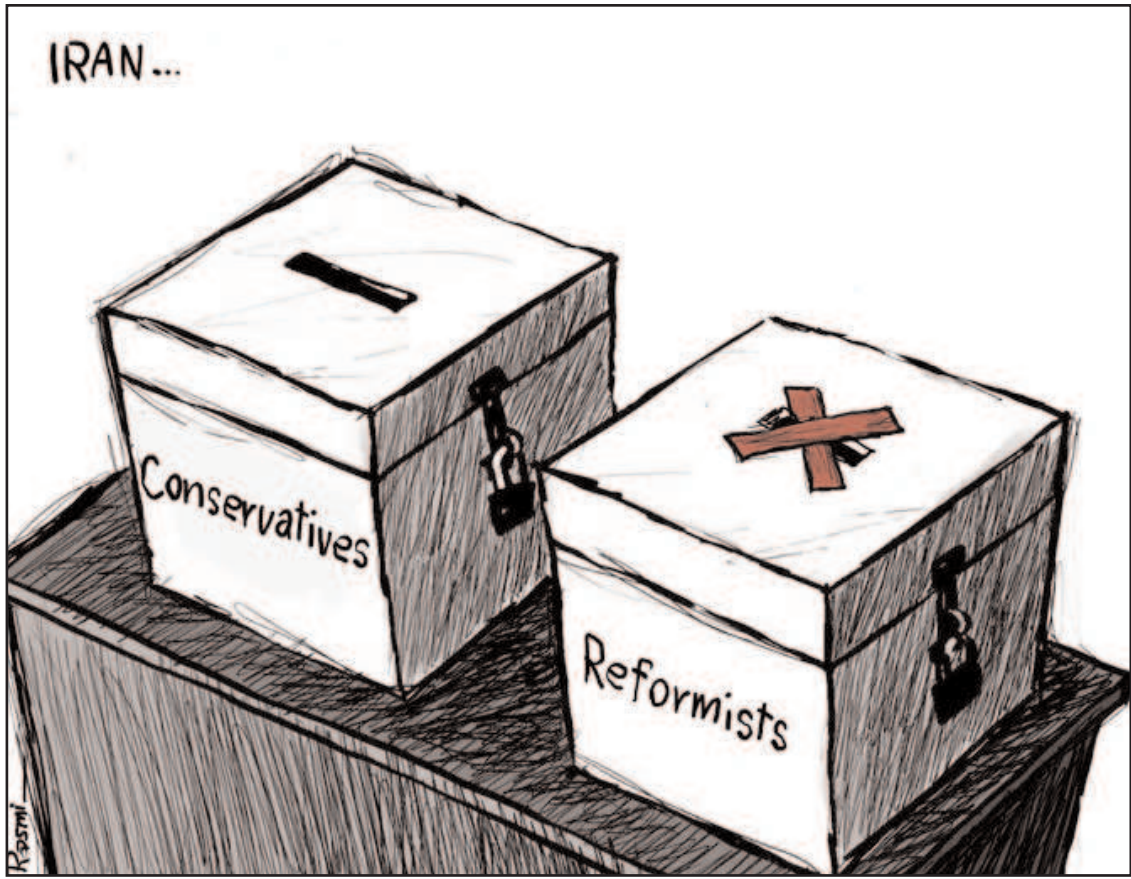
In recent months, several non-aligned senators and independent members from the upper house of the parliament have put forth highly contentious and unconstitutional bills on the house floor. That portrays a narrow mindset aimed at protecting communal and cartel interests at the behest of certain ethnic, political, or religious pressure groups, etc. That not only contradicts our social values, religious thoughts, and country's constitution but also undermines the long-term interests of the country. Henceforth, such events not only highlight the hollowness of our parliamentary system but also decry the intellectual depletion of our legislators and lawmakers. We are living in the 21st century where our world has been transformed into a global village. The recent shutdown of the internet and social media platforms has caused significant financial, and reputational losses to the nation whilst blocking social media permanently is a highly imprudent and silly idea that would have devastating effects on the country. However, the world will witness the wisdom of Pakistani technocrats before sunset of this day.

Bugti's Traditional Rituals

Balochistan's newly-elected Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti once again reaffirmed the provincial government's plan to continue engaging in dialogue with those involved in armed insurgency. Bugti extended the olive branch to dissidents in his victory speech after being elected as the province's Chief Executive. According to the newly elected Chief Minister, deterrence and dialogue are the two options that the government has to address the law and order situation in Balochistan. He urged armed groups to lay down their arms and join mainstream politics playing their role in the province's development. The chief minister urged the Baloch insurgents to continue their struggle while adhering to the Constitution of Pakistan, stressing that there will be no compromise on the state's writ. He noted that those fighting for their rights can only achieve their goals via the parliamentary route and not armed struggle. Balochistan, the Pakistan's largest and the highly richest province with respect to untapped wealth including mineral and gold deposits and long coastal lane on the Bank of pension gulf, has long been an epicentre of ethnic and sectarian violence, poor governance throughout the past. The majority of province's administrative and security issues are primarily due to prolonged feudal system, bureaucratic corruption and longheld poverty. The Baloch ethnic insurgency has been a persistent issue throughout the past wherein a few Baloch tribal leaders have been fighting the government for their vested interests while exploiting general needs of the masses. The insurgency has been fueled by grievances over perceived exploitation of Balochistan's natural resources, marginalization of the Baloch people, and the lack of economic development in the region. The successive Pakistani governments have used all available means and resources including dilagoue with insurgents, military operations, development works and distribution of development funds among public and tribal leaders, politicians and the notables, however a small faction of people still not abandoned armed struggle against the government. After assuming power, the newly elected Chief Minister has extended tradition courtesy and a message of peace toward disgruntled elements which is surely a right goodwill gesture from the new government. The rebel leaders must utilise this opportunity if they have genuine desire to serve the people of the province otherwise the unfruitful struggle and proxy on behalf of foreign power neither provided any benefit to common Baloch in the past nor it bring any change in the statue quo, whilst they have no muscle to Defeat nuclear Pakistan. At the same time, Mr. Bugti must launch a peace initiative to forge consensus with moderate rebel elements to restore peace and address genuine issues of the public, so the Baloch living in far flung areas could equally benefit from national resources, opportunities, job share etc as it is available in major cities and settled areas in the province.

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Will Biden listen  
to Michigan?

Dr. Amal Mudallali

Arab and Muslim American voters, and the coalition they built in the Michigan primary elections, this week sent a warning message to President Joe Biden and his campaign. They made it clear that he needs to change course on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, support a ceasefire, and halt military aid to Israel or he will risk losing their votes in the November presidential election in a key state that could be decisive.

The “Listen to Michigan” campaign registered a “huge victory,” celebrating Arab American leaders said, with the results of the state’s Democratic primary showing that more than 100,000 voters cast an “uncommitted” vote instead of voting for Biden, the party’s nominee.

This was a historic win for the Arab American and Muslim communities and their allies in Michigan. It was the first time that Arab Americans had flexed their voting muscle and showed that their voice should be heard and their vote counted in presidential elections.

The campaign, which was expecting to get 10,000 votes but got 10 times more than that, was well organized and made an “unprecedented impact, contacting 1,167,850 voters to encourage them to vote uncommitted,” and made “517,383 phone calls and sent 650,467 text messages,” as Emgage Action Michigan, a Muslim advocacy group, wrote in an email.

Leaders in the Democratic Party of Michigan like Rep. Rashida Tlaib, a Palestinian American who has family in the West Bank, led the effort. Tlaib’s sister, Layla Elabed, was the head of the campaign. The coalition included other ethnic groups and activists, especially young people who are angry at the White House’s policy toward the war. This was reflected in the high number of “uncommitted” votes in university towns in Michigan.

The Arab American community has been vocal since the beginning of the war on Gaza in calling for a ceasefire and a halt to US military aid to Israel, while warning the Democratic Party of the consequences if there is no change in policy. But the community feels that their calls have fallen on deaf ears. The president has not visited Michigan since the war started and has not met with the community there, leading to feelings of hurt and accusations of double standards.

Some activists complain that the community feels that its pain has not been recognized since many of them have lost family members in the Israeli attacks on Gaza. They cited the White House’s January statement on “100 days of captivity for hostages in Gaza” as an example because, while it talked about the pain of the families of the hostages, it did not mention the loss of thousands of Palestinian lives in Gaza.

The White House reached out to the community in Michigan, especially after the leaders of the community refused to meet Biden’s reelection campaign officials. Deputy National Security Adviser

Jon Finer traveled to the state and met with the community leaders. In their meeting, Finer expressed regret and acknowledged that “missteps” were made in the administration’s handling of policy toward the war in Gaza. But the war continues and the community has become more vocal in its calls for a ceasefire.

The results of the primary election showed that one in eight Democrats voted “uncommitted” in the Michigan primary, according to The New York

Times. This makes the Arab American and Muslim vote a potentially decisive one in November, should the community’s voters decide not to vote for Biden or to just sit at home and not vote at all, giving the advantage to the likely Republican nominee, Trump.

News reports indicated that 13.3 percent of Michigan Democrats cast an “uncommitted” vote, with some precincts registering 15 percent or more. This means the campaign-

**The White House reached out to the community in Michigan, especially after the leaders of the community refused to meet Biden’s reelection campaign officials. Deputy National Security Adviser Jon Finer traveled to the state and met with the community leaders. In their meeting, Finer expressed regret and acknowledged that “missteps” were made in the administration’s handling of policy toward the war in Gaza. But the war continues and the community has become more vocal in its calls for a ceasefire. The results of the primary election showed that one in eight Democrats voted “uncommitted” in the Michigan primary, according to The New York Times, which described it as a “protest of the Biden administration’s policies toward Israel and the war in Gaza.” The newspaper noted that, in “some of the predominantly Arab American precincts in Dearborn,” which is dubbed by some the Arab capital of Michigan, “around three in four Democrats cast a protest vote for uncommitted.” Michigan is a purple state, or a swing state. Former President Donald Trump won it by fewer than 11,000 votes in 2016, while Biden won it by just over 150,000 in 2020. This makes the Arab American and Muslim vote a potentially decisive one in November, should the community’s voters decide not to vote for Biden or to just sit at home and not vote at all, giving the advantage to the likely Republican nominee, Trump. News reports indicated that 13.3 percent of Michigan Democrats cast an “uncommitted” vote, with some precincts registering 15 percent or more.**

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150,000 in 2020. This makes the Arab American and Muslim vote a potentially decisive one in November, should the community’s voters decide not to vote for Biden or to just sit at home and not vote at all, giving the advantage to the likely Republican nominee, Trump.

A Listen to Michigan official said that campaigners “plan to hold the Democratic nominee accountable to our community’s anti-war agenda at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. See you there.” Other activists said they wanted to replicate the campaign in other states. But this does not enjoy the full support of

the leaders of the Arab American community, especially the seasoned ones, who point to obstacles to repeating the Michigan experience elsewhere.

First, they say, not all states have the option of “uncommitted” on the ballots. Second, the effort succeeded in Michigan because of the sizable Arab American community there. And, third, it was planned and organized well ahead of time, with Democratic Party officials’ support. That cannot be replicated in other states without organization, they contend, while warning that a failure could hurt the overall effort.

The White House first issued a statement on behalf of the president, as the results came in from Michigan, without mentioning the “uncommitted” votes or the reasoning behind them. But CNN later reported a statement from a senior campaign adviser who said: “President Biden shares the goal of many of the folks who voted uncommitted, which is an end to the violence and a just and lasting peace. That is what he is working for.”

Even before the vote, the administration tried to send signals that it was listening to the criticism. Secretary of State Antony Blinken made a statement expressing disappointment at Israel’s announcement of plans for the building of new settlements in the occupied West Bank and said they are “inconsistent with international law” — a reversal of the US position that former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced in 2019.

The other development was a report by Axios stating that the Biden administration had given Israel until mid-March to provide a letter of assurance that “it will abide by international law while using US weapons and allow humanitarian aid into Gaza.” The media, however, quoted officials as saying that this is a standard letter to all foreign governments who buy US weapons and that Israel was not being singled out.

The president only has a few months to convince the “uncommitted” in Michigan and elsewhere to vote for him. The White House and the president are hoping that, if they can change the picture in Gaza with an agreement for a ceasefire and the return of hostages, that would enable them to bring back the dissatisfied and uncommitted voters in time for the November election.

Time will tell whether the anger with the president will have a lasting effect and if the “uncommitted” will either stay at home in November or vote for Trump. That could potentially hand Michigan to a candidate activists in the Arab American community call “not a friend” because of his suggestion and their fear that he might reinstate the so-called Muslim ban if reelected.

Democratic politicians in Michigan are urging the president to engage with the community and to visit the state. The results of the primary put the ball in Biden’s court — he can either ignore their warning or, as Tlaib said after the vote, “listen, listen to Michigan.”

Netanyahu’s  
day after plan  
is the same as  
the day before,  
but worse

Yossi Mekelberg

Finally, after more than four months of devastating war, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has presented his Cabinet with a document titled “The Day After Hamas,” which claims to be a plan for the management of Gaza after the war.

In truth, it is no more than a collection of the most obvious, general, and worryingly unilateral, Israeli shopping list items that represent a return to the situation of the day before, but with excessively more Israeli control than forward thinking.

There is no plan for achieving peace and reconciliation with the Palestinians, nor have any lessons been learned from the conceptual paradigm of total security control that has cost so many lives on both sides.

Throughout this war, Netanyahu and his entire Cabinet have maintained that the aim is to destroy Hamas. Not only has this not been viable from the outset, but it also lacks any vision for the future of a post-war Gaza, even without Hamas, or a bigger picture for relations with the Palestinian people.

As with everything else that Netanyahu says or does these days, it smacks of the behavior of a small-time politician who is desperate to appeal to his ever-shrinking base, rather than a statesman with a long-term plan to climb out of the deep hole he has thrown his country into in the first place.

The prime minister’s one-page set of principles can easily be seen as a last-ditch act of defiance, an attempt to preempt the growing pressure, both from the international community and at home from those who want to see the release of the Israeli hostages held by Hamas, which might force him to accept a ceasefire that his base and right-wing government coalition partners reject.

Alternatively — since his supposed plan is in reality an utterly opaque statement in terms of timescale and detail, as the document clearly declares that the Israeli military operation will continue until it destroys the military capabilities and governing infrastructure of Hamas and Islamic Jihad — it can be viewed as an exercise carried out for the sake of pretending he has a plan, solely to buy some more time while the real aim is to prolong the war for many more months.

In a short passage of the document titled “In the long run,” Netanyahu reveals he has no interest in drawing any constructive conclusions from the disastrous events that have taken place since Oct. 7. What he presents as a long-term plan is merely a return to the same situation Israel and the Palestinians were in before the war, but with Israel demanding even more power to dictate the nature of relations between the two.

By doing so, he is saying “no” to a two-state solution and “no” to normalization of relations with the region.

Netanyahu’s “non-plan” also exposes his fixation with Israel’s security as a zero-sum game that can only be won if Palestinians are living under complete Israeli control with very few rights, least of all the right to self-determination.

This is just one more piece of evidence that confirms why he should leave office immediately and withdraw from politics altogether. His inability to address the root causes of the conflict, chief among them the absence of Palestinian statehood and the Israeli occupation, hampers and endangers Israeli security and makes him a liability.

His is the same old Israeli security paradigm, which maintains that only by oppressing Palestinians and depriving them of their rights can Israel achieve security and survive, rather than through

the creation of a Palestinian state and allowing the Palestinian people to enjoy equal rights so that they can fulfill their potential in every aspect of their lives.

One might think the unbearable ease with which the massacre of Oct. 7 was carried out, the many months of a subsequent war that has spread beyond Gaza, the damage it has caused to Israel’s economy, and the country’s increasing international isolation would lead to a change in the way of thinking. Not a bit of it.

There is a wide consensus in Israeli society, as outlined in Netanyahu’s document, that the underlining imperatives are that the hostages must be released and no force from Gaza should ever again pose a threat to Israel.

However, the proposal that Israel should continue its military operation in Gaza freely and with no time limit merely represents a continuation of the prewar blockade regime and a security buffer zone for as long as Israel deems it necessary, including along the border with Egypt.

Moreover, there is an insistence on complete security control over the entire West Bank, which is a clear violation of the Oslo agreement. In other words, if there is any space remaining for yet another “final” nail in the coffin of post-Oslo agreements, Netanyahu is determined to hammer it down.

What is deliberately vague in the prime minister’s post-war “plan” is who will govern Gaza when the hostilities are over, and how. A positive aspect of the ambiguity in this case is that Netanyahu does not exclude the possibility of the Palestinian Authority running it, but it grants Israel, at least in the minds of those who wrote this document, the final say on who will control day-to-day life in Gaza.

But let’s get back to reality: If Israel seeks cooperation with more moderate and pragmatic forces among the Palestinians, and the support of regional and international powers that can facilitate and finance a transition toward a sustainable, united governance of the West Bank and Gaza, Israel should dispense with the idea that it can dictate future political arrangements; otherwise it will once again empower the extremists who thrive on conflict and discord.

It would not be a Netanyahu plan without a demand to dismantle the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. It almost implies the agency is to blame for the massacre of Oct. 7 by suggesting it enabled the attacks by educating generations of Palestinians to support the destruction of Israel.

Setting aside the issue of the flaws in this allegation, no organization is sacred or irreplaceable, especially when circumstances are changing. Nevertheless, replacing UNRWA would require more than hollow rhetoric about bringing in other humanitarian groups without meticulous planning or adequate budgets, and without assessing the vacuum it would leave behind.

Both Israel and the Palestinians have their work cut out to come up with well-thought-through plans for postwar Gaza. At this stage, meanwhile, a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas that also includes a swap of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners is an urgent necessity. But this must happen without losing sight of the need for a more comprehensive long-term solution.

What is clear is that for the Jewish state to issue a diktat from Netanyahu, especially one that is unilateral in practice and in spirit, is neither viable nor desirable. Israel has tried this approach before and — self-evidently — it has not ended well.



# Foreign policy is shaping US politics in this presidential election year and here’s why

The 2024 US presidential election increasingly looks likely to be a repeat of the 2020 contest between Joe Biden and Donald Trump. However, there is one striking difference between these two big US election years: the significantly higher salience of international issues this time around.

About 40 percent of respondents in a recent poll, carried out by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, named foreign policy as a key issue in ballots this year. That is about twice as many as those who highlighted international issues in an AP-NORC poll a year ago.

The troubles in the Middle East since the attacks by Hamas on Israel on Oct. 7, and the subsequent Israeli military offensive in Gaza, have fueled US voter concerns about the geopolitical landscape, alongside ongoing concerns about the war in Ukraine and the possibility of wider challenges too, including China’s posture toward Taiwan.

Immigration is another issue increasingly on the minds of US voters. The latest poll found that 35 percent of people were concerned about it, especially as it relates to the border between the US and Mexico, compared with 27 percent a year earlier.

If international issues continue to be so salient for the rest of the US presidential campaign, it will not be the first time this has happened in the past decade. In 2016, for instance, the prominence of international issues was illustrated by a Pew survey that found 34 percent of people believed foreign policy, especially efforts to tackle international terrorism, was the biggest challenge facing the country at that time. In contrast, only 23 percent emphasized economic problems.

However, such data showing the higher salience of foreign policy in the minds of the American public compared with economic issues is

unusual in recent decades. Indeed, it more closely resembles the situation during the first 25 years of the Cold War, between 1948 and 1972, when issues of international security dominated the concerns of US voters during presidential campaigns.

Since the early 1970s, however, economic matters have tended to be the highest priority for the US electorate. This was the case during the 2020 Biden-Trump race when, in the first year of the pandemic,

Andrew Hammond

ues it could reach a crisis point for the West in the months to come.

Secondly, the risk of conflict escalation in the Middle East remains very high. Since the attacks by Hamas five months ago, in which about 1,200 people were murdered, an estimated 30,000 Palestinians have been killed in the subsequent Israeli attack on Gaza. This has inflamed public opinion across the region, which is at its most

between the situation now and during the first few decades of the Cold War.

That earlier period was characterized by a relative consensus on policy and widespread bipartisan cooperation on foreign affairs.

Now, however, this policy domain is significantly more divisive, politically. Certainly, the early Cold War consensus can be overstated. Nonetheless, a significant degree of bipartisan agreement on foreign affairs, and wider political

**For one thing, Russia appears to be making a steady series of gains in Ukraine and if this continues it could reach a crisis point for the West in the months to come. Secondly, the risk of conflict escalation in the Middle East remains very high. Since the attacks by Hamas five months ago, in which about 1,200 people were murdered, an estimated 30,000 Palestinians have been killed in the subsequent Israeli attack on Gaza. This has inflamed public opinion across the region, which is at its most febrile point in years. Meanwhile, a significant proportion of US voters are concerned about the potential for a crisis in the Asia-Pacific as well, possibly over Taiwan. This would create a third major source of international conflict for the US and its Western allies at a time when resources are increasingly stretched. Yet even if such foreign policy concerns continue to grow in salience to the American public this year, possibly through heightened tensions in the Asia-Pacific, there will still be significant differences between the situation now and during the first few decades of the Cold War.**

the US economy spun into recession with unusually high, rapid increases in levels of unemployment. By October 2020, more than 10 million unemployment cases had been filed.

While foreign policy is still not nearly as important to voters this year as it was during the early years of the Cold War, there are nonetheless a significant number of reasons why international affairs will remain prominent this year.

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Yet even if such foreign policy concerns continue to grow in salience to the American public this year, possibly through heightened tensions in the Asia-Pacific, there will still be significant differences

decorum, did exist in the years immediately following the Second World War, at least until it broke apart in the late 1960s under the strain of the Vietnam War debacle, and the demise of the notion of monolithic communism in light of the Sino-Soviet split.

No clear foreign policy consensus has emerged in the US in recent years; if anything, the gaps are widening. Even before Trump became president, many Republicans and Democrats differed significantly on how they viewed the power and standing of the US interna-

# Starvation: Israel’s criminal weapon of war

The international community has been calling on Israel for months now to end its weaponization of starvation against the civilian population of Gaza. Israel’s publicly stated hope is that by inflicting suffering on the Palestinian people they can extract a better negotiated deal with Hamas.

But such Israeli action is a war crime — the full enormity of which became clear on Thursday, when Israeli troops opened fire on starving Palestinians scrambling for food from an aid truck convoy just outside Gaza City, and more than 100 of them were killed.

International humanitarian law and the laws of war make it abundantly clear that the starvation of civilians as a weapon of warfare is prohibited. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court states clearly that intentionally starving civilians by “depriving them of objects indispensable to their survival, including willfully impeding relief supplies” is a war crime. Criminal intent does not require the attacker’s admission, but

can also be inferred from the totality of the circumstances of the military campaign. In the case of Gaza, both intent and action have been documented. From day one of the Israeli war, its defense minister said publicly that no food, water, or electricity would be allowed into the enclave.

“Israel’s continuing blockade of Gaza, as well as its more than 16-year closure, amounts to collective punishment of the civilian population, a war crime. As the occupying power in Gaza, under the Fourth Geneva Convention Israel must ensure that the civilian population gets food and medical supplies,” Human Rights Watch said in December. The situation by the end of February had become much worse.

Not only have the Israelis denied entry of food and other humanitarian aid into the northern parts of Gaza, where there is a border with Israel, they have also done so from the southern border with Egypt. Israel has bombed trucks from Egypt, compelling the Egyptians to accept

Daoud Kuttab

Israeli control of when and how anything is allowed to cross into Gaza. As a result, every truck carrying food supplies has to first go all the way to the Israeli border point, where it is checked. After this time-consuming check, the trucks, accompanied by Israel, are allowed into Gaza via the Rafah crossing.

Humanitarian aid workers speak of the need for hundreds of food trucks to enter Gaza every day to meet the needs of the starving population. The absence of food has become so extreme that a 3kg bag of wheat is being sold for \$100, which almost no family in Gaza can afford.

The situation in the south of Gaza became even more dire as the Israeli military moved from north, to center, to south. They occupied Gaza City, then Khan Younis, while encouraging Palestinians to move south to Rafah, where up to 1.5 million people are now trapped. They cannot return north without risking their lives, and the Egyptians will not

allow anyone to cross into Sinai for fear that Israel would never allow them to go back —ethnic cleansing, yet another war crime. The meager number of food trucks that finally make it to Rafah are naturally overwhelmed by the starving population.

Instead of allowing the normal entry of sufficient food supplies into Gaza, the Israeli effort to use starvation as a weapon has turned starving Palestinians into dead Palestinians. While the situation in south Gaza is dire, the starvation level in the north is even worse. Israel is refusing to allow wheat trucks into the north because of a handful of radical Jewish Israeli protesters. Had they been Palestinians they would of course have been instantly shot dead. But since they are fellow Israelis, the army, happy to keep the humanitarian pressure on, has done little to allow the trucks of wheat, which Israel promised their US allies would be delivered to north Gaza, ever to arrive.

The dire situation in north Gaza has led the Royal Jordanian Air Force

tionally, on the degree to which the country should be unilateralist, in their attitudes toward the fight against terrorism and the methods it should employ; and on the very priorities of foreign policy.

These divisions have only grown since Trump’s election victory in 2016, and this year we have seen significantly divergent US grand strategies: Trump’s familiar “America First” view versus Biden’s internationalist vision, which is much more similar in nature to the foreign policies of both his Republican and Democratic predecessors in the post-war era.

The increasing polarization of foreign policy also reduces the scope for the longstanding tradition of Americans “rallying around the flag” in times of geopolitical tensions. This has been illustrated by some Republicans blaming current tensions of this nature on Biden’s presidency.

For example, US Rep. Mario Diaz Balart, a Republican member of Congress from Florida, condemned what he described as “the results of a feckless (Biden) US foreign policy of appeasement.” He suggested the world was “a much more dangerous place today than before Biden took office ... After Afghanistan, Ukraine and negotiations toward an Iran deal, I shudder at the thought of more incompetence, weakness, and appeasement from the current administration.”

It is, therefore, increasingly plausible, especially if the conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East continue into the second half of the year, that the salience of international issues in the minds of American voters could remain high on election day in November.

Moreover, partisan splits on foreign policy will reinforce the high degree of political polarization in the US, potentially elevating the global interest in the race.

to organize daily air drops, even though occupying armies are obliged by international law to provide all the humanitarian needs of people under their direct military control.

Israel’s belated response to Thursday’s massacre was to claim that they opened fire only on people who “posed a threat,” and that most of the dead were trampled in a chaotic stampede for food. But as enlightened Israelis such as the journalist Gideon Levy have repeatedly observed, Israel is unique in claiming victimhood while painting the real victims as responsible for their own deaths. “I don’t remember one occupation where the occupier presented himself as the victim,” he said.

The World Court, Israel’s strongest allies including the US, in fact the entire world is calling on Israel to stop using starvation as a weapon of war. The time has come for the world to begin imposing sanctions on Israel. Any country that supplies weapons to Israel is complicit in its war crimes and the genocide of the Palestinian people.

# Political tremors in Chad are felt much further afield

Hafed Al-Ghwell

The Sahel, a region stretching 4,000 miles

along the southern fringe of the Sahara, is notorious for its volatile nature, with Chad emerging as the latest flashpoint in this troubled landscape. The country, long considered a fulcrum of relative stability, survived a close call last week after the escalation of political violence in the capital, N’Djamena. The situation in the country offers yet another compelling reminder of what can happen when pressing domestic challenges intersect with a convulsing region, exacerbating precarious security dynamics.

A potent mix of sociopolitical unrest, economic desperation, and the expanding contagion of junta regimes, from Sudan to the Sahel, have created an environment fraught with tensions. Chad’s short-lived brush with a descent into chaos rightfully caused alarm in the West and the Arab region, with concerns that the prospect of the country falling into chaos is no longer a matter of “if” but a foreseeable and inevitable consequence of a permanently restless region.

Internal strife in Chad has been fueled by years of authoritarian rule, ethnic divisions, and economic disenfranchisement. After the death of President Idriss Deby Itno in April 2021, the military in the country suspended the constitution and installed his son, Mahamat Deby, to lead an 18-month Transitional Military Council. Unlike his father, who commanded respect and authority thanks to his charismatic leadership and military prowess, Deby has struggled to consolidate his rule amid growing dissatisfaction among the military elite and the civilian population.

The mandate of the TMC was extended, controversially, by two years in October 2022, despite the prior promise of a transition to civilian rule, and that incited deadly protests. Unperturbed, Deby has persisted in his attempts to consolidate power within the military and the ruling Zaghawa ethnic group, mirroring the trajectory of neighboring countries in which juntas seized control at the expense of all else.

This regional pattern of military ascendancy over democratic processes has only succeeded in plunging the Sahel into chaos, fostering an environment ripe for prolonged strife and conflict. It is a far cry from the promises of a pan-Sahelian utopia following the exorcism of overt French influence. Deby’s single-minded pursuit of a monopoly on power eventually created internal fissures that culminated in his paternal uncle, Saleh Deby Itno, defecting to the opposition Socialist Party without Borders, or PSF.

During the turmoil in the country a few days ago, the leader’s uncle was detained and the leader of the PSF, Yaya Dillo, killed. This outcome is consistent with Deby’s efforts to tighten his grip on power and quell dissent ahead of presidential elections scheduled for May and June — if they take place at all.

These tremors in Chad shone a spotlight on the political volatility in the nation and fears for a future rift with conflict that could destabilize it, likely spilling over into neighboring countries.

The violent suppression

of the opposition, including the death of the PSF leader and Saleh Deby Itno’s detention, set the stage for potential armed confrontations between government forces and factions aligned with the PSF, particularly within the Zaghawa ethnic group. The specter of military engagements, especially near the capital, threatens to derail the presidential election and deepen the political and security crises the country faces.

The possibility that anti-Deby elements might seek assistance from Wagner Group, the Russian private military company, adds another worrying dimension to the turmoil. Wagner’s presence in the neighboring Central African Republic, Libya, and Sudan presents an opportunity for elements in these places to gain support from a rogue force with a history of intervention in African conflicts.

Moreover, the unrest at

**Externally, these developments might hasten French President Emmanuel Macron’s purported plans to reduce the presence of his nation’s troops in Chad. A swift withdrawal in response to the growing instability could result in a security void at the worst possible time, given the existing crises in Sudan, Niger, Libya, and the Central African Republic. This comes against the backdrop of a broader French military drawdown across Africa, including a recent exit from Niger, that has left about 1,000 French troops in Chad with an uncertain timeline for withdrawal.**

the end of February underscored the precarious nature of Chad’s internal stability. The growing public and military discontent could energize protests and potentially precipitate another coup, given the divisions within military ranks over the orders to suppress the PSF.

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Meanwhile, an extended nationwide strike called by major trade unions in Chad in protest against rising fuel prices adds an economic dimension to the country’s escalating woes. While the PSF might attempt to court Wagner for support, it remains to be seen whether the TMC will similarly engage, especially after Deby’s meeting with Putin in January.

The fragility of the political landscape in Chad is undeniable and the recent clashes might well be a harbinger of more trouble ahead, which would threaten domestic stability and the security of neighboring countries entangled in their own complex crises.

The nation’s internal

dynamics have been significantly influenced by a combustible mix of local grievances and international geopolitics. The instability of the Sahel region is not only the product of poor governance and economic deprivation, it is increasingly a consequence of external military and political interventions.

The crisis in Chad illustrates the ways in which internal instability can be exacerbated by the regional contagion of conflict, providing a bridge for the flow of arms, fighters, and insurgencies across borders. The interplay between internal discontent in the country and regional upheavals, especially given the involvement of external powers, highlights the fact that the Sahel is a battleground for local conflicts and international geopolitical rivalries.

The unfolding crisis in Chad necessitates a reevaluation of the strategies employed both by regional actors and international

stakeholders. It is clear that a military-first approach, focused on counterterrorism and maintaining the status quo, is insufficient to address the underlying causes of instability.

Instead, there must be a concerted effort to tackle governance issues, economic deprivation, and ethnic grievances that fuel discontent. This will involve a nuanced engagement that goes beyond mere security assistance to include support for democratic governance, economic development, and conflict-resolution mechanisms.

Furthermore, international actors, particularly Western powers, must reconsider their alliances and intervention strategies in the region. Support for autocratic regimes for short-term security gains has proven counterproductive, fostering resentment among local populations and perpetuating cycles of violence. There is a pressing need for a more balanced strategy that aligns security interests with support for human rights and democratic norms.

The situation in Chad is a clarion call for a fundamental rethink of the ways in which stability and security are pursued in North Africa and the broader Sahel region. Addressing this challenge will require a comprehensive approach that considers the intricate web of local grievances, regional conflicts, and international geopolitics.

If one recognizes the limitations of a security-centric strategy, and prioritizes governance reforms, economic development and regional diplomacy, there is yet hope for restoring stability to the Sahel.

# Turkiye, Gulf states’ converging interests in Horn of Africa

Turkiye last week signed a 10-year defense and economic cooperation agreement with Somalia, which aims to help defend the latter’s long coastline and also rebuild the naval forces of the fragile Horn of Africa nation. The agreement took a great deal of attention, as it came amid growing tensions in this region due to Ethiopia’s controversial maritime deal with Somaliland, which is a territory on the coast of the Gulf of Aden that declared its independence in 1991 but is still recognized internationally as part of Somalia. Somalia received an outpouring of support for its stance against the Ethiopia-Somaliland deal. Turkiye and the Gulf Cooperation Council states were among several regional nations that backed Somalia,

stressing the importance of the country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Over the past decade, GCC states have shown significant engagement and investment in the Horn of Africa area, with the Red Sea regaining its prominence as a geostrategic focal point, attracting competing global and regional actors aiming to extend their influence.

In Somalia, the Gulf states are key players jockeying for influence. During the Gulf diplomatic crisis that began in 2017, the Horn of Africa was an area of rivalry for the GCC states and Turkiye. However, after the reconciliation that kicked off in early 2021, they focused less on assertive policies that could harm their reconciliation path and instead adopted policies aimed at

preserving the stability and security of the Horn of Africa and could contribute to enhancing their interests.

Any tension that could pose a threat to the stability and security of this region is now considered a collective threat by both Turkiye and the Gulf states. The dynamics within and between African states are closely intertwined with the Turkish-Gulf normalization trend and it is evident that both the GCC states and Ankara will try to use their leverage to solve the disputes through dialogue.

When mentioning the Gulf states, it is significant to underline that it is the UAE, Qatar and Saudi Arabia that have played a pivotal role and have the leverage in the region, particularly in Somalia. Following the Ethiopia-

Somaliland deal, Riyadh affirmed its stance on the unity of Somalia and the country’s sovereignty over its entire territory.

Even before the Somaliland dispute erupted, Saudi Arabia was angling for a closer relationship with Somalia, having appointed its first ambassador to the country in three decades in 2021. Last year, the two countries inked a security cooperation agreement. Somalia has also been participating in summits held in Riyadh, such as the Saudi-African Summit and the joint Arab-Islamic extraordinary summit, with Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud aiming to cultivate close personal ties with the Saudi leadership. Somalia has made it clear several times

Sinem Cengiz

that it hopes Saudi engagement will go much further, including deeper into the security sphere.

The UAE is another actor in the Horn of Africa that has ties with all competing parties. Prior to 2021, Turkiye and the UAE engaged in a bitter rivalry in the wider Red Sea area that was driven by their different visions for the region’s future. But when Turkish-Emirati relations started to improve, the two states had common stances on some tensions, such as the war in Tigray, in which they supported the Ethiopian government.

From a commercial and security perspective, the UAE gives special importance to Somalia, where it manages two key ports —

Berbera and Bosaso — and has close ties with the presidency. The UAE and Somalia signed a security agreement in early 2023 that improved bilateral ties.

Last month, a Mogadishu attack killed four Emirati soldiers and one Bahraini officer tasked with training the Somali army. It was claimed by the Al-Qaeda-linked Al-Shabab militant group, which had previously also attacked the Turkish mission in Mogadishu. Al-Shabab described the UAE as an “enemy” for its backing of the Somali government in battling the armed group. Notably, this was not the first time Al-Shabab had targeted Emiratis. In 2015, it attempted to kill Emirati diplomats in the Somali capital.

Amid the tensions in the

region, the Somali president has visited the GCC states. In the last few months, he has visited Qatar, the UAE and Kuwait. Qatar is another Gulf state that has affirmed its commitment to supporting Somali military officers in the fight against Al-Shabab.

Last month’s attack made it clear for the Gulf states and Turkiye that, without having a solution to the root cause of the insecurity in Somalia, it is tough to achieve their goals. Securing Somalia fits into the GCC and Turkiye’s wider concerns about security in the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea.

It is noteworthy that Somali piracy has recently resumed after a gap of several years amid the attacks by Yemen’s Houthi rebels

on shipping in the Red Sea. Thus, the new Turkiye-Somalia deal affirms Ankara’s position as a major player in Somalia, where it has a large military base that trains thousands of Somali security personnel. This base is the backbone of Somali efforts to tackle Al-Shabab.

However, within this context, there remains considerable uncertainty regarding the Ethiopia-Somaliland deal and the defense cooperation agreement between Turkiye and Somalia. While Gulf states had serious concerns over the former, they seem to be comfortable — although not publicly supportive — with the new Turkish-Somali agreement, or at least Turkiye’s security provider role that could also serve the GCC’s interests in the long term.



# Exports to Europe falls 8% despite GSP plus status

## F.P. Report

LAHORE: Raising grave concern over the continued falling trend of Pakistan exports the Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) said that Pakistan's exports to European countries dipped year-on-year by 7.54 per cent in the first seven months of the current fiscal year, mainly due to reduced demand for Pakistani goods in western, southern and northern Europe.

PIAF Chairman Faheem-ur-Rehman Saigol, quoting the latest figures, said that this decline in export proceeds indicated the challenges faced by Pakistani exporters in these economically uncertain times despite having preferential access to 27-member EU countries. The export proceeds from these countries fell to \$4.866 billion in July-January FY24, a drop from the \$5.263bn recorded in the corresponding months of the previous year, according to figures compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan.

In FY23, exports to the EU dropped 4.41pc to

\$8.188bn from \$8.566bn in the preceding fiscal year. However, the decline in exports was seen despite the Generalised System of Preferences Plus (GSP+) scheme.

The PIAF Chairman said that in October 2023, the European Parliament unanimously voted to extend the GSP+ status for another four years until 2027 for developing countries, including Pakistan, to enjoy duty-free or minimum duty on exports to the European market.

Western Europe, which includes countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, France, Italy and Belgium, accounts for the largest portion of Pakistan's exports to the EU.

However, there has been a significant decrease of 13.85pc in exports to this region. The export value stood at \$2.393bn in the first seven months of FY24, down from \$2.778bn during the same period last year.

While exports to western, southern and northern Europe have seen a decline, there is a silver lining in the form of an uptick in exports to eastern Europe. Exports to southern Europe saw a

paltry decline of 0.22pc to \$1.743bn in 7MFY24 from \$1.747bn over the corresponding period of last year.

In this region, exports to Spain saw a growth of 5.67pc to \$856.423m in 7MFY24 from \$810.461m over the last year. Exports to Italy stood at \$649.433m in 7MFY24 against \$661.932m over the last year, indicating a decline of 1.88pc. However, exports to northern Europe have not done well, recording a 7.59pc decline. The export value to this region stood at \$0.365bn this year, down from \$0.395bn over the corresponding months of the previous year.

PIAF Chairman Faheem-ur-Rehman Saigol stated that the overall exports during July-February 2023-24 totaled \$18.678 billion against \$20.57 billion during the corresponding period of last year, showing a decrease of 9.21 percent while the exports in Feb 2024 were \$2.19 billion compared to \$2.24 billion of Jan 2023 showing a decrease of 2.36 percent and by 22.69 percent, respectively.

The PIAF chairman pointed out that administrative measures, leading to raw material shortage for the industry and resultantly lower production, were the main reason for the plunge while the slowdown in global demand amid monetary tightening was another reason, he said.

Faheem Saigol said that Pakistan has remained a potential market for foreign investors, who still have plans to make fresh investment in the country, but they have continued to wait for the return of economic stability.

He highlighted uncertainty in the rupee-dollar parity as one of the major concerns of foreign investors. He said a slowdown in the economy had badly impacted business confidence.

It is must for the authorities concerned to first create an enabling environment for the local businessmen desiring to make new investment. The PIAF chairman advocated the need for raising the country's tax base so that tax-to-GDP ratio improves from current poor level.

## KTH chairman greets PM

LAHORE (APP): Kyrgyzstan Trade House in Pakistan (KTH) Chairman Meher Kashif Younis here Sunday greeted Shehbaz Sharif on becoming Prime Minister for the second time.

He hoped that under his dynamic leadership, Pakistan would emerge as one of the leading economies in the world.

Meher said the character of economy is the need of the hour that requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach from the top leadership of the incumbent government. By evolving a consensus among all stakeholders and prioritizing national interests, the government can set the stage for meaningful reforms that will strengthen the national economy and improve the living standards of people, he added.

Pakistan faced a number of economic challenges, ranging from high inflation and unemployment to a growing debt burden and dwindling foreign reserves, and to address these challenges, a concerted effort involving all key players is imperative, he suggested.

He added that the government must take proactive steps to engage with all relevant stakeholders including opposition parties, business leaders and international partners.

Building consensus among these diverse groups would be essential for garnering support for necessary economic reforms and ensuring their effective implementation.

This may involve measures to improve fiscal discipline, enhance tax collection, streamline regulations, attract foreign investment and promote job creation, he added.

Meher Kashif Younis said the government must listen to the concerns and perspectives of all stakeholders and incorporate their feedback into the policymaking process.

By promoting an environment of inclusivity and transparency, the government can build trust and confidence among the public and key decision-makers, he concluded.

# Pak-US celebrates Pakistan Startup Cup



## F.P. Report

KARACHI: TIE Islamabad and the US Embassy celebrate the 10-year milestone of the Pakistan Startup Cup, Pakistan's biggest startup competition with a capstone event. The event marked a decade of US and Pakistan partnership fostering innovation, growth, and success in the entrepreneurial landscape of Pakistan. The first ever all inclusive event for persons with disabilities, served as a pivotal moment, bringing together representatives from the government, corporate sector, investors, Entrepreneur Support Organizations (ESOs), startups and winners of the Pakistan Startup Cup, and diverse stakeholders in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The event was attended by [Mr. Naem Zamindar, Former Minister of State & Chairman Board of

Investments as the Chief Guest along with Deputy Counselor for Public Affairs Valerie O'Brien of US Embassy, President TIE Islamabad Mr. Saqib Ahmed, along with key figures in the entrepreneurial community.

"We are thrilled to mark this significant milestone with the capstone event, bringing together the brightest minds and key players in Pakistan's startup ecosystem," said Naem Zamindar. "This event is not just a celebration but a reflection of the incredible journey, impact, and success stories that have emerged over the past 10 years."

The capstone event featured a diverse range of activities, including an Investor's Roundtable, success stories by top startups, interactive discussions, and networking opportunities. The day also included the screening of a short docu-

mentary capturing the essence of the Pakistan Startup Cup's 10-year journey.

Valerie O'Brien said "The US Mission in Pakistan is proud of our role supporting a vibrant ecosystem of entrepreneurship in Pakistan. We are committed to empowering young people to dream big, take risks, and become the job creators and change-makers that Pakistan needs."

The event hosted a distinguished lineup of speakers, including international experts and industry leaders, making it a must-attend for anyone passionate about entrepreneurship and innovation in Pakistan. With an emphasis on international collaboration, the capstone event aimed to strengthen cross-border partnerships, showcase global startup networks, and highlight the achievements of Pakistani startups on the global stage.

# Business world expects to witness era of 'Pakistan Speed': PBF

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) on Sunday congratulated Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on his election as the 24th Prime Minister of Pakistan and hoped that the business world would now witness a new era of 'Pakistan Speed'.

PBF President Khawaja Mehboob ur Rehman, Vice Presidents Ahmad Jawad and Jahan Ara Wattoo, and Provincial Chairmen Naseer Malik, Daroo Khan Achakzai, Malik Suhail Talat, Atif Ikram Sheikh, Ashfaq Paracha and Shabnum Zafar urged the newly-elected prime minister to provide a competitive environment to the business community.

The PBF President, in a statement, called for framing a 20-year economic vision for the country, including the signing of a 'charter of the economy' by all political parties and a roadmap for economic

development. He suggested that the vision should be reviewed after five years and no government should be allowed to change it on its own. The PBF leader said that due to inconsistency in policies and frequent changes in them, a large number of SROs were being issued and that process should be stopped.

At the moment, he said, "our exports are about US\$ 30 billion and half of it is from the textile sector".

PBF Vice President Chaudhry Ahmad Jawad said after the elections all the political parties must show maturity and join hands with the government for the country and its people. Unity was required as Pakistan was passing through economic turbulence.

He claimed that constant rise in the electricity tariff was hurting the businesses and industry at large. The Discos' losses stood at Rs 77 billion during July-

December 2023-24 as compared to Rs 62 billion in the same period of 2022-23, showing addition of Rs 15 billion in total circular debt stock. The total amount of losses, inefficiency were Rs 160 billion during FY 2022-23.

Jawad called for 'out-of-box thinking' to deal with the economic crisis. He urged approximately 43 percent reduction in power tariff, as, otherwise, many industries might not survive after losing export markets because of high input costs.

PBF Chairman South Punjab Malik Suhail Talat urged the incoming government to come up with the right set of policies to keep the industrial wheel in motion, including revival of cotton crop, as a large chunk of the country's industries would eventually fall victim to high input cost and close down.

"We also demand that the power sector circular debt

issue should be resolved holistically without escalating electricity cost, as its size has more than doubled during the last three and a half years," he added. PBF KP Chairman Ashfaq Paracha said corporate tax reforms were essential to spur Pakistan's economic potential and innovation, thus improving living standard of the people. At present, corporate tax reforms were imperative for economic growth and sustainability in Pakistan, he said and asserted that the current tax structure was burdened with complexities coupled with high tax rates and loopholes that deterred investment, stifles innovation and hinders jobs creation.

## PFC to take part in 4- day Intel Hong Kong expo

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) will take part in a four-day international Hong Kong expo starting from April 27 to explore business opportunities and find new global markets. The PFC Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq announced this during a meeting with a delegation of furniture manufacturers and exporters led by Muhammad Araib here on Sunday. He said, this fair attracts thousands of exhibitors, investors, importers, exporters and buyers from all over the world to showcase their products. "PFC will exhibit quality products to capture their share in international market, as it is an excellent opportunity to showcase Pak products and develop business deals with international buyers," he said and added that this expo also offers professional buyers a sourcing platform with wide variety of products ranging from basics to the most creative and qualitative.

# SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry ex-president felicitates PM

LAHORE (APP): SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry former President Iftikhar Ali Malik here Sunday felicitated Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on his election as Prime Minister for the second time and said that his victory is a proof of people's confidence in his leadership and clear vision for the country's future.

He said, "I extend my best wishes for Shehbaz

Sharif and pray for his all success in this task of premiership."

Malik said, "the challenges facing Pakistan particularly in the economic sphere, are indeed formidable." He was confident that with his vast experience, dedication, and commitment to serving the people, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif would navigate through these turbulent situations. "Shehbaz Sharif's

track record of effective governance and determination in the face of adversity inspires hope and optimism among the all strata of society," he remarked, asserting that his results-oriented approach and prudent economic policies would be instrumental in steering the country out of the prevailing economic quagmire.

Shehbaz Sharif's ability to bring all stakeholders to the table and take them into

confidence is commendable and would be crucial in formulating strategies that cater to the needs of every segment of society, he added.

SAARC Chamber's former president Iftikhar Ali Malik urged the Prime Minister to prioritize inclusivity and fairness, ensuring that no one is left behind in the journey towards prosperity. "By fostering an environment of

collaboration and cooperation, we can build a resilient economy on sound footings and withstands any future challenges that may arise," Malik said.

He expressed the confidence in the leadership of Shehbaz Sharif and his vision for a better tomorrow. He prayed Allah may his tenure as Prime Minister be marked by progress, prosperity, and peace for all.

# Anjum Nisar demands upcoming govt to prioritize economic recovery

## F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has asked the upcoming government to give priority to the economic recovery, emphasizing the necessity of joint efforts to tackle Pakistan's economic difficulties.

Addressing a meeting held here today, the Businessmen Panel (BMP) Chairman and the FPCCI former president Mian Anjum Nisar expressed confidence in the country's ability to overcome these challenges and highlighted the new government should fulfill the commitment to eradicating poverty and unemployment.

The upcoming government should remain steadfast in its commitment to

guide Pakistan through its current economic and political challenges, with a focus on unity, effective governance, and public welfare.

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

tives. Circular debt, which is the accumulation of unpaid invoices and pending payments among power generation firms, distribution companies, and the government, is a problem in Pakistan's energy sector. This problem has a significant negative impact on the power sector's finances and hinders its ability to meet the rising energy demand.

Other troubling issues also exist, posing obstacles to our economy's expansion. Pakistan is ranked 173rd internationally for tax payments.

According to a World Bank analysis, Pakistani businesspeople pay 47 taxes yearly, compared to those of Hong Kong, the United Arab Emirates, Ireland, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and India, which are the countries with whom Pakistan must compete.

A single business that conducts business in four different Pakistani provinces annually disburses five corporate income taxes, twelve employer-paid pension contributions, twelve Social Security payments, one property tax, one professional tax, one vehicle tax, one stamp duty payment, one fuel tax payment, and twelve payments of goods and sales tax.

An exporter needs 75 hours to complete border compliance and document compliance. Additionally, Pakistan dropped 23 spots on the indicator for corporate loan availability.

The nation was ranked 105th this year as opposed to 82nd last year. There wasn't much money left to fund the company's expansion because of the government's expanding budget financing requirements.

Pakistan's Human Development Index as of 2022 is 0.544, placing it 161st out of 192 nations. The HDI of Pakistan is among the lowest in Asia, right below Yemen and Afghanistan.

The country dropped one spot, moving to positions 142 and 170 on the indices for registering businesses and properties, respectively. There are 12 different treatments, and it takes roughly 18 days to finish them all.

Similarly to that, it took many days to register a property. The nation climbed nine spots in the rating for handling building permits, landing at position 141. It takes an investor 252 days to complete 15 different types of procedures to obtain a building permit.

The BMP chairman said

that the new government that comes into office will have its work sharply cut out as far as the economic challenges are concerned.

Coming at the back of fast-unfolding climate change crisis and recent COVID pandemic that pushed millions into poverty with little fiscal capacity of government to provide anywhere near close to what was needed in stimulus spending.

Then there is acute debt distress, and seriously high inflation at the back of global aggregate supply shock, and accentuated by a world of rising conflicts, mainly in Ukraine, and the Middle East.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that even though Pakistan's economic crisis in 2022-2023 is a recurring factor in the country's political unrest, it has a history of

ignoring the nation's true issues, which include poor governance, a broken judicial system, outdated laws, complicated tax system, lack of transparency, duplication in the government system, ineffective bureaucracy, improper use of our human, natural and water resources, lack of efficient local government, inadequate/unreliable data for country's planning, and the consistent flaws in policies in execution by the government departments.

Pakistan's GDP growth rate has always remained below its potential despite efforts to boost economic growth.

The development of important sectors and investment prospects was hampered by inadequate revenue collection, structural problems, and governance issues.

Since it has been causing serious governance and economic issues for years, the cost of goods, food, petrol, and other necessities has increased, and inflation has almost reached 45 percent, which is not bearable for the common man.

On the other hand, there has been an increase in dissatisfaction among the public that no state institution is performing well and to save them from the haughtiness and bad administration pervasive in the system.

The only way for this to go from a failure to a success story, as in other countries, is if the federal and provincial governments defy them and pursue fundamental changes in governance, fairness, openness, accountability, and the consistent economic policies minimum for 15 years.





In brief

Paris 2024 hockey Olympic tournaments

ISLAMABAD (APP): The International Hockey Federation (FIH) has announced the match schedules of the Paris 2024 hockey Olympic tournaments – women and men to be unveiled on March 6 at the Olympic House in Lausanne. It would be revealed by IOC President Thomas Bach and FIH President Tayyab Ikram, said a press release issued here on Sunday. The hockey tournaments of the XXXIII Olympiad would be played in the historical venue of the Yves-du-Manoir Stadium – an Olympic Games arena in 1924! – in Colombes, near Paris. As many as 12 men’s and as many women’s national teams would compete to clinch the highly coveted Olympic medals. FIH President Tayyab Ikram said, “On behalf of FIH and in my personal name, I’d like to express my sincerest gratitude to President Bach for his attendance at this really important event in the build-up to Paris 2024. As an Olympic sport since 1908 and an active member of the Olympic movement, we’re honoured and proud that the IOC President will be giving us some of his precious time. These Olympic Games are taking place during our Centennial year, which makes it even more special for the global hockey community. We’re looking forward to a fantastic event in Paris in a few months’ time!” With an FIH Hockey Pro League workshop taking place in Lausanne on March 6 and 7, most of the National Associations participating in the Paris 2024 Olympics would attend the unveiling ceremony.

Katie reaches WTA 500 final

LOS ANGELES (Agencies): Britain’s Katie Boulter reached her first WTA 500 final by beating American Emma Navarro in straight sets at the San Diego Open. Boulter, 27, won 6-3 6-1 in 74 minutes to reach Sunday’s final and will face Ukraine’s Marta Kostyuk, who got past American Jessica Pegula 7-6 (7-4) 6-1. The British number one and world number 49 dominated on her serve, winning more than 87% of first-serve points. She had just two break points against her serve, saving both. Boulter also had to deal with a rain delay before she could overcome the third seed, the world number 26. “Today was one of those matches where everything just clicks,” she said. “I came on the court and started the first few games and I could feel the power that she had and the way she works and manoeuvres the ball. I knew I had to come up with something better.” WTA 500 events are so-called as they offer 500 ranking points to the winner.

Bangladesh, Sri Lanka ready

SYLHET (Agencies): Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto said Sunday he wanted his team to use the three-match Twenty20 series against Sri Lanka to perfect the format ahead of the World Cup in June. The series, which opens Monday in Sylhet, marks the start of Sri Lanka’s month-long tour of Bangladesh, which also includes three one-day internationals and two Tests. Najmul said it was critical to “play as a team”, noting that big wins last year were because “everyone contributed”. Bangladesh have never defeated Sri Lanka in a Twenty20 series. Sri Lanka coach Chris Silverwood said he was expecting a “very competitive series between two good sides”.

## Usman-inspired Sultans edge Kings to reach PSL 9 Playoffs

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Multan Sultans have become the first team to qualify for the playoffs of HBL PSL 9 after they defeated Karachi Kings at National Bank Stadium, Karachi on Sunday night. After scoring 189-3 in the first innings, Multan restricted Karachi to 169-7 to win the game by 20 runs.

Karachi Kings’ right-arm fast bowler Blessing Muzarabani drew first blood in only the second over as Reeza Hendricks (13, 8b, 3x4s) holed one straight to Mir Hamza at deep third, as Sultans chose to bat first after winning the toss.

Mohammad Rizwan and Usman Khan stitched a mammoth second-wicket partnership, yielding an impressive 148 runs, to take Multan to a comfortable position after the earlier setback.

After joining Rizwan at the crease in the second over, Usman took on Muzarabani and Mohammad Nawaz in the powerplay to help the side breach the 50-run mark in six overs.

In the last five overs of the innings, Multan added 51 runs to the total, while in the 15th over they racked up 20 runs on the back of two sixes and a boundary. In the meanwhile, Rizwan brought up his 63rd T20 half-century after hitting two boundaries in the over.

On the first ball of the 18th over, Muzarabani

dismissed Rizwan (58, 44b, 5x4s), bringing the game-changing partnership to an end.

The next batter in, Iftikhar Ahmed, could only manage a-run-a-ball four before he was caught by Muhammad Irfan Khan off Hasan Ali’s bowling in the penultimate over.

In the last over, Usman brought up his second HBL PSL career century with a maximum, helping Multan finish with a good total. The right-arm batter smashed an unbeaten 106 on 59 deliveries, including an impressive tally of 10 boundaries and five maximums. For his knock, Usman was also adjudged player of the match.

Hasan had one wicket while Muzarabani had two to his name.

In return, Karachi Kings’ opening batter Tim Seifert (1, 4b) was run out in the second over of the innings while chasing a target of 190.

James Vince, batting at number three, made just seven off four before he edged one to the wicketkeeper off Chris Jordan, who was on his debut for Multan Sultans. At the end of the powerplay, Karachi stood at 53-2.

Khushdil Shah and Usama Mir bowled in tandem following the field restrictionsto break the 47-run third-wicket partnership between Shan Masood and Shoaib Malik. The former fell to

Usama on the final ball of the ninth over after scoring 36 on 29, including five boundaries. In the 12th over, Shoaib (38, 28b, 5x4s) holed one to Jordan at long-on off Khushdil’s bowling.

In the following over, Leus du Plooy (12, 11b) was caught at cover to award Usama his second wicket of the day. Nawaz then joined Irfan in the middle with the Kings requiring 91 off the last seven overs. Irfan took on Faisal Akram in the 14th over, hitting two boundaries and a six. David Willey broke the 25-run stand between Nawaz and Irfan as the latter was caught behind on 23 off 19, including two fours and a six.

Hasan joined Nawaz (27 not out, 17b, 3x4s, 1x6) on the crease to produce a partnership of 41 runs, which was broken in the last over by Mohammad Ali as Hasan (17, 8b, 1x4, 1x6) was caught by Tayyab Tahir, while the duo failed to keep up with the asking rate.

Karachi could only manage 169-7 in the allotted 20 overs, losing the game by 20 overs.

Usama picked up two wickets, while Ali, Khushdil, Willey and Jordan removed a batter each.

Scores in brief:

Multan Sultans beat Karachi Kings by 20 runs Multan Sultans 189-3, 20 overs (Usman Khan 106 not out, Mohammad Rizwan 58;



Blessing Muzarabani 2-32)

Karachi Kings 169-7, 20 overs (Shoaib Malik 38, Shan Masood 36, Mohammad Nawaz 27 not out; Usama Mir 2-29)

Player of the match – Usman Khan (Multan Sultans)

## Babar Azam excellent in batting like Lara & Tendulkar: Wasim

LAHORE (INP): Cricket legend Wasim Akram recently commended Peshawar Zalmi captain Babar Azam, hailing him as one of the world’s premier batsmen. Speaking in a recent interview on a local sports channel, Akram fondly referred to as the “Sultan of Swing,” shared insights into his bowling strategy when facing Azam on the field.

Responding to a fan’s inquiry, Akram lauded Azam’s exceptional talent and placed him among the top three batsmen globally.

He specifically noted Azam’s proficiency in playing “good shorts,” drawing comparisons to cricketing icons Brian Lara and Sachin Tendulkar.

“He’s not a hitter who throws his wicket away on a bad ball,” Akram explained. “Like Lara and Tendulkar, he can play good shorts even on good deliveries.” Akram acknowledged the challenge such batsmen pose to bowlers, offering limited opportunities for dismissals.

However, Akram stressed the importance of seizing the initiative early on. “Early overs are crucial to assess their stance,” he remarked. “Are they settled or struggling? This understanding can lead to breakthroughs, especially on pitches favoring bowlers.”

It’s noteworthy that Azam is currently topping the run-scoring charts in the ongoing Pakistan Super League (PSL) season 9, accumulating an impressive 330 runs in the initial five matches, including a stellar century (111 runs) against Islamabad United.

### PCB announces ticket refund policy

LAHORE (INP): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has announced a crucial update regarding ticket refunds for the washed-out matches in the Pakistan Super League (PSL). According to the statement issued by PCB, cricket enthusiasts who purchased tickets for the rain-affected matches in Rawalpindi can apply for refunds at various branch centers until March 12.

To avail the refund, fans must present their original ID cards used for purchasing the tickets. Online ticket buyers will have their refunds credited directly to their booking bank accounts. However, tickets bought through corporate channels will only be refunded to the respective organizations, with individual refund requests not being entertained.

The ticket refund policy, outlined in Clause 2.1, ensures full reimbursement if a match is canceled before the toss due to any reason, including inclement weather. Refunds, as per Clause 3.3, will be processed within 10 business days upon receipt of a valid request.

Notably, the recent cancellation of the matches between Lahore Qalandars and Peshawar Zalmi, as well as Quetta Gladiators and Islamabad United, due to rain resulted in each team being awarded one point each.

### Clarke gears up for commentary stint in PSL 9

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Former Australia captain Michael Clarke is all set to travel to Pakistan to brace the ongoing Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9 with his commentary skills.

Taking to Instagram, Clarke shared a picture of his luggage with the caption, that read: “It’s that time, [The PSL]”.

Clarke is all set to make his PSL debut behind the mic as he joins a star-studded commentary panel.

The 42-year-old Clarke has been an active broadcaster after hanging up his boots as a player.

Besides Michael Clarke, PSL 9 commentary panel features foreign commentators like the dynamic Ian Bishop, known for his insightful and gripping commentary, along with Danny Morrison, Simon Doull, Pommie Mbangwa, Mark Butcher, Dominic Cork and Mike Haysman.

The Pakistani commentators also make up an exciting lineup with Ramiz Raja, Waqar Younis, Bazid Khan, and Amir Sohail joining Urooj Mumtaz, Sana Mir and Marina Iqbal.

Tariq Saeed and Ali Younis will call the action in Urdu. Erin Holland and Zainab Abbas will be the presenters during the course of PSL 9.

For the unversed, the ongoing ninth edition of the PSL has entered the second leg with Rawalpindi and Karachi, set to host the remaining matches.

After the conclusion of 18 matches, 2021 champions Multan Sultans sit at the summit of the standings with 10 points in six matches, closely followed by 2019 champions Quetta Gladiators, second with nine points in as many matches.

## Engro National Under-20 Volleyball Championship enters final stage

PESHAWAR (APP): Teams from Pakistan WAPDA, Pakistan Air Force, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab have qualified for the semi-finals.

In the Engro National Under-20 Junior Volleyball Championship, Pakistan WAPDA, Pakistan Air Force, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Green and Punjab Green have qualified for the semi-finals

after recording victories against their respective rivals here at PSB Coaching Center.

In the round matches on Sunday, Pakistan Wapda defeated Sindh by 3-0, the score was 25-12, 25-7 and 25-12. In the second match, Punjab White defeated Balochistan by 3-0, the score was 25-17, 25-12 and 25-17.

Similarly, in the third match, Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa Green defeated Azad Jammu Kashmir by 3-0 to and reached the semi-finals.

Organizing Secretary and Secretary KP Khalid Waqar Chamkani, Secretary Punjab MB Javed, Secretary Sindh Shahid Masood, Secretary AJK Sardar Farooq and other officials were present on the occasion.

The Championship will continue till March 5.

## Lyon spins Australia to victory over New Zealand in first Test

WELLINGTON (AFP): Nathan Lyon spun Australia to a 172-run win over New Zealand in the first Test on Sunday, taking six wickets as the hosts collapsed to 196 all out.

The home side crumbled on the fourth morning in Wellington, losing their last seven wickets for 70 runs, with four of them falling to off-spinner Lyon. He finished with innings figures of 6-65 off 27 overs, giving him 10-108 for the match.

The 36-year-old capitalised on spin-friendly Basin Reserve conditions and some meek batting from New Zealand, who began the day on 111-3 and needing 258 more runs to secure an unlikely victory.

The capitulation began in the seventh over of the day when Lyon claimed the key wicket of Rachin Ravindra for 59.

Ravindra had only added three to his overnight score when he failed to keep a cut shot



down and was caught by Cameron Green at point.

Tom Blundell was caught in close by Travis Head without scoring in the same over and Glenn Phillips was trapped leg before by Lyon for one soon afterwards, to expose the tail.

Scott Kugegeleijn struck 26 off 28 balls before he failed to control a short ball from Green to be caught by wicketkeeper Alex Carey and Matt Henry fell for 14, caught at slip by Steve Smith off Josh Hazlewood. Tim Southee became

Lyon’s sixth victim before Daryl Mitchell was the last wicket to fall, for 38, caught and bowled by Hazlewood. Green was named man of the match for his career-high unbeaten 174 in the first innings.

No one else made three figures in a challenging Test for batsmen as Green rescued Australia from 89-4, having been put into bat, to reach 383 and set up a 204-run first-innings lead. The second and final Test starts in the Christchurch on Friday.

## Brazil thrash Argentina to reach Women’s Gold Cup semis



LOS ANGELES (AFP): Bia Zaneratto scored twice as Brazil thrashed Argentina 5-1 on Saturday to move into the semi-finals of the CONCACAF Women’s Gold Cup while Olympic champions Canada scraped past Costa Rica with a 1-0 win after extra-time.

The Brazilians had simply too much firepower for Argentina as they set-up a semi-final clash with the winner of Sunday’s game between Mexico and Paraguay. Argentina had the first opening when Brazil keeper Luciana was caught off her line but Dalila Ippoli’s attempted chip from distance fell harmlessly wide.

The Brazilians got ahead in the 19th minute when Yaya rose to angle in a superb header from a Zaneratto cross from the left. Yasmim Ribiero then doubled the lead in the 36th minute when a clearance fell to her on the edge of the box and her low drive took a slight deflection as it whistled into the corner.

There was no change to the flow of the game after the break -- the Argentine defence was at sea and Brazil took full advantage with Zaneratto poking home from the center of the box. A header from Gabi Nunes on a Gabi Portilho cross from the right made it 4-0 and put the outcome beyond any doubt.

Argentina pulled a goal back in the 82nd when a ball over the top found Celeste Dos Santos who chipped the advancing Luciana.

But there was still time for Brazil to add one more when the outstanding Zaneratto fired home a left foot diagonal shot to complete the rout. Brazil captain Rafaella praised the way the team approached the game. “I think we started the game on the right foot and then we just went on from there,” she said. “It’s always hard to play against Argentina. We have a lot of history but I think in all of these games, we have been winning and we have been proving that we’re the best team in South America.”

The free-scoring Brazilians have had nine different players find the target so far in the competition, which Rafaella said was a sign of their strength in depth. “I think everybody’s pushing hard and it doesn’t matter who is playing at the top,” she said. “Everybody understands and we really embrace the way we’re going to play and we’re lucky we have a lot of good players.”

Canada will face the winner of Sunday’s quarter-final match between the United States and Colombia after fighting their way past stubborn Costa Rica. Costa Rica finished third in their group and won a draw of lots to make it into the last eight, but they proved to be a tough opponent for Bev Priestman’s team. The deciding goal came from substitute Evelynne Vienes, who glanced home a header from a Jesse Fleming free kick. Canada, which created numerous chances but lacked the clinical touch in front of goal, had goalkeeper Kaileen Sheridan to thank for an excellent save deep into stoppage time in regulation.



he said. “And I hated that had to happen in a defeat especially versus a team that plays extremely well.

“We played some good basketball but weren’t able to close it out, so [it’s] bittersweet, but I enjoyed every moment on the floor.” James became the NBA’s all-time leading scorer in February 2023, passing Kareem Abdul-Jabbar’s long-standing record of 38,387 points.

The four-time NBA champion and four-time Most Valuable Player is in his 21st campaign and is the league’s oldest active player. James said he did not know if another NBA

player could reach the 40,000-point milestone.

“You have to play the game quite a while and have some good luck with injuries and things of that nature,” he said.

“You have to take care of your body. You have to be present on the floor and then you have to be productive as well.” Lakers coach Darvin Ham was among those to pay tribute to James. “Just happy for him. It was a hell of an accomplishment,” he said.

“Wish we could have got the win to cap it off. But my hat’s off to him. Amazing, amazing run that continues to this day.”

## LaFond claims world indoor triple jump gold

GLASGOW (AFP): Dominican Thea LaFond won the women’s triple jump at the world indoors championships in Glasgow on Sunday, the third and final day of competition.

LaFond managed a best of 15.01 metres in her second effort, the sole competitor to go over the 15m mark. She then passed on her four remaining chances to jump as the field failed to come close to her leading mark.

Cuban Leyanis Perez Hernandez took silver with a best of 14.90m, with Spain’s Ana Peleteiro-Compagore claiming bronze (14.75m). LaFond said the victory seemed “absolutely surreal”.

“I’m the only athlete here from my country and I have the gold medal. We’re just a little island with a population of 70,000 people, so this one is for my people, all of my people,” she said.

The second gold of the morning session went the way of New Zealand as







## In brief

### Jam Kamal Khan takes oath

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Speaker of the National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Sunday administered the oath to Jamal Kamal Khan, the newly elected member of the National Assembly. Jam Kamal Khan was elected as a member of the National Assembly from NA-257.

### World Wildlife Day being observed

ISLAMABAD (APP): The World Wildlife Day, is being observed across the world including Pakistan on Sunday. Its a global event that aims to raise awareness about the importance of wildlife conservation and the need to protect endangered species. The theme for the day is "Connecting People and Planet: Exploring Digital Innovation in Wildlife Conservation." The theme highlights the critical role that digital innovation plays in wildlife conservation efforts. The World Wildlife Day 2024 (WWD2024) poster was created by CHENG Hui Xin, a talented digital design student from Penang, Malaysia. World Wildlife Day is significant because it provides an opportunity for people around the world to come together and celebrate the beauty and diversity of our planet's wildlife. It also serves as a reminder of the urgent need to take action to protect endangered species and their habitats. By raising awareness about the threats facing wildlife, World Wildlife Day helps to mobilize support for conservation efforts and promote sustainable practices that can help preserve our planet's biodiversity for future generations.

### IFA cracks down on unhygienic food points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) recently conducted inspections at various food points across the city, including Shaheen Market, Rawat Bus Stand, and Defence Housing Authority to ensure the public health and safety. Talking to APP, Director Operations of Food Authority, Dr Tahira Siddique, said that during the inspections, one food point was sealed due to unhygienic conditions, while heavy fines of Rs 110,000 were imposed on three other outlets. Additionally, notices were also served to eight food points for various violations. In a significant move, authorities confiscated 360 packets of gutka, a heavy quantity of adulterated spices, expired drinks, fruits, and vegetables. The Director of Operations of the Food Authority issued a stern warning, emphasizing that strict action would be continued against the violators.

### Shariah course for judges conclude

ISLAMABAD (APP): The four-month 65th regular Shariah course for the judges, Qazis, attorneys, law officers and prosecutors, organized by the Shariah Academy of the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI), concluded with a closing ceremony at the Faisal Masjid. As many as 26 participants from various areas and departments across the country attended the course. They covered important topics such as contemporary legal issues, international labor law, and medical issues related to Islamic law. They were also given assignments of book reviews and term papers. The participants visited various courts and relevant ministries across Pakistan. In addition, the participants visited Turkey and Jordan to exchange experiences and further broaden the exposure by visiting the ministries of justice and courts in both the countries.



ISLAMABAD: A view of a blossoming and flourishing flowers on greenbelt at H-8 in the Federal Capital.

### Matric annual exam

## RBISE takes action against 'Boti Mafia'

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (RBISE), on the directives of Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, is taking strict action under the law against 'Boti Mafia.'

RBISE had finalized foolproof arrangements for the first annual examination Matriculation 2024 which started on Friday in Rawalpindi division, said a RBISE spokesman.

He informed that the board on the directives of Commissioner Rawalpindi Division had finalized the best possible arrangements to make the exams foolproof and transparent in all respects and all available resources were being utilized to eliminate cheating and copy mafia.

He said that lists of the examination staff were sent to the Special Branch and Intelligence Bureau for checking the records of all the staff including Resident and Distributor Inspectors,

Superintendents, Deputy Superintendents, and Invigilators. Chairman RBISE, Muhammad Adnan Khan, and Controllor of Examinations Prof. Sajid Mehmood Farooqi had directed the authorities that strict action should be taken against those using unfair means and found cheating in the exams.

He further said that instructions were issued by the Commissioner to the Deputy Commissioners, A d d i t i o n a l Commissioners and Assistant Commissioners of all the districts that the monitoring of all the examination centers should be done daily.

The officers were also directed to conduct the monitoring of the examination center strictly and comprehensively so that the examination could be completed smoothly.

The RBISE spokesman said that the Chairman Board and Controllor of

Examinations issued special instructions to the focal persons and members of six vigilance committees regarding Standard Operating Procedures issued by the board.

The chairman squad, special squad, mobile inspectors, and vigilance committees were directed to inspect the examination centers daily and send the reports to the board office. Required steps would be taken and the complaints would be addressed immediately, he added.

A central control room had been established in the board office while separate control rooms had also been established in the Chief Executive Office at the district level, he informed. He said that the Chairman and the Controllor had asked all the examination staff to perform their duties with utmost honesty so that the foolproof examination could be conducted in a peaceful environment.

### IESCO imposes fines of 539.23m on people involved in power theft

ISLAMABAD (APP): During the ongoing anti-power theft campaign, the Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) has imposed fines totaling 539.23 million against people involved in power theft.

Spearheaded by IESCO Chief Dr. Muhammad Amjad Khan, the campaign, initiated on September 7, 2023, has backing from both the government and the Ministry of Energy. With the unwavering support of governmental bodies, provincial administrations, and law enforcement agencies, detection teams deployed by IESCO have made notable strides in curbing electricity pilferage across its operational circles.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Standing along a busy road and pondering on messy traffic sparks an immediate reaction to any sensible Pakistani's mind that are we a responsible nation?

With rare manifestations of respect for other's rights, we are most often in a senseless hurry or looking for a short cut creating an imagination not of a sensible nation but a crowd running towards an unknown destination. Teachings of our noble religion, philosophy of Quaid-i-Azam for emerging as a responsible nation and respecting the laws of our land, all seem missing from our lives.

Except for a few, especially the elderly people who grew up in a peculiar environment of respecting elders and honoring laws, the rest take pride in trampling down ethical values. Different laws, rules, and regulations formulated for a peaceful and respectful co-existence fell like the most ridiculed entity as seen at roads, banks, hospitals, government offices, and other walks of life, even the Parliament. But still, we are surviving as a resilient nation though plagued by menaces like terrorism, enmities, intolerance, nepotism, lies, short measuring, adulteration, and much more evils. "It really pains when I see our conduct today. Our respect for religious norms, teachers and parents, and above all the law of land - all is lost somewhere," said a retired professor Abdul Shakoor.

"We are impatient, cannot wait for our turn in a line. We are always in hurry zig-zagging on roads not caring for ourselves and others. We are plagued with social menaces like superiority and privileges," he said.

"Our culture and norms faded away gradually with the replacement of different other cultures," Prof Shakoor stated. "I do not argue to live in isolation but globalism cannot mean that we do away with our noble

## Know about Shehbaz Sharif - The twice-elected Prime Minister of Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif was elected on Sunday as the Prime Minister of Pakistan by securing 201 votes in the National Assembly defeating Omar Ayub Khan of Sunni Ittehad Council who received 92 votes.

Born on September 23, 1951, he is now the twice-elected Prime Minister of Pakistan and thrice-elected Chief Minister of Punjab. He is the younger brother of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Quaid Nawaz Sharif, the thrice-elected premier of the country.

Shehbaz Sharif's first stint of the premiership spanned from April 11, 2022 to August 14, 2023. He was elected by the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) by ousting Imran Khan through a vote of no confidence in the National Assembly.

Coming from a renowned business family, Shehbaz Sharif graduated from Government College, Lahore and served as President of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry in 1985 before entering the politics.

He held positions as a Member of the Punjab Assembly from 1988 to 1990 and a Member of the National Assembly from 1990 to 1993. He later served as Leader of the Opposition in the Punjab Assembly from 1993 to 1996. In 1997, he was elected Chief Minister of Punjab and served till 1999 when as a result of coup, his government, along with the federal government, was toppled.

Shehbaz Sharif played a leading role in the restoration of democracy in the country and was elected unopposed as Member of Punjab Assembly for the fourth time in 2008, and served as Punjab chief minister for the second time from June 2008 to March 2013. After getting elected on three provincial assembly seats and on one National Assembly seat in 2013 general elections, Shehbaz was elected as Punjab Chief Minister for the third time.

Shehbaz Sharif's dynamic leadership and efficient administration earned him the title of "Shehbaz Speed" from China.

Under his leadership, Pakistan swiftly tackled its energy crisis, completing the Sahiwal Coal Power Plant in a record 22 months and implementing three RLNG-power projects in Punjab.

He spearheaded the establishment of the Metro Bus System, providing state-of-the-art traveling facilities in Lahore, Multan, and Rawalpindi/Islamabad. The transformative projects like the Lahore Orange Line Metro Train was also among his government's famed initiatives that revolutionized transportation.

His administration focused on upgrading schools, merit-based hiring of educators, and establishing the Punjab Educational Endowment Fund, supporting over 350,000 deserving students. To his credit, the innovative programs like the Daanish Schools in South Punjab and the laptop scheme are also included.

Besides launching Zeevar-e-Taleem program featuring the provision of stipend to over half a million girls of South Punjab, Shehbaz Sharif also led an education program for the children of brick kiln workers that resulted in the enrolment of about 100,000 out-of-school children back to schools. Shehbaz Sharif's government made significant reforms in the health sector, including the division of health departments into specialized healthcare and primary/secondary healthcare, and establishment of new hospitals, medical universities, and innovative institutions like the Pakistan Kidney and Liver Institute and Research Center, as well as the country's first forensic laboratory.

During the 2011 dengue outbreak in Punjab, Shehbaz Sharif demonstrated effective leadership by collaborating with Sri Lankan health authorities to develop a comprehensive anti-dengue policy which led to control the virus.

Under Shehbaz Sharif's leadership, groundbreaking initiatives like the establishment of the Information Technology University and the Punjab Land Records Management and Information System revolutionized governance in the province.

He also championed pro-women reforms during his tenure, ensuring enhanced job quotas, inheritance rights, and comprehensive anti-harassment laws in Punjab. Since 2018 till becoming the premier in 2022, he has served as the leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly, advocating for democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

## Living beyond moral, ethical values

customs and traditions."

In our early age, he said, the educational institutions were meant for both 'teaching and training.' "Right from the laps of our mothers to mosque and schools, we had to be under strict vigil of our parents and teachers." But, he said, the changes in the educational environment and the curriculum in the name of making it internationally compatible, affected our traditions. "As the race for money became fierce, our noble culture is lost in its dust somewhere."

As ethical norms have a trickle-down effect right from reformists, political elite, parents, preachers, and teachers – it seems like that they all have to revisit their conduct.

It is a common question in the mind of every sensible and responsible Pakistani – are we preparing a good nation?

Analyzing ourselves personally as well as in view of international ranking of globally recognized organizations, we continue to suffer deterioration on indexes of nobility, purity, honesty, fairness, truthfulness, righteousness and so on. "In our daily life and dealing with one another, it seems like that we have stopped hating social evils and opted most them as our life style," remarked Allama Abdul Hafeez. "We are gradually detracting from our religious teachings. Instead of making our Holy Prophet a symbol of life for ourselves, we have indulged in variety of sins."

"I remember my childhood when our fathers used to have complete control on family affairs and mothers commonly used to help them in maintaining discipline," he stated. "But, the situation changed over the time due to obliviousness of our male and female folk to their rights and duties to themselves, their kids and the society." Allama Hafeez, however was confident that still our religion is a panacea to all these evils. "Even today our religious teachings are not

a bygone dogma for creating a noble society. But, for this we need good parents, good teachers and good preachers." Seldom sense of responsibility and respect for other's rights, impatience, intolerance, conspiracies, back biting, character assassination and many other social evils permeated to our lives leave the responsible citizens with nothing but a deep regret. "Our professionals have become machines running from pillar to post to earn more and more money and this race leaves them with lesser time for their kids," stated social worker Chaudhry Muhammad Saleem. "When we would compromise discipline for love for our kids, how can we raise responsible nation. Therefore, whether it our own negligence or the influence of exotic cultures, our social fabric is shattering," he added.

Saleem said our mothers keep busy on social media and Tik Tok when they had to be with their children and fathers forced to work in shifts or double jobs to earn living.

"This non-availability of time for children is a serious issue. But, people cannot help it because they had to spend extra time on money making to fight unbearable price hike," he stated. "This situation also calls upon our rulers and policymakers to devise strategies for addressing these challenges." We are also too free as a nation to indulge in others affairs, taking revenge and hatching conspiracies against our relatives, colleagues, and friends. Work shirking and shying away from responsibilities are other menaces plaguing our society. Therefore, it is our collective responsibility to protect our dying noble norms and political leaders, religious scholars, teachers, and above all parents will have to revisit their social conduct and responsibilities to the nation to save it from complete disaster.

### Negahban Rashan Program

## Commissioner visits Industrial State to monitor preparation of ration bags

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Engineer Aamir Khattak on Sunday visited Industrial State to monitor the preparation of the ration bags for Negahban Rashan Ramazan package.

The Commissioner said that under the package, the ration packages would be provided to 378,496 families across the division.

Engr. Aamir Khattak informed that the distribution of Negahban Rashan Ramadan package of the Punjab Government would be started from March 05.

Ramadan ration package would contain 10 kg flour with two kg each, rice, sugar, ghee and gram flour,

he said adding, the Punjab government had taken a significant step towards providing maximum relief to the public amidst rising inflation. For this purpose, the Punjab government had devised a Negahban Rashn program, a Ramazan relief package, he added.

The Commissioner informed that the verification process of 67,628 households in Rawalpindi district, 45,181 in Jhelum, 5,541 in Murree, 74,624 in Attock and 64,654 in Chakwal district had been completed.

The control rooms had also been set up in Deputy Commissioner Offices to monitor the process of dis-

tribution of Negahban Rashan Package, he said and checked the quality and quantity of the essential items included in the ration bags. Earlier chairing a meeting held here in Commissioner Office with the Deputy Commissioners of the five districts, he reviewed all the arrangements for the distribution of the package.

Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi Dr. Hasan Waqar Cheema, Additional Commissioner Syed Nidharat Ali, DG, RDA Saif Anwar Jappa, DG, PHA Ahmed Hasan Ranjha and other relevant officers attended the meeting while

Deputy Commissioners of Attock, Jhelum, Chakwal and Murree participated through video link.

In the next two days, the final list would be prepared, verifying the data of the beneficiaries of the entire division, the Commissioner informed.

He directed the authorities to ensure the quality of the essential items for the ration package which would be given to the deserving families.

He also ordered the DCs to monitor the packaging of the ration and ensure that there should be no compromise in the specified quantity and quality of items in all packages.

## Authorities directed to control prices of fruits, vegetables during Ramadan

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Engr. Amir Khattak has directed the concerned authorities to take all possible steps to control the prices of fruits and vegetables, particularly during Ramadan ul Mubarak.

According to a spokesperson, the Commissioner during a visit to Rawat Vegetable market reviewed the facilities besides inspecting prices of fruits and vegetables. The Commissioner reviewed the administrative affairs of the vegetable and fruit market in detail and talked to the people. He directed the concerned authorities that the vegetable market should further be improved in the light of the public suggestions. The supply of vegetables and fruits should be increased in the market, he ordered. Special discounts should be given to the local farmers, he said adding, the administration should take solid steps to pro-

vide relief to the citizens, particularly during Ramadan ul Mubarak.

Engr. Aamir Khattak said that a special van route from the city to the vegetable market had been started to facilitate the citizens. The administration was trying to provide relief to the three million population of Rawalpindi through the Rawat vegetable and fruit market, he said adding, the market was also promoting business activities at the regional level.

The administration worked hard to set up the Rawat vegetable and fruit market, Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi Hassan Waqar Cheema said. He informed that the administrative officers had been directed to remain present during the bidding process in the market. The administration of the Rawalpindi vegetable and fruit market helped to ensure the supply of affordable and quality essential items at affordable rates, he added.



### 3,000 Afghans returned

KABUL (BNA): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation Affairs reports that an additional 3,000 Afghan citizens have returned to Afghanistan from Iran and Pakistan. 1,477 Afghan immigrants returned from Iran via the Islam Qala border crossing on Saturday. Among these returnees, 140 individuals who required identification and assistance received support from the International Organization for Migration, which included both food and non-food items.

## The Frontier Post

Shabaan 22, 1445 — Monday, March 04, 2024

### 11,000 livestock lost

BALKH (Ariana News): Officials in Balkh announced Sunday that 11,418 livestock have been lost during the snowfall in past few days in the province. Balkh Media Center in a statement said that the livestock were lost in Shulgarh, Chahi, Kishandeh, Chaharbulak, Chimal, Shurtipe, Chaharkint, Alborz, Dehdadi, Marmel and Kaldar districts. The statement noted that an emergency committee is working to save the lives of animals and humans and has delivered food to them.

## ‘UNAMA ineffective over past year’

KABUL (TOLONews): The Islamic Emirate’s spokesperson said that UNAMA’s activities have not been effective over the past year.

Zabiullah Mujahid, the spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate, said that UNAMA’s reports were exaggerated and not based on facts on the ground.

According to Mujahid, UNAMA has the responsibility to help Afghanistan reestablish diplomatic ties.

“They have to be more active, they have to strengthen Afghanistan’s relations with other countries. There is still a vacuum, they have to create trust,” said Mujahid.

Mujahid accused the UN of being affected by major world powers, saying that its decisions about Afghanistan have been doubtful.

“The United Nations decisions about Afghanistan have been doubtful and the organization is under the shadow of major powers of the world. The UN has met the expectation of nations about serving justice,” said the spokesman.

TOLONews was not successful in reaching UNAMA for comments about the statements.

Political analysts have their own view about the coordination of UNAMA and the Afghan govern-

ment.

“UNAMA is trying to melt the Islamic Emirate into the international liberal system, especially in the areas of political, social, economic and cultural areas,” said Aminullah Ehsas, a university lecturer. “UNAMA is sharing all political issues of Afghanistan with the UN and is ensuring Afghanistan’s relations with the world,” said Aziz Maarji, a former Afghan diplomat.

UNAMA’s mandate ends on March 17 this year and the United Nations Security Council is expected to hold a meeting about the issue.

## Afghanistan, Turkmenistan to hold trade forum

KABUL (TOLONews): The acting Minister of Industry and Commerce (MoIC), Nooruddin Azizi, leading a high-level economic and trade delegation to Turkmenistan, said that the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan Business Forum will take place today (Monday) in Ashgabat.

Azizi emphasized that alongside the mentioned conference, an exhibition showcasing Afghan products will also be held in Ashgabat, aiming to enhance the trade relations between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan.

“Turkmenistan is prepared to engage in some beneficial contracts related to Afghan products, particularly in our marble, metal, and other unique Afghan products. We also have some women from the private sector included in the delegation,” Azizi said.

Meanwhile, the Afghanistan Chamber of Industries and Mines stated that the purpose of the exhibition in Ashgabat is to market the country’s products.

“Our request from Turkmenistan and the President of Turkmenistan would be to grant us a subsidy in the export sector, reducing the high customs duties on Afghan goods,” said Shirbaz Kaminzada, head of the Afghanistan Chamber of Industry and Mines.

In addition, fifteen female businesswomen from Afghanistan have traveled to Turkmenistan to take part in the exhibition.

“I hope that at a regional level, with neighboring countries that share borders with Afghanistan, a trade corridor can be established between Afghan women and the regional level,” Fariba Noori, an Afghan businesswoman told TOLONews’ reporter in Ashgabat.

The acting Minister of Industry and Commerce, in meeting with trade officials of Turkmenistan, discussed various issues such as increasing trade between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan, creating special facilities in the transit sector, and addressing banking challenges faced by traders from both countries.

## Islamic Emirate not isolated, says Deputy PM



KABUL (TOLONews): The deputy prime minister for political affairs of the Islamic Emirate said that the current Afghan government is not isolated and is improving in political affairs.

Speaking at a graduation ceremony of religious students in Kabul, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir said that the Islamic Emirate wants positive relations with the whole world.

“The Islamic Emirate is in practical engagement with the world, and it is not in isolation. All Afghans must be sure that we are neither in economic nor political isolation and these areas are getting stronger,”

said Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, the deputy prime minister of political affairs.

Mawlawi Abdul Kabir added that the Islamic Emirate has free economic and trade relations with the regional countries and that the world has no other option but to engage with the caretaker Afghan government.

He said that the Islamic Emirate wants positive relations with all countries including Russia and the US.

“We say to the world that they have no option but to engage with the Islamic Emirate, because there is no one to engage with as a

representative of Afghanistan,” said Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, the deputy prime minister of political affairs.

Meanwhile, the acting minister of higher education said that the Ulema [Islamic scholars] have the responsibility of preserving the Islamic system.

“Your goal should not be to become materialistic; it is a fact that the government needs Ulema [religious scholars]. There is not an administration in the Islamic government which does not need a religious scholar,” said Neda Muhammad Nadim, the acting minister of higher

education.

The acting minister of vice and virtue said that freedom of speech came to existence during Islam and that media should not abuse the freedom. “I say to my dear brothers in the media, that the freedom of speech has been established by Islam. The freedom is for building, not destroying,” said Muhammad Khalid Hanafi, the acting minister of vice and virtue.

Hanafi added that all people living in Afghanistan are equal under Islamic Emirate rule, and that the government wants to address all the problems of people.

## IEA’s acting defense minister leaves for Qatar



KABUL (Ariana News): Acting Minister of National Defense Mohammad Yaqub Mujahid left for Qatar on Sunday.

Enayatullah Khwarazmi, the spokesperson of the

Ministry of National Defense, said on X that Mujahid is accompanied by Chief of Army Staff Mohammad Fasihuddin Fitrat.

He added that they will discuss with the Qatari

authorities about strengthening bilateral relations, and will participate in the Doha International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference DIMDEX 2024.

## Afghanistan invests \$35m in Chabahar port

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Taliban administration in Afghanistan has committed to a \$35 million investment in Iran’s Chabahar port, a strategic move that includes the development of commercial, residential, and administrative projects. This investment, announced by the Iranian Special Envoy to Kabul, Hassan Kazemi Qomi, marks a significant step by the Afghan government to diversify its trade and economic partnerships beyond its traditional ties with neighboring countries.

The investment was made public following a visit by an Afghan delegation to Iran, highlighting the deepening economic cooperation between the two nations. A notable aspect of this investment is its focus on the Fakher construction project within the Chabahar Special Economic Zone, which involves the development of a 25-story high-rise residential complex.

This initiative is seen as a pivotal move for Afghanistan, aiming to improve its access to international waters and enhance its trade capabilities.

The engagement between Afghanistan and Iran comes at a time when both countries have experienced strained relations, not only with each other over issues such as border disputes and water rights but also with

neighboring Pakistan. Relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have been tense, particularly following Pakistan’s measures to manage cross-border movements and address security concerns, which have included the expulsion of undocumented Afghan refugees and tighter border controls.

Despite these regional tensions, the investment in Chabahar is viewed as a strategic effort by Afghanistan to secure an alternative route for its trade and to bolster its economy, which is crucial for the landlocked country. Iran’s Chabahar port offers a vital gateway for Afghanistan to access international markets, circumventing the need to rely solely on its immediate neighbors.

This development also signifies Iran’s willingness to enhance cooperation with Afghanistan, emphasizing the importance of trade and economic ties between the two countries despite the challenges posed by international sanctions on Afghanistan. The collaboration on the Chabahar project reflects a mutual interest in fostering regional stability and economic growth.

Furthermore, the situation underscores the broader geopolitical dynamics in the region, where countries are navigating complex

relationships and seeking new alliances to advance their economic and strategic interests. The investment in Chabahar by the Afghan Taliban administration illustrates a pragmatic approach to diplomacy and economic development, aiming to improve the country’s infrastructure and trade prospects amidst ongoing challenges.

## 2 children killed, 4 injured Paktia’s explosion

PAKTIA (Khaama Press): Local officials in Paktia province report the tragic loss of two children and injuries to four others due to an explosion of a landmine in the Hesarak district of Paktia province.

According to reports from Paktia province officials, the incident occurred on Sunday, in the Khilzi Khalil area of the district.

Based on reports, the incident occurred precisely when the landmine exploded, resulting in the loss of two children’s lives and injuries to four others.

Additionally, provincial authorities have stated that all the victims of this incident belong to a single family.

Similar incidents of casualties, especially among children, have been reported in various provinces, particularly Paktia, due to leftover mines from previous wars.

This comes as the United Nations Mine Action Coordination Office (UNMACC) had previously announced that Afghanistan is one of the most heavily mined and explosive-contaminated countries in the world.

Efforts to clear mines and unexploded ordnance remain crucial to prevent further tragic incidents in Afghanistan’s conflict-affected regions.

was an orphan and was struggling with economic hardships and could not afford to pay the power bill.

“When I approached relevant departments, they told me this electricity is consumed from your meter, you have to pay it. They said if you want this problem to be resolved, we will take away this meter and you should buy another power meter. But that process also cost 10,000 to 15,000 afis then I borrowed money and paid the bills,” he added.

Farhad Karimi, a resident of Arzan Qimat area said: “This winter, electricity supply has deteriorated

we don’t have proper electricity.” He said in 24 hours they availed electricity for three to four hours.

He added previously he would pay about 750 afghani per month, but currently despite reduced power consumption because of outages his bill was about 1,500afis.

National Olympic Committee and General Directorate of Sports former director Nazar Mohammad Mutmin also posted pictures of electricity bills last week and wrote on his Facebook page: “A friend sent me these bills, saying I wish electricity supply timing is not further reduced,

otherwise the bill would increase fourfold. More power outages mean high bills.”

But Mohammad Aman Popalzai, a resident of Qasba area in the fifteenth district, said he availed electricity for four to five hours in 24 hours.

He said “In the past when electricity was available for 10 or 12 hours in 24 hours, our bill hovered between 500 afis and 800 afis. Now electricity supply duration has been reduced and its cost surged.”

Mohammad Agha, a resident of 16th district, also complained about

electricity shortage and said in the past, he would pay 1,000 and 1,200 afghani in electricity bill, but now despite prolonged blackouts, bills remained unchanged.

Referring to people’s complaints, Hekmatullah Maiwand, a spokesman for DABS, told Pajhwok: “Electricity consumption increases in winter. Uzbekistan has halved electricity supply and this caused the price to increase a bit,” he added.

According to him, DABS can provide 70 to 75 percent electricity to the people in normal conditions, but this level has

dropped to 50 percent in winter.

He said those complaining about high electricity bills should refer to the power utility and their problems would be addressed.

According to reports, Afghanistan imports 430 MW of electricity from Uzbekistan, 440 MW from Tajikistan, 202 MW from Turkmenistan and 102 MW from Iran to meet its needs.

Afghanistan currently produces approximately 150 megawatts of electricity, of which 100 megawatts are produced by a number of private companies.

## Inflated bills despite prolonged outages irk Kabul residents

KABUL (Pajhwok): Some inhabitants of Kabul are complaining about inflated electricity bills despite prolonged outages — a problem the relevant department acknowledges.

Some residents told Pajhwok Afghan News power bills remained high despite the increase in power outages.

Hekmatullah Maiwand, a spokesman for Da Afghanistan Breshna Shirkat (DABS), told Pajhwok Afghan News that 70 to 75 percent of electricity was supplied to the people in normal situation, but this level decreased to 50 percent in winter.

**High electricity cost despite outages**

Rahimullah Khaksar, a resident of Qabilbai area of 9th police district of Kabul, told Pajhwok that electricity was supplied to the people based on their turn during winter.

According to him, the consumers are provided electricity for four hours one night in one phase and for four hours the next night in another phase and the people of our area have electricity for one or two hours during daytime.

He added considering the mentioned hours, there should have been a decrease in electricity cost,

but on the contrary, the bills were higher than before.

He showed his house electricity bill to Pajhwok and said before, his electricity bill was 120 to 500 afghani, but last month’s bill was 10,505 afghani and the month before last month was 3500 afghani.

Khaksar said: “We don’t have a TV in our house, we don’t use electronic heater, we don’t have a washing machine, there are only three lights and we charge mobile phones. I was wondering how to pay 10,500 afghani bill when another month’s bill came which was 3,500afis.”

The 15-year-old said he





GAZA: The sun sets over Gaza, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, as seen from Israel's border with Gaza in southern Israel.

## Incumbent parliament a ‘product of rigging’: Fazl

KARACHI (INP): Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazalur Rehman said that the people of Pakistan do not recognize the incumbent parliament as it is a product of ‘rigging’.

Addressing a presser in Karachi, the JUI-F chief said that the newly elected parliamentarians are not representatives of the people but a product of rigging. He said that the General Elections 2024 is the most ‘rigged’ polls in

the country’s history, vowing to carry out a country-wide movement against the same. Maulana Fazalur Rehman said that the general elections in 2018 were considered the most ‘manipulated’ polls in the country, adding that the record was broken in the 8th February elections.

He said that the JUI-F would chalk out a plan for the country-wide movement against what he termed massive rigging in

the elections. The JUI-F chief said that democracy and parliament are losing dignity after the ‘massive rigging’ in the elections.

“Sindh and Balochistan assemblies were bought. The current rulers will not be recognized by the people as they are the product of rigging,” Maulana Fazalur Rehman said. While rejecting the election results across the country, the JUI chief said that they would go to the parliament with ‘severe’ reservations.

## PML-N saves country from default: Marriyum

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Information Secretary Marriyum Aurangzeb Sunday lauded Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif’s role to save the country from default in previous PDM government besides taking bold economic decisions for Pakistan and asked opposition parties to play constructive role for strengthening democracy.

Talking to Media outside National Assembly she said that both government and opposition parties should work in tandem in the interests of their country and people as country was facing current economic challenges where Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz leadership can only combat the recent challenges amicably. She said instead of protests and sit-ins PTI leaders should spend their time for the welfare of the public, adding, the opposition party should act in such as a way as to expose the weaknesses, if any of the government so that the government can rectify and build upon such weaknesses.

The government always has its duties and obligations toward the country and people, she said, adding, in this regard, the opposition party can play a big role. She said Shehbaz Sharif is committed to brought the country back on track of development, adding, the people of Pakistan were looking towards Nawaz Sharif and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif as they have all the abilities to take the country out of existing challenges.

# CM to approach PM for release of K-IV funds

KARACHI (APP): Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that the federal government has released only Rs4 billion for the K-IV project and he plans to approach Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif to address this funding issue.

He said that the fund is less than one-fourth of the allocated Rs16 billion. He said this significant shortfall will lead to further delays in the project. He said this while talking to media persons just after submitting the nomination papers of PPP Senate Candidates Jam Saifullah Dharejo, Aslam Abro and their covering candidates Waqar Mehdi and Aajiz Dhamraha at the Election Commission of Pakistan, Sindh.

It may be noted that these two senate seats had fallen vacant after the resignation of two PPP Senators Nisar Khuhro and Jam Mehtab Dahar, who returned as members of the provincial assembly of Sindh in the general election held on Feb 8.

The chief minister said that both the PPP candidates would easily be elected as Senators from the provincial assembly. “We need only 108 votes against which we have 114 votes in the assembly, therefore we will get them elected easily for which I am congratulating Asif Ali Zardari,” he said. In response to a question, the Chief Minister stated that Mayor Murtaza Wahab is working tirelessly to develop Karachi into one of the

most advanced cities in the world. As an elected mayor, he has all the necessary powers. The CM expressed that any further reforms to the local bodies law, if required, will be made by the Sindh Assembly.

The CM also expressed regret that amendments to the local bodies law could not be made by a political party as demanded by the MQM.

Syed Murad Ali Shah said that he had talked to the MQM for the election of Speakers and Deputy Speaker of the Sindh Assembly. Presently, MQM leadership is in Islamabad for the Prime Minister’s election and they would be approached for the presidential election, the CM said.

Shah admitted that MQM and Sunni Ittehad Council have stakes in Sindh, therefore they would be consulted for legislation, and other concerned matters. “I want to take all the stakeholders together so that the issues of the province can be resolved with collective wisdom.

He said that maintenance of law & order was the responsibility of the provincial government for which he has given necessary instructions to the police and the Rangers. “We would soon get rid of street criminals and dacoits in the Riverine area”, he said. When asked about his plans, the Chief Minister stated that he is fully committed to implementing the 10-point election manifesto of PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto with utmost sincerity.

He further added that the PPP government in Sindh has always worked diligently to serve the people of the province, which is why the people have elected the party to power in Sindh for the fourth consecutive term. In response to a question, the Chief Minister stated that the newly elected Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif, would be taking the oath of his position on Monday. The CM further added that the primary responsibility of the Prime Minister would be to strengthen the economy. The people of the country are currently facing an unprecedented rise in prices, and the new federal government would have to take steps to alleviate this issue. According to the CM, this can only be achieved by withdrawing the subsidies being enjoyed by the elite.

Mr Shah stated that he intends to write a letter to the prime minister, requesting for the completion of the K-IV project. He emphasized that the K-IV project is crucial to meet the water requirements of the city. The federal government had allocated Rs16 billion for the project, but only Rs4 billion has been released so far. He expressed concern that if the remaining funds for the project are not released soon, it will cause further delays. Murad Ali Shah said that on special occasions such as Ramadan, Eid-ul-Azha and others the traders drop down prices of edible items and clothes but in Pakistan, the price of such items were deliberately increased which was unfortunate.

## American voters doubt Biden’s leadership and favour Trump; Muslims to abstain in balloting

NEW YORK (APP): A new U.S. poll shows that many voters are increasingly put off by President Joe Biden’s leadership, while former President Donald Trump has garnered relatively high support ahead of November’s presidential election. In survey results released Saturday by The New York Times and Siena College, 47% of 980 registered voters said that they “strongly disapprove” of Biden’s handling of his job, the highest figure for this rate in any Times/Siena poll during his presidency.

The national poll, conducted in February, also shows Biden’s 43% of support trailing behind Trump’s 48%, a potential warning sign for the Democratic president. At 81, Biden has faced criticism for being the oldest sitting president in U.S. history. He has also received pushback for his handling of the current conflict in Gaza, where health officials say that more than 30,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel’s assault since October. Biden has remained a strong supporter of Israel. Meanwhile, 77-year-old Trump has more successfully unified support within his party as he seeks to retake the White House, despite his recent legal losses and upcoming trials.

According to the Times/Siena poll, Trump has the support of 97% of people who say they voted for him in the 2020 election, while Biden is winning just 83% of his voters from four years ago. Ten percent of the 2020 Biden voters said they would now vote for Trump, the poll found. Meanwhile, growing outrage over President Biden’s support for Israel in its relentless bombardment of Gaza is prompting Arab-American and Muslim voters to declare that they intend to stay away from the polls.

In Michigan, where early primaries was held, one-time Biden’s Muslim supporters sent his administration a strong message by voting “uncommitted”, even as the president’s aides scrambled to meet and mend broken ties with community leaders. Here’s what American Arab and Muslim communities want, why the two voting blocs are important for Biden, and the parts of the US where they are most influential: Arab and Muslim communities have been calling on the Biden administration to speak up and halt the killings in Gaza with no results. Some are Palestinians with families and friends in the besieged strip.

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## UN rights expert urges sanctions against Israel

UNITED NATIONS (APP): The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Michael Fakhri, has called for sanctions against Israel, asserting that a potential famine may already be occurring in besieged Gaza.

Fakhri, a human rights expert, raised the alarm after reports of the death of a 10th child from starvation. In a post on X, formerly Twitter, he said Israel was intentionally starving the Palestinian people in Gaza since October 8. He stressed that an immediate ceasefire is essential to prevent or end the famine and called for sanctions against Israel as a means to push for a ceasefire. “The only way to end/prevent this famine is an immediate ceasefire. And the

only way to get a ceasefire is to sanction Israel,” Fakhri added. More than 30,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, have been killed and over 70,000 wounded in the Gaza Strip since the Israel’s war on Hamas began nearly five months ago, health officials in the territory said.

On Thursday, Israeli troops opened fire on a crowd of people scrambling for food in Gaza City. More than 100 people were killed and at least 700 wounded, according to Gaza’s Health Ministry. Israel claimed many of the dead were trampled in a chaotic stampede for the food aid and that its troops only fired when they felt endangered by the crowd. Israel’s war against

Hamas has created a humanitarian catastrophe throughout the Gaza Strip and devastation in northern areas like Gaza City, which are largely cut off from the rest of the territory with little aid entering.

As concerns about the humanitarian situation in Gaza escalate, the call for sanctions reflects growing international scrutiny and demands for action to address the urgent needs of the affected population. Hunger and severe malnutrition are widespread in the Gaza Strip, where about 2.2 million Palestinians are facing severe shortages resulting from Israel destroying food supplies and severely restricting the flow of food, medicines and other humanitarian supplies.

# Shehbaz Sharif returns as prime minister for second time

(Continued from Page 1)

Rs 7,300 billion, out of which Rs 8,000 billion had been paid in interest and services charges, showing a deficit of Rs 700 billion.

He wondered that from where they would have to get resources for the development, education, health, salaries of the Federal Government employees and the armed forces!

He termed it an unending chain of seeking loans after loans and ‘a grave situation’ for about 250 million people of the country.

Referring to the protest of the opposition members, he regretted that there should be ‘a reign of realization rather than making noises in the House’, adding the history would decide over such tactics.

The newly elected prime minister further said that the country had sought about Rs 80,000 billion external, internal and private debts in the past. The issues at hand required a deep surgery and introduction of reforms in the system and various sectors, he said, expressing the confidence that his senior party leadership along with allied parties would get rid of the crippling loans trap.

..Shehbaz Sharif said other issues included in energy sector, which itself was burdened with Rs 2,300 billion circular debt while recovery stood at around Rs 2,800 billion with Rs 1,000 billion gap.

About Rs 500 to Rs 600 billion accounted for power theft, whereas the circular debt in the gas sector reached Rs 2,900 billion, he added.

Shehbaz Sharif further said that it was an irony of the fate that the state-owned enterprises (SOEs) were incurring Rs 600 billion deficit annually and cited the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) which had been suffering from losses to the tune of Rs 800 billion.

He maintained that tax evasion and theft in power and gas were matters of gravity for the country, equating them to ‘a bottomless pit’.

“These challenges are difficult though but not impossible to resolve. It is a thorny journey; full of obstacles but the developed nations had overcome all these obstacles,” he observed, expressing the resolve to lead the country on path of progress and prosperity.

The newly-elected prime minister said that they would strive for a network of health and educational facilities, green revolution, and construction of infrastructure and factories.

To resolve these issues, they would utilize the latest technology and innovations, empowerment of women and loan facilities to the youth bulge, he said, adding that he was hopeful to ensure positive effects of the steps trickling down within one year.

Shehbaz further said that about 500,000 students would be imparted the latest training, besides boosting the artificial intelligence and IT exports. Farmers’ prosperity was linked with the country’s progress, he said, and announced that fertilizers’ subsidy would be directly provided to the farmers. A solar tube-wells programme would be launched for the smaller farmers, he said, adding the seeds mafia would be effaced as the upcoming government would import quality seeds, which would also work on an initiative to provide the same to the farmers for one time free of cost.

He also emphasized to work collectively with the support of all provinces to bring revolution in the agriculture sector under the guidelines of Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC).

The upcoming prime minister also announced laying of an efficient public transport network through the length and breadth of Pakistan, which he viewed as a key of progress achieved by the developed countries.

He said that high achievers and performing children would be provided with the scholarships and their expenditures would be borne by the Federal Government for their education in the world’s renowned educational institutions.

He also underlined the need for quick and speedy justice system with required reforms in consultations with all the stakeholders.

Shehbaz Sharif announced that those jailed women and children who were not involved in heinous cases and completing their prison terms of less than two years, would be released and trained with skills to become useful citizens of the society.

He lamented that on May 9, unthinkable incidents happened in the country’s history and said that the law would take its course and the respon-



sible involved in those incidents who had hatched the conspiracy against the country and its security institutions would have to face it, however, he hastened to add that innocents would be spared.


The upcoming prime minister also announced to completely implement the National Action Plan to end the scourge of terrorism forever.

In a veiled reference to the previous PTI’s government, he regretted that for the personal interests, hardened terrorists were brought back and released from jails; which was the reason for a surge in recent terrorist incidents. To ensure minorities’ rights, it was their joint responsibility under the principles as laid down by the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) and guaranteed by the Constitution of Pakistan, he added.

He also reiterated ensuring equal rights to the women who comprised about 50 percent of the country’s population, adding the nation stood indebted to the contributions and sacrifices of Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah and Benazir Bhutto, as well as other prominent female figures in different sectors as the national progress would not be possible without their involvement. The newly-elected prime minister said that his government would ensure a business friendly environment, and address issues impacting direct foreign investment and tax collection. He said that mafias indulged in tax evasion should be made to pay taxes, adding that export zones facilities would also be introduced.

Shehbaz observed that tax refund delay was a hurdle for the exporters and he would direct the FBR (Federal Board of Revenue) to expedite the process, ensuring its payment in ten days. He opined that promotion of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) was critical for providing jobs opportunities to the rural population and controlling a wave of urbanization. All the banks would be made to provide loans to the youth to run their small businesses under a similar parameter, he added. The upcoming prime minister said that investors from the brotherly countries might be provided with visa free entry to encourage investment opportunities, besides work on the CPEC projects would be accelerated.



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