

**Eight lose life in Lakki**  
**F.P. Report**  
LAKKI MARWAT: At least eight were killed and 15 injured including women and children in a deadly collision between a loader rickshaw and a truck in Lakki Marwat on the second day of Eidul Fitr. The tragic accident occurred on the Indus Highway in Tajazai town of Lakki Marwat. All of the killed and the injured hailed from Tank and Tatar Khel.

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LAHORE: Federal Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Israel-Iran tensions

# France, India, Russia and UK issue travel warnings

NEW DELHI: Countries including France, India, Russia, Poland and the United Kingdom have warned their citizens against travelling to Israel, the occupied Palestinian territories and, in some cases, the wider region amid threats of an Iranian attack in response to a strike this month on its consulate in Damascus.

Iran has threatened reprisals against Israel over the strike in the Syrian capital on April 1, which killed seven Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps members, including two generals, leading to fears of an escalation of violence in the Middle East. The French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs on Friday advised its citizens against travelling to Iran, Lebanon, Israel and the Palestinian territories.

In a statement on the social media platform X, the ministry added that relatives of Iran-based diplomats will return to France and French civil servants are now banned from conducting any missions in the countries and territories in question. The UK told its citizens to avoid all but essential travel to Israel and Palestine over the "possibility of an attack on Israeli territory from Iran".

In an update, the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office warned against "all travel" to northern Israel, the Gaza Strip, areas near Gaza and the occupied West Bank – excluding occupied East Jerusalem and Route 1 between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Russia strongly recommended its citizens "refrain from travelling to the region", emphasising security risks in Israel, Lebanon and Palestine. "The situation in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict zone as well as in the area of the 'Blue Line' between Lebanon and Israel remains unstable," its Ministry of Foreign Affairs said. Poland's Foreign Ministry also advised against travel to Israel, Palestine and Lebanon.

"It cannot be ruled out that there will be a sudden escalation of military operations, which would cause significant difficulties in leaving these three countries," it said in a statement. "Any escalation may lead to significant restrictions in air traffic and the inability to cross land border crossings." India's statement covered Iran and Israel, calling on Indians not

to go to the two countries until further notice in view of the "prevailing situation in the region".

The Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi said Indian citizens who are in the two countries should observe "utmost precautions about their safety and restrict their movements to the minimum". Separately, German flagship airline Lufthansa extended its suspension of flights to and from Tehran until Thursday and will not use Iranian airspace during that time. The United States has restricted its employees in Israel and their family members from personal travel outside the greater Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Beersheba areas.

An imminent attack by Iran on Israel is a "real" and "viable" threat, US National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told journalists on Friday, adding that Washington would make sure the Israelis "have what they need and that they're able to defend themselves". The top US commander for the Middle East, General Erik Kurilla, is also in Israel for talks with its military officials on security threats. His trip was moved up from a previously scheduled date "due to recent developments", Pentagon spokesman Major General Pat Ryder said on Thursday.

After Kurilla discussed the tensions with Iran with Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant on Friday, Gallant said the US and Israel were "shoulder to shoulder" in facing possible threats. "We are prepared to defend ourselves on the ground and in the air, in close cooperation with our partners, and we will know how to respond," the defence chief added. The Wall Street Journal, quoting a person familiar with the matter, reported on Thursday that Israel was preparing for an attack by Iran as soon as Friday or Saturday.

Al Jazeera's Hamdah Salhut, reporting from East Jerusalem, said the Israeli army announced that it was preparing on all fronts offensively and defensively. "A couple of weeks ago, the Israelis increased their alertness level, calling up reservists and bolstering air defence systems," she said, adding that Israeli officials said they were prepared for anything. Israel has bombarded the Gaza

Strip since October 7 and sent in ground forces, killing at least 33,600 Palestinians and injuring more than 76,000. Hamas's October 7 attacks on southern Israel killed more than 1,100 people there. Israel has also stepped up strikes against Iranian personnel and allies in Syria and Lebanon and has traded near daily cross-border fire with the Lebanese group Hezbollah since the start of the war.

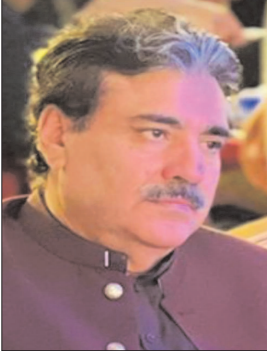
Meanwhile, the United States expects an attack by Iran against Israel but one that would not be big enough to draw Washington into war, a US official said. The White House said earlier Washington did not want conflict to spread in the Middle East and the US had told Iran it was not involved in an air strike against a top Iranian military commander in Damascus.

The White House added it warned Iran to not use that attack as a pretext to escalate further in the region. Suspected Israeli warplanes bombed Iran's embassy in Damascus on Monday in a strike for which Iran has vowed revenge and in which a top Iranian general and six other Iranian military officers were killed, ratcheting up tension in a region already strained by the Gaza war.

Iranian sources told Reuters Tehran has signalled to Washington that it will respond to Israel's attack on its Syrian embassy in a way that aims to avoid major escalation and it will not act hastily, as Tehran presses demands including a Gaza truce. The United States has been on high alert about possible retaliatory strikes from Iran and US envoys have been working to lower tensions.

Palestinian group Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7, killing 1,200, according to Israeli tallies. Israel's military assault on Hamas-governed Gaza has since killed over 33,000 according to the local health ministry, displaced nearly all of Gaza's 2.3 million population, caused a humanitarian crisis and led to genocide allegations that Israeli denies. Iran-backed groups have declared support for Palestinians, waging attacks from Lebanon, Yemen and Iraq. Tehran has avoided direct confrontation with Israel or the United States, while declaring support for its allies. — Aljazeera

## DG Info KP Imran promoted to Grade-20



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: On the recommendations of the Provincial Selection Board (PSB), the Competent Authority has approved the promotion of Muhammad Imran, Director General of Information & Public Relations Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from Grade 19 to Grade 20 on a permanent basis. Muhammad Imran has been serving as the Director General of Information and Public Relations of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the past year.

Muhammad Imran's career spans more than three decades, during which he has held various significant positions, consistently playing a crucial role in maintaining the information & public relations system of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in alignment with the evolving trends of the times. Whether it was pioneering radio initiatives, introducing community broadcasting via 'Pakhtunkhwa Radio' with FM technology in the public sector, venturing into the realm of Internet and web media, or embracing trends like citizen journalism through social media in new media, Imran has consistently displayed leadership and played a pivotal role as an officer.

Welcoming his appointment as Director General Information & Public Relations Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and his promotion to Grade 20 on a permanent basis, Muhammad Imran has expressed his determination to reshape the DGIPR system of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa using artificial intelligence. His goal is to ensure timely and accurate information dissemination to the public while further strengthening the relationship between the people, the media, and the government. It should be noted that the notification regarding the promotion of Muhammad Imran, Director General of Information and Public Relations, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, to Grade 20 was issued on April 9, 2024.

## Army, police to jointly probe Bahawalnagar incident: ISPR

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: After short video clips showing dozens of masked men wearing military garbs thrashing cops in Bahawalnagar went viral on social media, the Pakistan Army and the Punjab Police have decided to jointly investigate the incident, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said Friday.

The military's media wing in a statement said an unfortunate incident occurred in Bahawalnagar recently, which was promptly addressed and resolved through collaborative efforts of military and police authorities.

"Despite this, certain motives started fanning vitriolic propaganda on social media to create divisions between state institutions and government departments," the statement read.

"To ensure a fair and deliberate inquiry, and to determine responsibility for violation of laws and misuse of authority, a joint inquiry comprising security and police officials will be conducted for ascertaining the facts and apportioning responsibility," it concluded.

## Upcoming meetings with IFIs during US visit

# Finance minister briefs Premier

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Minister for Finance Muhammad Aurangzeb on Friday called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and briefed him about the upcoming visit to the United States.

The finance minister discussed with the prime minister his scheduled meetings with the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and other institutions, according to a PM Office press release. In the meeting, they also deliberated over the overall economic situation of the country.

Meanwhile, Federal Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in Lahore. During the meeting both exchanged greetings on the auspicious occasion of Eid ul Fitr, a press release issued by the Prime Minister Office said. The prime minister expressed satisfaction over the overall law and order situation in the country.

**PM commends Pak Army, Police Jawsans:** Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif extended heartfelt tribute to the valiant Jawsans of the Pakistan Army and Police, as well as the dedicated personnel of security agencies, for their commitment to upholding law and order during Eid ul-Fitr celebrations.

"In honour of Eid's significance, the entire nation,

myself included, stands in admiration of the officers and personnel of the Pakistan Army, Police, security agencies, and administration, who selflessly carry out their duties far from their families," he conveyed in a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office.

The prime minister lauded the proactive steps taken by the administration, leaders of security agencies, Inspector Generals of Police from all provinces, and the officers and soldiers of the Pakistan Army in ensuring law and order nationwide. He emphasized the immeasurable sacrifices made by the officers and personnel of the Pakistan Army and security agencies to ensure law and order throughout the country.

**PM receives Eid phone call from Kuwaiti Prime Minister:** Prime Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Mohammed Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah called Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and extended warm greetings on the auspicious occasion of Eidul Fitr.

During their conversation, the prime minister thanked the leadership of Kuwait for their messages of felicitations on his reelection. He recalled the historically cordial and brotherly ties between Pakistan and Kuwait and reaffirmed Pakistan's resolve to further strengthen the bilateral relationship with a view to securing mutual benefit for the people of both countries.

In this regard, the prime minister emphasized the need to enhance economic and trade ties between the two countries and assured the Kuwaiti side that the successful and timely implementation of the agreements and MoUs signed by the two sides last year would be ensured. In addition to exchanging Eid wishes, both leaders also prayed for peace and prosperity of their two nations, unity among the ranks of the Ummah, and, most importantly, for an end to Israeli atrocities against the innocent Palestinians in Gaza. The Kuwaiti prime minister conveyed his best wishes for the people of Pakistan and reaffirmed the Government of Kuwait's desire to strengthen and deepen its cooperative partnership with Pakistan.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif conveyed heartfelt Eid greetings to Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman during a cordial telephone conversation on Thursday. In return, Maulana Fazlur Rehman reciprocated the Eid greetings to the prime minister. Both leaders prayed for the advancement and prosperity of the nation. On the blessed occasion of Eid ul Fitr, they also prayed for an end to oppression and atrocities being committed against the people of Palestine and Indian Occupied Kashmir.

# COAS celebrates Eid with troops in North Waziristan

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir, undertook a visit to Miran Shah & Spinwam in North Waziristan Agency, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where he joined troops in celebrating Eid, said Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) in a statement.

Commencing with Eid prayers at the frontline, the army chief offered supplications for enduring stability and prosperity of Pakistan, ISPR said. He conveyed heartfelt Eid-ul-Fitr greetings to the troops,

commending their unwavering dedication and service to the nation.

Subsequently, COAS Asim Munir received a comprehensive briefing on operational readiness and the prevailing security landscape, with a specific focus on border security measures along the Pak-Afghan Border. Acknowledging the formation's monumental efforts in fostering peace and stability, COAS attributed these strides to the sacrifices of our martyrs, facilitating secure environment conducive to socio-economic development, particularly in the newly merged districts and throughout Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Emphasizing the adverse impact of terrorism upon development, COAS underscored the collective imperative to safeguard the hard-earned peace. He urged all stakeholders, especially the local populace, to remain vigilant against adversarial elements seeking to destabilize the region. "Maintain unwavering focus on your professional duties in service to the nation," COAS concluded. Earlier, on arrival, COAS was warmly received by Commander Peshawar Corps.



MIRAN SHAH: General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff conveying heartfelt Eidul Fitr greetings to the troops, commending their unwavering dedication and service to the nation.

## Pakistan seeking potential follow-up loan programme: IMF

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan is in discussions with the IMF on a potential follow-up programme to its nine-month, \$3 billion stand-by arrangement, IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva said on Thursday, adding that it had important issues to solve.

Georgieva told an event at the Atlantic Council think tank, that Pakistan was successfully completing its existing programme with the IMF and its economy was performing somewhat better, with reserves now being built up. "There is a commitment

to continue on this path, and the country is turning to the fund for potentially having a follow-up programme," Kristalina Georgieva said, flagging issues that the struggling South Asian nation still needed to address.

"There are very important issues to be solved in Pakistan: the tax base, how the richer part of society contributes to the economy, the way public spending is being directed and of course, creating ... a more transparent environment." Pakistan and the IMF last month reached a

staff-level agreement on the second and last review of the \$3 billion stand-by arrangement, which, if cleared by the global lender's board, will release about \$1.1 billion to the country. The IMF's board is expected to review the matter in late April, but no firm date has been set, a spokesperson said. Both sides have also spoken about negotiating a longer-term bailout and continuing with necessary policy reforms to rein in deficits, build up reserves and manage soaring debt servicing.

## President greets Iranian counterpart

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and President of Iran, Seyed Ebrahim Raisi, held a telephonic conversation and exchanged greetings on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr. During the conversation, President Asif Ali Zardari offered his heartfelt condolences and sympathies to the Iranian leadership and the bereaved families who lost their dear ones in the Israeli attack on the Iranian embassy in Damascus.

The President expressed his concern over the humanitarian crisis and the genocide being committed by the Israeli forces and called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. President Asif Ali Zardari assured his Iranian counterpart that Pakistan would continue to work with Iran in all areas of mutual interest to further boost bilateral cooperation.

He underlined the need to enhance the exchange of information to overcome the security challenges being faced by the two countries.

## PTI to launch protest movement from Balochistan

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Omar Ayub Khan on Friday said that the former ruling party, under the umbrella of a "grand opposition alliance", would launch a protest movement against the alleged rigging in the February 8 general elections and for "restoration of the Constitution and democracy" in the country from Balochistan.

Addressing the media in Rawalpindi after meeting the PTI founder in Adiala jail, party leader Asad Qaiser said a first rally would be held in the protest movement. The Khan-founded party believed that the incumbent rulers stole their mandate in the elections and the results were changed in Form 47s to benefit the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). Ayub said that the protest movement would be initiated from Balochistan and later the scope of the protests would be expanded countrywide.

## Bushra Bibi visits Adiala

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Bushra Bibi, the former first lady, visited Adiala Jail under tight security arrangements to meet her husband, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Founder Imran Khan, on the auspicious occasion of Eidul Fitr. Accompanied by security personnel, Bushra Bibi was escorted from her residence in Bani Gala, where she is also under house arrest, to Adiala Jail, where Imran Khan is currently held. The road leading to the jail was closed on one side to ensure a smooth passage for Bushra Bibi's visit.

A meeting of the opposition parties [scheduled today] would discuss the inclusion of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman [in the grand opposition alliance]. Earlier this month, the PTI formed the opposition alliance as part of its efforts to give the incumbent government a tough time. "We are the strongest opposition in history, we are not among those who backtrack."

The grand opposition alliance agreed on one point, which was that everyone should respect the Constitution and the law. Investment trade and devel-

opment are linked with the supremacy of the constitution, said the PTI leader. Saudi businessmen were investing in a solar energy project in Balochistan when the PTI government was toppled and the PDM-II government was formed, he added. Khan was ousted as the prime minister of Pakistan from office through a no-confidence motion in April 2022. Moving on to the alleged crackdown against the PTI workers after the May 9 riots, Ayub said that over 200 cases were loaded against the PTI founder, adding that their people suffered all kinds of brutalities.





KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah meets with Consul Generals of different countries to exchange Eid greetings at CM House. —APP Photo

## Minister expresses dismay over killing

KARACHI (APP): Sindh's Home Minister, Zia-ul-Hasan Lanjar, expressed profound dismay regarding the tragic killing of a citizen who bravely resisted a robbery in the Gulshan Iqbal Chowrangi vicinity.

In response, the Home Minister swiftly ordered the immediate suspension of the SHO of Gulshan Iqbal.

He further instructed the authorities to expedite the arrest of the perpetrators through an inquiry led by the SSP East, ensuring a thorough investigation.

Emphasizing accountability, the minister mandated a review of the SHO's service history and urged for necessary actions to be taken.

He underscored the imperative for police officers to be actively present in the community, safeguarding public safety by combating street crimes and apprehending offenders.

Zia-ul-Hasan Lanjar vehemently advocated for stringent measures to be implemented against those responsible for the heinous act, asserting justice for the innocent victim.

## Police claim to arrest Lyari gang commander

KARACHI (APP): District City Police claimed to have arrested a notorious Commander of the Lyari Gang known as Jegho Group.

A spokesperson of District City Police told here on Friday that a police team in an exchange of gun fire held late last night near the jurisdiction of Kalri police station, apprehended the accused involved in multiple criminal cases.

The police also recovered a cache of arms and ammunition from the criminal's possession. The accused was identified as Muhammad Arif who was a fugitive and a prime suspect in a murder case.

As per police records, eight First Information Reports (FIRs) had already been filed against the accused in various police stations. After the arrest of Muhammad Arif, he was sent to a medical facility for necessary treatment.

Legal proceedings against him are currently underway.

## Int'l diplomats join CM Sindh for Eid celebrations

KARACHI (APP): A gathering of diverse Consul Generals convened at the Sindh Chief Minister's House for an Eid Milan party, marking a moment of cultural exchange and celebration.

According to a spokesperson from the Chief Minister House, representatives from various countries shared warm Eid

greetings with Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah.

Amidst the festive ambiance, discussions revolved around the traditions and significance of Eid, fostering a sense of camaraderie among the Chief Minister and the attending Consul Generals.

The Consul Generals commended the vibrant Eid

celebrations in Karachi, acknowledging the government's efforts to uphold the spirit of the festival.

Notable attendees at the Eid Milan party included Consul Generals from Sri Lanka, Qatar, Dubai, Indonesia, Thailand, Iran, France, Germany, Japan, Malaysia, Russia, USA, China, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, and Afghanistan.

## MWL Secy-Gen delivers Eid sermon

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Secretary-General of Muslim World League (MWL), Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, delivered a powerful Eid-ul-Fitr sermon at Faisal Mosque in the federal capital on Wednesday, urging Muslims to remember and support their Palestinian brethren amidst ongoing challenges in Gaza.

In his address to the faithful, Dr. Al-Issa emphasized the importance of solidarity and prayers for the Palestinian people, calling for divine intervention to alleviate their suffering and hold perpetrators of aggression accountable for their actions.

Highlighting the significance of exemplifying Islamic values through actions, Dr. Al-Issa underscored the positive impact of individuals who embody

the true essence of Islam in their daily lives. His message resonated with the congregation, encouraging them to uphold compassion, justice, and righteousness in their interactions with others.

Meanwhile, Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Spokesperson Muhammad Umar Butt revealed Dr. Al-Issa's plans to sign a memorandum of understanding for the establishment of a groundbreaking Seerat-un-Nabi Museum in the federal capital.

"This museum, the first of its kind in Pakistan, will showcase relics and artifacts related to the life of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), enriching religious education and cultural heritage," he added.

Further enhancing reli-

gious education, Dr. Al-Issa will serve as the chief guest at a prize distribution ceremony for young ' Huffaz' at the Jinnah Convention Center on April 13, as disclosed by MWL Regional Director Saad Masoud M. Al Harthi.

"This initiative aims to recognize and celebrate the dedication and achievements of young memorizers of the Quran, fostering a deeper appreciation for Islamic knowledge and scholarship," he added.

Dr. Al-Issa's multifaceted engagements during the Eid festivities underscore the MWL's commitment to promoting social welfare, religious education, and interfaith harmony, aligning with its mission to uphold the principles of compassion, justice, and solidarity within the global Muslim community.

## Pakistan Kissan Ittehad withdraws protest call

LAHORE (PPI): Pakistan Kissan Ittehad (PKI) on Thursday withdrew from a planned protest after successful negotiations with the Punjab government.

Punjab Agriculture Minister Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani held a meeting with a 10-member delegation of the farmers' body where the two sides discussed issues faced by the farmers in the province.

It is pertinent to mention that the PKI had announced to begin a protest after Eidul Fitr if

the government failed to address the issues of the community.

However, the provincial minister met the community leaders and formed a joint investigation committee (JIT) aimed at resolving issues faced by the farmers.

He assured the farmers' leaders of conducting an inquiry into the import of wheat during the previous caretaker government.

The committee will include provincial ministers of agriculture and

food, secretaries of relevant departments along with the leaders of the Pakistan Kissan Ittehad.

Minister Kirmani said that the provincial government would give interest-free loans to the farmers along with the provision of the Nawaz Sharif Kissan Card that would facilitate around 1.5 million farmers.

Additionally, Punjab will build 41 agriculture facilitation centres along with the installation of solar tube wells in discounted prices.

## Sindh to form task force to combat drug dealers

KARACHI (PPI): Excise and Taxation Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon on Friday directed to form a task force in the Sindh province.

Expressing concern over the increasing prevalence of drugs, particularly in educational institutions, Mr Memon emphasized the necessity of taking all possible measures to curb this trend, according to a statement.

Memon directed the Secretary Excise and DIG Hyderabad to take decisive action against drug dealers, while also instructing them to keep the Secretary Information Sindh informed

about these efforts.

Furthermore, he urged the information secretary to launch an anti-narcotics advertisement within a few days. Highlighting the importance of thorough investigations into arrested drug suspects, the provincial minister instructed the Secretary of Excise to establish a task force comprising reputable officers.

Last month, Sindh government announced preparations for a comprehensive crackdown against the scourge of drugs across the province.

Sindh Minister for Excise, Taxation, and

Narcotics Control Sharjeel Inam Memon chaired a high-level meeting in Karachi on Tuesday to spearhead a move aimed at curbing the scourge of drugs.

During the meeting, the provincial minister stressed the need to tackle the drug epidemic head-on. He outlined plans to form teams comprising efficient officers dedicated to executing the crackdown effectively.

"A massive crackdown targeting drugs and its traffickers would be launched imminently," Memon said, emphasizing that the young generation must be liberat-

ed from the clutches of drug dealers.

He also announced that officers demonstrating exceptional performance would be duly recognized and rewarded with awards and honors as a testament to their dedication and commitment to the cause.

Memon noted that actions would be taken daily to ensure the eradication of drugs from every nook and corner of the province.

Moreover, he emphasized the significance of raising awareness among the youth in parallel with the crackdown on drug peddlers.

## Surjani Town police claim to nab extortionist

KARACHI (APP): Surjani Town police station claimed to have apprehended suspects involved in a case of extortion.

The victim, a property dealer Azhar Ali, reported police that he had been targeted by the accused who demanded money with serious threat. SSP West confirmed the report on Friday that the accused had threatened Azhar Ali, and warning of dire consequences if he failed to comply with their demands. The situation escalated when the accused resorted to gunfire at Azhar Ali's office.

Upon receiving the complaint from the victim, Surjani police promptly launched an investigation.

Acting on intelligence information, the police conducted a raid, resulting in the arrest of two primary suspects directly linked to this incident. The culprit involved in this heinous activity identified as Riaz Burfat and Sajjad Pathan, who were subsequently transferred to the Special Investigation Unit (SIU) for further proceedings.

Meanwhile, efforts are underway to locate and apprehend other suspects behind this offence.

## 80 police officials promoted

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General of Police Punjab, Dr. Usman Anwar has promoted 80 more officials who meet the merit and seniority to the next posts.

According to the details, promotion board meetings were held in Sheikhupura and Bahawalpur region under the direction of IG Punjab. 50 officials in Bahawalpur region, 30 in Sheikhupura region were promoted to the next rank.

According to the Punjab Police spokesperson, fourteen ASIs have been promoted to sub-inspectors, eleven head constables have been promoted to ASIs, twenty five constables have been promoted to head constables in Bahawalpur region, while eighteen ASIs were promoted to the post of Sub-Inspectors, twelve Head Constables to the post of ASIs in the Promotion Board chaired by RPO Sheikhupura Athar Ismail.

The spokesman said that during Ramazan, more than 700 officials of different ranks have been promoted to the next posts, whereas under the leadership of IG Punjab, around 21,000 promotions have been given so far. IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar congratulated the promoted officers and directed them to perform their duties more diligently for the service of citizens.

## Muggers kill Karachiite on 2nd day of Eid

KARACHI (PPI): Muggers killed a citizen in Gulshan Chowrangi in Karachi when he offered them resistance during the robbery on the second day of Eid, police said.

According to the police, Turab Zaidi, the father of three children withdrew money from the ATM of a private bank and when he came out, the robbers rushed to him and looted his money and mobile but he offered them resistance, upon which they shot him dead.

The robbers fled to unknown destination after swift operation.



LAHORE: Children enjoy swings in Gulshan-e-Iqbal Park on the 2nd day of Eid-ul-Fitr celebrations. —APP Photo

## Registration for electric, petrol bikes for students

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif has started a registration drive for the provision of 20,000 electric and petrol bikes to university students across Punjab on interest-free easy monthly instalments.

In phase-I, 19,000 petrol bikes and 1,000 e-bikes will be provided. Under the project, the Punjab government will pay Rs 1 billion markup subsidy, besides paying Rs 20,000 per bike down payment on behalf of the students. The markup on monthly instalments will also be borne by the Punjab government, according to a handout issued here Friday.

Male students will deposit Rs 11,676 per month, while female students will pay Rs 7,325 per month instalment. In the first phase, e-bikes will be given in Faisalabad, Multan, Bahawalpur, Rawalpindi and Lahore, whereas petrol

bikes will be given in each district in the proportion of their population.

The last date for the submission of application is 29th April 2024.

The students can apply online by visiting the link ( [StudentsBikes.punjab.gov.pk](http://StudentsBikes.punjab.gov.pk)). An eligible applicant must be a student of a public or private sector university/graduate college. He/she must be 18 years or above of age, and have a driving licence or learner's permit.

**221 raids conducted on hideouts of drug dealers:** On the instructions of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, police are in action for a drug-free Punjab and intelligence-based operations are ongoing in all districts of the province.

A Punjab police spokesman said that in the last 24 hours, 221 raids were conducted on the hide-

outs of drug dealers across the province including Lahore. Over 44 suspects involved in drug trade were arrested and 66 cases were registered. Over 35 kilos of charas, one and a half kgs of heroin and other drugs were recovered from the possession of the accused.

According to the spokesperson, during the last 23 days, more than 12,000 raids were conducted on the hideouts of drug dealers in various districts including Lahore. Over 5,760 cases were registered against drug dealers and 5,280 accused were arrested. Over 3,973 kg of charas, more than 21 kg of ice, 500 kg of opium and 42132 liters of liquor were recovered from the possession of the accused. IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar directed that RPOs, DPOs should monitor the ongoing crackdown against drug dealers and punish the accused.

## Commissioner checks cleanliness of South East districts

KARACHI (APP): Commissioner Karachi Syed Hassan Naqvi visited the South and East districts on Friday to assess the cleanliness situation and the performance of the relevant staff deployed for Eid holidays in different locations.

During his visit, the Commissioner expressed concern over the absence of staff and substandard cleanliness situation in some areas of the South district.

While taking notice, the commissioner directed the Deputy Commissioners to closely monitor the situation, besides emphasizing the pivotal role of administrative departments for taking initiatives for improvement in the city.

To bolster accountability, Hassan Naqvi empowered the officers with access to the Solid Waste Management Board portal to facilitate real-time monitoring of staff attendance and performance.

Stressing the imperative for proactive engagement, he urged the DCs to uphold their responsibilities in driving positive change.

Accompanied by MD Solid Waste Intiaz Ali Shah, Syed Hassan Naqvi, received a briefing on the sanitation infrastructure. Besides others, DC South Altaf Sario and DC East Altaf Sheikh, were also present during the inspection.

Acknowledging the

challenges during Eid holidays, Hassan Naqvi underscored the urgency of maintaining sanitation efforts, particularly in densely populated areas. Consequently, a cleaning crew comprising 1200 khakroobs was deployed in the South District.

However, dissatisfaction arose due to absenteeism, prompting Naqvi to issue immediate directives for their attendance.

Following the Commissioner's intervention, 511 absentee sweepers were summoned to fulfill their duties.

To ensuing cleanup efforts, he saw 856 khakroobs actively participating in sanitation activities, resulting in the collection of 750 tons of garbage from various sites in the South district.

Venturing into the heart of affected areas, including Empress Market, Garden, Soldier Bazar, and Lee Market, Naqvi personally inspected the garbage collection process. Emphasizing the importance of daily waste removal, he stressed the necessity of transporting garbage to designated landfill sites via the GTS.

Looking ahead, the Commissioner pledged to conduct comprehensive visits to all GTS and landfill sites across the city, underlining his commitment to implementing necessary improvements. He reiterated the urgent need for revitalizing Karachi's sanitation sys-

tem to ensure a cleaner and healthier environment for its residents.

## 14 dead, 2553 hurt in 2177 RTCs

LAHORE (APP): At least 14 persons were killed and 2553 injured in 2177 Road Traffic Crashes (RTCs) in all 37 districts of Punjab during the last 24 hours.

According to a spokesperson, 1247 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 1306 victims with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by rescue medical teams thus, reducing the burden of hospitals. Furthermore, the analysis showed that 1106 drivers, 114 underage drivers, 224 pedestrians, and 1237 passengers were among the victims of road traffic crashes.

The statistics show that 350 RTCs were reported in Lahore which affected 425 persons placing the Provincial Capital at top of the list followed by 143 in Faisalabad with 188 victims and at third Gujranwala with 132 RTCs and 141 victims.

According to the data, 2022 motorbikes, 104 auto-rickshaws, 254 motorcars, 43 vans, 15 passenger buses, four trucks and 183 other types of auto vehicles and slow-moving carts were involved in these road traffic accidents.



LAHORE: An over loaded motor rickshaw book by a family in risky way traveling on a busy road. —APP Photo



# Search operation continued: Chanzeb

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Adviser to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism and Culture, Zahid Chanzeb, has appreciated the Rescue 1122 for immediately reaching the accident site of boat capsized and saving the lives of tourists in the Kabul river near Kund Rest House at the junction of Nowshera and Swabi.

He expressed the confidence that the infant baby who went missing by drowning in this accident will also be recovered soon, for which the search and

rescue operation is going on diligently. In a statement, he paid tribute to the spirit of Rescue 1122 as well as the local people for rescuing 7 out of 8 people by timely reaching on the spot and thus saving precious human lives.

The Tourism Adviser also eulogized the role of relief and rescue department for deploying rescue divers and medical teams at various water tourism spots of the province including Nowshera, Charsadda, Swat, Kalam, Bahrain, Nathyagli, Hariapur, Kohat and Hangu on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr.

He highly praised the initiatives and hoped that under this spirit, all the institutions including the departments of tourism, relief and local administration will work side by side to give the tourists a sense of security and pleasure during their tours and travels thus highlighting the best soft image of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at national and global levels.

He clarified that the provincial government is making KP better and safer for tourists during every season and all the available resources are being utilized for this purpose.

# Govt working on projects for welfare of KP’s people

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Provincial Food Minister Zahir Shah Toru has said that under the leadership of Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, our government in the province is working on projects with far-reaching results for the welfare of the people and according to our leader Imran Khan’s vision, health card has been restored besides the provision of cash assistance worth billions of rupees to the poor citizens during Ramadan was ensured.

He was interacting with the local elders, party workers and people who came to greet him on Eid-ul-Fitr at his residence and interacting with the media. Zahir Shah Toru said

that Mardan is the second largest city in the province, the development of which is the top priority of the provincial government.

He said he had already talked to the Chief Minister and Health Minister to provide funds for the completion of the ongoing projects of DHQ Hospital and Benazir Children Hospital in Mardan and the required funds will be provided soon and by June this year these projects will be completed.

He said that they are working on many projects for the development of Mardan, the fruits of which will benefit the people here. In response to a question, Zahir Shah Toru said that there are specific situations regarding the security of our province, in the context

of which a meeting was held with Corps Commander Peshawar.

He said that being a responsible government, it is necessary to communicate with the security agencies to be aware of the security situation so that necessary measures can be taken to protect the public.

The provincial food minister mentioned the steps taken by the food department to control prices and prevent artificial inflation during Ramadan and said that the food department and administrative offices throughout the province had worked hard to provide food items at reasonable prices to the people. He himself directly supervised these initiatives which yielded positive results, he concluded.

# Governor’s House opens for women, children

PESHAWAR (INP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor House on Friday opened for families and children on the third day of Eid ul Fitr.

For children recreation, swings and other playing instruments were installed at Governor House, besides food stalls.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali, intermingled with children and helped them in free swings.

On the first two days, the Governor House remained open for general public.

On the occasion, the KP Governor said that arrangements for recreation of families and their children were made at the colonial era building, saying it was the house of people.

# APS students extend Eid greetings to Pak Army

PESHAWAR (PPI): Students of Army Public School Peshawar extended Eid greetings to the brave of the Pakistan Army. Through a unique gesture, these young minds conveyed their admiration and appreciation for the sacrifices made by the defenders of their nation.

In their own unique way, the children expressed their love and support for the Pakistan Army, sending Eid cards adorned with messages of high morale, unwavering spirit, and solidarity.

Their gestures served as a powerful reminder of the unity and resilience of the entire nation in safeguarding their beloved homeland.

Through these gestures, the children sent a powerful message to any potential adversaries, reaffirming that the bond between the people of Pakistan and their armed forces remains unbreakable.

# Rescue 1122 provides services

PESHAWAR (APP): KP Emergency Service Rescue 1122 provided services to 1,499 people in 1,439 emergencies through out the province during Eid.

Bilal Ahmed Faizi, spokesman for Rescue 1122 said that Director General Dr. Muhammad Ayaz canceled the holidays of personnel during Eid ul Fitr.

Rescue 1122 campuses were been set up in which emergency medical technicians and divers were been appointed at tourists spots.

Bilal Ahmed Faizi said that in the first two days of Eid, Rescue 1122 provided services to 1499 people in 1439 emergencies across the province. In which 326 traffic accidents, 832 medical, 87 fires, 37 crimes, 10 drownings, 20 wall collapses and provided facilities in 25 other emergencies.

19 people died in various incidents while providing medical aid to 1499 people and transferring many people to hospital for further treatment.



PESHAWAR: People exchanging Eid greetings to each other.

# Peshawar residents distressed as use of firecrackers on Eid creates nuisance

Ali Sheikh

PESHAWAR: Residents of different localities in Peshawar have demanded the government to ban the open sale of firecrackers as the exploding of firecrackers by children during the Eid ul Fitr has created nuisance for the people.

The streets of Peshawar ablaze not with festivity but with frustration as the rampant use of firecrackers have sparked discontent among residents, leading to a surge in noise pollution and safety concerns. What was once a religious celebration has transformed

into a source of nuisance and distress for many.

As soon as announcement of Eid ul Fitr was made by the Central Reut e Hilal Committee, children came out of streets and used different types of firecrackers creating huge and unbearable noise in every nook and corner of the city. The residents of different areas including Hayatabad, University Town, Bara Gate, Old Bara Road, Swati Phatak, Gulberg and Gulbahar who spoke with this scribe raised their concern over the sale of such firecrackers without any notice taken by the government.

“The excessive use of these explosive devices has left residents on edge, particularly the elderly, ailing community, and pets who are more sensitive to loud noises,” Umar a resident of University Town said.

“The constant barrage of firecrackers has made it impossible to find solace even within the confines of our homes,” laments Mrs. Farid, a resident of Bara Gate. “It’s not only disturbing but also poses a serious risk to our safety,” he added. The issue has prompted calls for action from various quarters of society, with residents urg-

ing authorities to enforce strict regulations on the use of firecrackers. Many argue that while celebrating cultural and religious festivities is important, it should not come at the expense of public peace and safety.

As Peshawar grapples with the aftermath of the firecracker frenzy, residents remain hopeful that concerted action and community cooperation will pave the way for a quieter, more peaceful future. It is a reminder that while celebrations may come and go, the well-being and harmony of the community should always remain paramount.

# Cinemas continue to attract crowds of moviegoers

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar cinemas continue to attract large crowds of moviegoers with the release of four new Pashto exciting thrillers and films.

Pashto film industry has released four new movies on Eidul Fitr to entertain cinemagoers. The four Pashto flicks were featuring film stars, including Arbaaz Khan, Shahid Khan, Jahangir Khan, Asif Khan and Jameel Babar.

Shot on beautiful locations of northern areas and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa the four movies have many

attractions for the viewers.

Sabrina Cinema screened the Pashto film “Yar Dushman” on the first day of Eidul Fitr.

The movie Yaar Dushman, which is directed by Arbaaz Khan attracting hundreds of fans while the film cast comprises of the actor himself, Ajab Gull, Jahangir Jaani, Asif Khan and Jameel Babar.

“The much anticipated movies with quality production, dialogues, casts, locations and soulful music will mesmerise the audience, multiplying their joy

of the festive occasion”, renowned film director and film star Arbaaz Khan said.

The film directors and producers have pinned hopes on the production quality, dialogues delivery, casts, locations and strength of music of the films.

Film expert Aijaz Gul said that screening of four Pashto films on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr is very positive news which will revive the ailing regional film industry through providing a spice of entertainment and a blend of emotions to the cinegoers.



PESHAWAR: Policeman stand alert during Eid prayer in City.

# Naran, Kaghan attract domestic tourists in droves amid blossom of flowers

PESHAWAR (APP): Enjoying the hide and seek between the sun and clouds with prediction of moderate to erratic rainfalls over the snow-clad mountains of Malka Perbat at Kaghan valley, the domestic tourists, adventure sports enthusiasts and ecotourists arrived in large numbers from plain districts of KP and Punjab provinces during Eid holidays, enjoying the breathtaking natural beauty of Saiful Malook, Lalusir and Anso lakes, which takes them into the lap of serenity.

Following an increase of mercury level in the plains districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab provinces during Eid days, the domestic tourists, adventure sports enthusiasts, mountaineers and hikers along with families started arriving in droves to picturesque the Kaghan and Naran valleys to make these days memorable.

The tourists explore Saiful Malook-a famous lake known for Persian Prince, Saiful Malook and fairy princes Badri Jamal, Anso and Lalusir lakes located in snow-clad

Malaka Perbat mountains in eastern side of Kaghan.

The tourists enjoy traditional food cuisines including Chappli Kabab, Paye, Rice Polao while children play around them amid great fun and laughter.

The lake takes thousands of visitors into pipe-dream with fairy world’s thoughts popping up with peace and serenity after entering the natural wonder spreading on 1.06 square miles having 113 feet depth and 3,224 meters height from sea-level following completion of boredom of tedious journey from plain areas of Pakistan to Kaghan valley where seasonal flowers started blossom signaling arrival of spring season.

“Saiful Malook’s natural beauty are beyond one’s imagination. I have visited many lakes in Pakistan and foreign countries but no one can match the mesmerizing beauty of this oval shape lake blessed with crystal greenish-blue water emanating from Malka Perbat glaciers,” said Taj Khan, former Ambassador while talking to APP.

Enjoying boating at the famous lake with his fami-

ly, he said the clean-water of Saiful Malook emanating from the lofty glaciers of Malka Perbat on its northeast and prince Malook-Jamala fairytale leaves mesmerizing effects on the minds of tourists that can’t be explained in words.

The enhanced roads connectivity including Hazara Motorway, establishment of camping pods, construction of jeepable tracks and improvement in links roads besides deployment of tourism police have helped increase tourists flow to Naran, Kaghan, Nathiagali and Galiyat valleys.

Tourists along with families could easily come here to spend some time in its relaxed environment due to better roads connectivity before exploring the nearby Anso and Dudipatsar lakes in Upper Kaghan through jeeps and horse riding.

KP Tourism and Culture Authority officials told APP that under Ecotourism Project, camping pods were established at Sharan near Saiful Malook lake to facilitate tourists. Besides Sharan, 10 more camping pods installed at different

tourism places to provide affordable accommodations to tourists’ families.

These camping pods established at Sharan Kaghan Mansehra, Gabeen Jaba Swat, Mahaband Buner-Swabi, Allai Batagram, Bamburait Chitral, Tandyani Abbottabad, Bisigram Swat, Yakhtangi Shangla, Saheed e Sir and Malka Swat and Sheikh Badin in DI Khan.

Bishigram, Shran, Yakhtangi, Shaheed e Sir and Malk camping pods have already been opened for tourists while the remaining pods would be shortly opened after completion of renovation works.

Each pod has two to four beds for families, a wash room and a small kitchen,” he said, adding Rs4500 to Rs5000 per day/night stay was being charged against Rs15,000 to Rs20,000 per room by a private hotels at Kagan, Naran and Galiyat valleys,” he said.

Keeping in view of the camping pods successful experience, it has been decided to install 10 more camping pods at Jargo and Sulatan in Swat,

Lashkargha Broghal Valley and Surlaspur Shandor valley Upper Chitral, Kumrat valley in Upper Dir, Laram Top and Shahi Bin Shahi in Lower Dir, Lilowani Alpuri in Shangla Samanah Top in Orakzai/Hangu and Kalam Swat.

Muhammad Ali Syed, General Manager, Tourism and Culture Authority said that five tourists’ facilitation Centres at Chitral, Donga Gali, Abbottabad City and Peshawar established. Waterfalls of Lamchar, Sajkot, Noori, Chajjian Haripur, Jarogo Swat, Lanchar Dir and Umbrella Abbottabad were being developed to promote ecotourism.

To reduce tourists’ load at Galiyat, Kaghan, Naran, Kalam, Malam Jabba and Dir, jeepable tracks was being constructed in 15 areas to reduce load on existing tourists destinations.

To promote sustainable and planned tourism, he said KP government has announced construction of Integrated Tourism Zones (ITZs) at Ghanool Mansehra, Mankiyal Swat, Madaklasht Chitral and

Thandiyanj Abbottabad with assistance of the World Bank.

ITZs of Ghanool Mansehra would be established on 59.6 acres, Mankiyal Swat on 29.5 acres, Madaklasht on 540 Kanal and Thandiyanj on 640 Kanal of land respectively.

As a pilot project, the Govt has decided to first develop Ghanool with a proposed cost of Rs5.5 billion and Mankiyal with an estimated cost of Rs2.9 billion.

The pre-qualification bids of Mankiyal and Ghanool ITZs would soon be awarded for which rules and regulations were being prepared and to be completed in two years on the patterns of ITZs of Malaysia and Indonesia.

These ITZs are expected to create 200,000 direct and indirect job opportunities and about USD 2.8 billion investment.

Similarly, tourism spots, jeep tracks and roads to link waterfalls of Abbottabad, Hariपुर and Mansehra were being developed.

Also, ecotourism spots are being developed at

premises of small dams include Tanda dam Kohat, Chatri dam in Hariपुर, Naryab Hangu, Kundal Swabi and Chalgoza Abbottabad, and that a road from Maidan to Bishigram lake was being constructed while a jeep track at Kandal lake was already built.

PC-1 of Chatri, Naryab and Tanda dams tourism sites were completed and practical work to soon start.

Feasibility of Cable Car project to be started from Dir Upper to Madaklasht Chitral has almost been completed, and the mega project would be financially supported by the World Bank through Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Integrated tourism project (KITE).

The rest houses of KP tourism departments including Batakundi Naran, Kund Parak Swabi, Malam Jabba Swst, Tanda Dam Kohat, Landakai Swa and four cottages at Nathiagali Abbottabad were also outsourced to provide better accommodation to tourists.

Four colonial era tracks’ development including Thandiyanj-Nathiagali hav-

ing 8, 200 feet height, 40km length and 1500 old trees belt, Thandiyanj-Biringali track, Dagri Bangla-Meera Jani-Nathiagali track and Kaghan- Mahnoor track starting from Shinkyari to Kund Bangla and onward to Shaheed Pani-Nadi Bangla to Musa Ka Musallah were in pipeline.

Deployment of tourism police in tourist destinations of Malakand and Hazara divisions and tourists assistance app were launched to facilitate tourists.

As a result of these pro-tourism measures of the government, he said influx of tourists started coming to various tourists’ destinations during Eidul Fitr holidays in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The Government needs to project these picturesque destinations through digital media to attract foreign tourists. These sites is required to be showcased through social media platforms to bolster rural economy and project the country’s soft image of being tourists friendly.





## In brief

### Arms recovered, two arrested F.P. Report

KOHAT: Local police here Wednesday foiled a bid of arms smuggling and arrested two smugglers. The arms were recovered by a team of police officials under supervision of ASP Sadar Muhammad Talha Arif. The seized weapons include 2 Sub machine guns, 58 pistols and 56 chargers. The arrested smugglers were identified as Kamil Jan and Saleem Jan, residents of Parachinar Kurram. Case has been registered against arrested smugglers and investigation is underway. Meanwhile, SP Sadar Division Tariq Khan has spent Eid-ul-Fitr with the Policemen at the remote outpost Shadikhel Kohat. SP Sadar Division congratulated the police jawans on Eid and distributed sweets among them. SP Sadar Division went to a remote outpost on the day of Eid and spent a lot of time mingling with the youth. SP Sadar Division praised the determination, courage and high morale of the Police Jawans. While talking to the Policemen, the SP Sadar Division appreciated the Police Jawans for their courage and ensuring peace and defense of the motherland. He said despite great responsibilities, the Cops are determined to serve the people while giving matchless sacrifices and now the Police Force is considered as the pride force of Pakistan who fight at the frontline against terrorism, militancy and insurgency. With the experience of terrorism, with the grace of Almighty Allah, the Police Force has become the guarantor of peace, he added.

### Sweets distributed among inmates F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Deputy Commissioner Lower Dir, Wasil Khan visited District Jail Taimargara on Eid-ul-Fitr and distributed sweets among inmates. He was accompanied by Additional Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Tariq Khan and concerned officials. The DC inspected various sections of Jail including kitchen, dispensary and juvenile section. He met with prisoners and inquired about their problems. He directed jail superintendent to take steps for resolution of prisoners' problems and distributed Eidi among juvenile prisoners. He directed jail staff to make special arrangements for families of inmates who would visit jail to meet relatives on Eid.

### 2 brothers fall prey for enmity F.P. Report

TANK: Armed men shot dead two real brothers over an old enmity in Tank on Friday morning. According to police, another man was injured in the firing incident which happened in Mian Lal area of Tank. The deceased were identified as Zainuddin and Akramuddin. The dead bodies and the injured were shifted to a hospital. The police have launched a search operation to hunt down the killers.

### Over dozen hospitalized F.P. Report

MALAKWAL: Over a dozen people were hospitalized when a swarm of honey bees attacked them in Punjab town of Malakwal. The victims were enjoying picnic on the second day of Eidul Fitr in Nawaz Sharif Park when bees targeted them. The injured with multiple bit marks were rushed to a hospital for treatment.



**D I KHAN:** Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur offering Eid prayer at his native town.

## People visits Pir Baba Shrine during Eid

**F.P. Report**

BUNER: Countless number of visitors throng the Pir Baba Shrine on the eve of Eid breaking the previous records. Thousands of followers both female and male mostly young age were visited the Shirin during three days of Eid festivities.

The families also visited with children due to their presence the surroundings were presented a festive look. The followers were largely visited the Pir Baba Shrine and the Pir Baba Jamia Masjid the Pir Baba worship place at some distance away while the Pir Baba Bazaar observed heavy rush.

The motorbikers the car and jeep riders the mini coaches and heavy busses transported thousands of people of both sex to the Shrine. The visitors number was so high that they were observed packing like situation at the Shrine and Bazaar while almost all of open spaces were packed with their bikes car jeep

mini coaches and busses.

Most of the families and villagers dashed Pir Baba with own cooking ranges and food stuff so as to cook and feed at open atmosphere. They also spent day and night in the open spaces and well enjoyed trip. The Pir Baba Bazaar especially designed for the followers and visitors were decorated shops with decoration items both for make-up and home and other items of daily use including garments and shoes besides toys for kids.

The visitors were also moving onward to enjoy lush greenery the thick forest and natural water falls and fountains at the scenic beautiful visiting spots in the Elum the Qadar Nigar the Kalil top and Gokand Valley. The deputy commissioner Hamid Ali Khan under the supervision of ADC relief and Human Rights Syed Akram Shah with team members ACs AACs TMOs was assigned task of facilitation the followers and visitors.

The DPO Shah Hassan

under the supervision of DSP circle Pir Baba DSP headquarter and SHO Pir Baba was devised strategy for security to the followers and visitors. Special directives were issued traffic warden Naseer Bacha for smooth flow of traffic entering Pir Baba Bazaar and the warden with team well implemented it.

The Syed families (in series the grand sons of Pir Baba) were happy over the unprecedented rush at the Shrine during this Eid and hoped gradually the followers and visitors number would increase up to the number in the past and to help improve religious tourism and to promote peace in the region as well.

The shopkeepers the hoteliers and vendors were also happy over returning the visitors and followers to Pir Baba and hoped this positive development would help promote economy trade and earning and also help sending positive message and to help message of peace rest of Pakistan and abroad as well.

## Balochistan CM meets PPP chairman F.P. Report

NAUDERO: Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti met with Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari here in Naudero. During the meeting, the two leaders discussed various political matters, including the formation of the Balochistan cabinet. Bugti also extended Eid greetings to Bilawal.

CM Bugti stated that his provincial government was planning projects in line with the vision of the PPP to ensure the welfare of the poor. Bilawal mentioned that Balochistan was close to his heart, emphasising that efforts had been made in the past to address the province's issues. He expressed their commitment to continue initiatives for public welfare, with the assurance that the Sindh government would assist Balochistan in the healthcare sector.

## Three drown in Indus River F.P. Report

ATTOK: Three young men drowned in the Indus River in Attok Khurd while celebrating a picnic, police said Friday.

According to the police, body of one of the young men was retrieved while search for the other two continued. As per the Rescue personnel, 19-year-old Hussain Shah son of Waheed Shah of Barzai village while two other youths, 18-year-old Waqar and 20-year-old Abdul Ghani, who came from Peshawar to celebrate a picnic at the bank of the Indus River in Attok Khurd drowned while taking a bath in the river on Thursday.

Other visitors tried to save them but they were swept away by gushing water. Rescue 1122 personnel rushed to the site and launched a rescue operation. They searched for hours but due to darkness after sunset, the search was called off for today.

# Youths and tourists throng scenic spots on Eid days in Dir

**F.P. Report**

LOWER DIR: Sunny shining weather, long Eid holidays and attractive spring season promoted hundreds of local youths to throng scenic spots and lush green hills in different areas of Lower Dir during the first three days of Eid al Fitr.

Soon after offering religious rituals on Eid, the youths riding motorcycles, cars and pick up vehicles thronged the tourists' spots in Laram Top in Adenzai, Shahi Park in Samarbagh, Sheen Ghar in Lajbok, Kamrani Top in Talash, Rabat and Maidan. Several outside tourists from Mardan, Rawalpindi and Lahore also reached the scenic spots in Lower Dir on the Eid third day to enjoy natural beauty and everlasting greenery at hill-tops.

The Frontier Corps North and Dir Scouts 185 Wing also set up a three-day colourful Eid fair at the Lal Qila sports' complex in Maidan which was visited by hundreds of local youths. Male and female children enjoyed swings, food stalls and sporting activities on the occasion. The Commandant Dir Task force brigadier Sanaullah and colonel Sajjad Kiani inaugurated the funfair on the first day of Eid.

The visiting youths lauded the efforts of Dir Scouts 185 wing and termed it an appreciable step. Music sessions and gymnastic games were also arranged which was enjoyed by people visiting the fair. Talking to local journalists, Brigadier Sanaullah said that lasting peace prevailed

in all parts of Lower Dir and tourists from other districts could also visit and enjoy the scenic beauties of the district without any fear. He also distributed medals and cash prizes among youth for displaying their talent.

Local and some outside tourists also visited the Shahi Park, a scenic tourist spot in the bordering area of Samarbagh and enjoyed different kinds of swings and food stalls. The organizers appealed to tourists from across the country to visit this scenic valley fearlessly and enjoy the natural beauty. Hundreds of tourists also thronged the Laram Top which is famous for its natural beauty, lush green forest and coolness. Talking to this reporter, Arshad, a tourist from Mardan said that God had gifted unique beauty to Laram Top. The tourists, however, deplored the bad condition of the road leading to the top and demanded the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to allocate funds for the road's reconstruction and repair.

**Several youths injured in road accidents during Eid days in Dir:** A minor girl hailing from the Khall area was killed when a car and a motorcycle collided head on at Mian Banda in the jurisdiction of Timergara police station here on Eid day. Sources in the Rescue 1122 told that a total of 26 incidents of road mishaps, medical emergency and house fires occurred during Eid days at Shaheed Chowk, Qaziabad, Munjai, Siar, Danwa, Timer camp, Khungi, Osakai,

Odigram and other areas. Several youths were injured in road mishaps. One of the injured youths from Osakai was referred to Peshawar due to his critical condition. The Rescue 1122 emergency and medical teams provided the injured with first aid and shifted some of the injured to nearby hospitals.

The Lower Dir deputy commissioner Wasil Khan along with additional assistant commissioner revenue Tariq Khan visited the district jail Timergara and asked about the facilities provided to the inmates. The officials checked the jail hospital, kitchen, juvenile section and other units. The DC also distributed sweets and cash Eidi among juvenile and female prisoners. Later the DC also visited the district headquarters hospital and checked healthcare facilities at the emergency units and different wards.

One of the traffic police officials told this reporter that mostly youths were ruthlessly driving their motorcycles without wearing helmets on the busy roads. The official said the traffic police performed their duties even on Eid but due to shortage of staff all the roads leading to scenic tourists' spots could not be checked. He said that the majority of teenagers were seen plying their motorcycles on the roads. The district administration had banned wheeler, aerial firing and fireworks in the district but despite that dozens of youths violated the order during the first three days of Eid.

## Dengue hemorrhagic fever leading cause of death among children

**F.P. Report**

QUETTA: World Health Organization (WHO) has issued dengue situation report of Balochistan, it emerged on Friday.

The report says dengue fever is a vector borne viral infection of global public health concern in tropical and subtropical regions around

the world. The disease is caused by any of the four closely related dengue virus serotypes (DEN-1, DEN-2, DEN-3, and DEN-4), which are transmitted primarily by the Aedes aegypti mosquito. Dengue fever can manifest as a mild flu-like illness or develop into a severe, potentially life-threatening condition known as severe

dengue or dengue hemorrhagic fever (DHF). Worldwide, 100-400 million dengue infections occur annually. Out of them, 70% cases occur in Asian countries including Pakistan. DHF is a leading cause of death among children. No specific treatment (only symptomatic treatment) is available.



**QUETTA:** Security personnel standing alert to avoid any untoward incidents during Eid holidays.

## Eid holidays: Naran, Kaghan attract domestic tourists in droves

MANSEHRA (APP): Enjoying the hide and seek between the sun and clouds with prediction of moderate to erratic rainfalls over the snow-clad mountains of Malika Perbat at Kaghan valley, the domestic tourists, adventure sports enthusiasts and ecotourists arrived in large numbers from plain districts of KP and Punjab provinces during Eid holidays, enjoying the breathtaking natural beauty of Saiful Malook, Lalusir and Anso lakes, which takes them into the lap of serenity.

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The tourists enjoy traditional food cuisines including Chappli Kabab, Paye, Rice Polao while children play around them amid great fun and laughter. The lake takes thousands of visitors into pipe-dream with fairy world's

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Bishigram, Shran, Yakhtangi, Shaheed e Sir and Malk camping pods have already been opened for tourists while the remaining pods would be shortly opened after completion of renovation works. Each pod has two to four beds for families, a wash room and a small kitchen," he said, adding Rs4500 to Rs5000 per day/night stay was being charged against Rs15,000 to Rs20,000 per room by a private hotels at Khagan, Naran and

Galiyat valleys," he said.

Keeping in view of the camping pods successful's experience, it has been decided to install 10 more camping pods at Jargo and Sulatarn in Swat, Lashkargha Broghal Valley and Suraspur Shandor valley Upper Chitral, Kumrat valley in Upper Dir, Laram Top and Shahi Bin Shahi in Lower Dir, Lilowani Alpuri in Shangla Samanah Top in Orakzai/Hangu and Kalam Swat. Muhammad Ali Syed, General Manager, Tourism and Culture Authority said that five tourists' facilitation Centres at Chitral, Donga Gali, Abbottabad City and Peshawar established. Waterfalls of Lamchar, Sajkot, Noori, Chajjian Haripur, Jarogo Swat, Lanchar Dir and Umbrella Abbottabad were being developed to promote ecotourism.

To reduce tourists' load at Galiyat, Kaghan, Naran, Kalam, Malam Jabba and Dir, jeepable tracks was being constructed in 15 areas to reduce load on existing tourists destinations. To promote sustainable and planned tourism, he said KP government has announced construction of Integrated Tourism Zones (ITZs) at Ghanool Mansehra, Mankiyal Swat, Madaklasht Chitral and Thandiyani Abbottabad with assistance of the World Bank.

ITZs of Ghanool Mansehra would be established on 59.6 acres, Mankiyal Swat on 29.5 acres, Madaklasht on 540 Kanal

and Thandiyani on 640 Kanal of land respectively. As a pilot project, the Govt has decided to first develop Ghanool with a proposed cost of Rs5.5 billion and Mankiyal with an estimated cost of Rs2.9 billion. The pre-qualification bids of Mankiyal and Ghanool ITZs would soon be awarded for which rules and regulations were being prepared and to be completed in two years on the patterns of ITZs of Malaysia and Indonesia.

These ITZs are expected to create 200,000 direct and indirect job opportunities and about USD 2.8 billion investment. Similarly, tourism spots, jeep tracks and roads to link waterfalls of Abbottabad, Haripur and Mansehra were being developed. Also, ecotourism spots are being developed at premises of small dams include Tanda dam Kohat, Chattri dam in Haripur, Naryab Hangu, Kundal Swabi and Chalgoza Abbottabad, and that a road from Maidan to Bishigram lake was being constructed while a jeep track at Kandal lake was already built.

PC-1 of Chattri, Naryab and Tanda dams tourism sites were completed and practical work to soon start. Feasibility of Cable Car project to be started from Dir Upper to Madaklasht Chitral has almost been completed, and the mega project would be financially supported by the World Bank through Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa Integrated tourism project (KITE).

The rest houses of KP tourism departments including Batakundi Naran, Kund Parak Swabi, Malam Jabba Swst, Tanda Dam Kohat, Landakai Swa and four cottages at Nathiagali Abbottabad were also outsourced to provide better accommodation to tourists. Four colonial era tracks' development including Thandiyani-Nathiagali having 8, 200 feet height, 40km length and 1500 old trees belt, Thandiyani-Biringali track, Dagri Bangla-Meera Jani-Nathiagali track and Kaghan-Mahnor track starting from Shinkyari to Kund Bangla and onward to Shaheed Pani-Nadi Bangla to Musa Ka Musallah were in pipeline.

Deployment of tourism police in tourist destinations of Malakand and Hazara divisions and tourists assistance app were launched to facilitate tourists. As a result of these pro-tourism measures of the government, he said influx of tourists started coming to various tourists' destinations during Eidul Fitr holidays in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Government needs to project these picturesque destinations through digital media to attract foreign tourists. These sites are required to be showcased through social media platforms to bolster rural economy and project the country's soft image of being tourists friendly.





GAZA: Palestinian women volunteer in a charity initiative to prepare traditional cookies in Rafah.

## Will Gaza be safer if Netanyahu quit as Israel PM? Likely not

GAZA: As Israel’s war on Gaza drags on, criticism appears to be centring on embattled Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu, a man indicted on multiple corruption charges, with thousands of protesters in the streets, demanding his departure. However, discontent over Netanyahu and the extreme-right provocateurs in his government should not be confused with a dampening of popular support for the war being waged to punish Gaza for a Hamas-led attack on October 7 and, ostensibly, to secure the release of the remaining captives taken from Israel that day, say analysts. Observers say that while Netanyahu’s critics may take issue with him as an individual, his war objectives still enjoy the support of a society that is becoming increasingly right-wing, ultra-religious and believing that Palestinians are somehow “less” than they are. “We have people walking around with automatic weapons, and simply saying that you were afraid of a Palestinian gives you the legal justification to shoot them,” Haim Bresheeth, author of *Introducing the Holocaust: A Graphic Guide* and a professor of film studies at SOAS, said from London.

“I think, right now, Israeli society is somewhere between fascism and Nazism and no one seems to have noticed,” Bresheeth, who left Israel in the 1970s and whose parents were both killed at Auschwitz, said. A January poll by Israel Hayom found an overwhelming majority of those polled (81.5 percent) supported the idea that the war in Gaza remained the best means of securing the captives’ release. Moreover, before the recent International Court of Justice ruling that ordered Israel to allow more aid into Gaza to avert famine, a survey by the Israel Democracy Institute (IDI) showed a marked reluctance among Israelis to increase aid deliveries to Gaza. “Two trends have been under way for the last 20 years or so,” Mairav Zonszein, a senior analyst with the International Crisis Group said from Tel Aviv.

“Israeli society, especially the young, has become much more right-wing, the polls bear that out ... we’ve seen support for ultra-Orthodox and far-right politics grow, eventually

entering, not just the government, but the courts, the army and the education system,” she said. Israel’s current cabinet, which includes the far-right Itamar Ben-Gvir, who was convicted of incitement and support for terrorism in 2007, and Bezalel Smotrich, who heads the hardline Religious Zionist Party, has a mandate that could sustain it until 2026. “People do complain about the presence of the far right and ultra-Orthodox in power, especially liberals. However, it’s important that we don’t conflate those objections, which often refer to their own political freedoms, with concern for Palestinian lives,” Zonszein continued. International criticism of Israel’s assault on Gaza has done little to dent the domestic assumptions forged by decades of a political and media narrative about the country’s “regional isolation”.

After complaining of being victimised by the United Nations for years, and accusing the main UN humanitarian agency in Gaza of being infiltrated by the Palestinian group Hamas, Israeli ministers were quick to reject the Security Council’s late March demand for a ceasefire. Other international criticisms – such as the report by UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese, which found that Israel is engaged in three of the five acts of genocide specified in the 1948 convention – were dismissed as anti-Semitic by Israel’s political and media establishment, as well as its allies in the US. Few would dispute that Netanyahu has not encouraged and profited from the growth of the ultra-religious and extreme right, but the suggestion that the suffering in Gaza would be any less without him is risible, Zonszein said. Before the October attack, Israel had been sure of its position as an untouchable regional superpower and confident that leading Arab states were ready to overlook its expanding settlements and normalise relations, she continued.

October 7 upended those assumptions, delivering a gut punch to the Israeli sense of self from which the state was still convulsing. “October 7th cut across Israeli society, from the soldiers documenting their war crimes on TikTok to the politicians

directing them. “Israeli society has for years been geared to see the Palestinians as the enemy,” Zonszein continued. “It’s convenient to blame Netanyahu, nothing more. Others would take a similar approach. Where Gaza is concerned, Netanyahu represents the consensus.” More than 33,000 people have died in Gaza and close to 76,000 more have been injured in Israeli attacks. Within the enclave, accounts of the torture of civilians and UN workers are being shared, while accusations of the Israeli army killing starving people seeking food have become commonplace. “The Israeli army was taken over by the extreme right since around 2000,” Bresheeth, whose book, *An Army Like No Other*, argues that the army both forged and reflects Israel’s cultural and political identity.

“Right-wing recruits entered the army from the lower ranks before gradually earning promotion. By around 2008, maybe 2009, they had essentially become the army,” he said. “Don’t misunderstand me, this wasn’t exactly a liberal organisation before, it has always been an extremely nationalist body. “After all, this is the same army that oversaw the Nakba [the expulsion of some 750,000 Palestinians from their homeland in 1948], as well as the wars that followed. However, this is something new.” Before the current war on Gaza, the reach of the ultranationalist and religious had hit a wall, Israeli analyst Nimrod Flaschenberg said of the nationalist fervour Israel discovered in the conflict.

“The extreme right has been advancing its hold on the state for many years. Since the war, the Israeli public is politically rejecting Netanyahu’s path, but also wholeheartedly accepts the policy of the right – namely the war of destruction being waged in Gaza,” he told Al Jazeera from Berlin, where he is based. What may happen next in the war is the subject of intense speculation. While leaders in the West, not least US President Joe Biden, increasingly centre their criticism on Netanyahu, it is becoming clear that his leadership speaks more to effect than cause. — Aljazeera

## Singapore ‘tightens screws’ on Myanmar generals with arms trade crackdown

BANGKOK: Singapore has responded to United Nations pressure by cracking down on sales of weapons through its territory to Myanmar, delivering a serious blow to the embattled generals, who seized power in a coup more than three years ago.

Thomas Andrews, the UN special rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar, told Al Jazeera that the city state’s government “immediately responded” to his 2023 report that found Singapore-based entities had become the third largest source of weapons materials to the military and were “critical” to its weapons procurement. “My subsequent report to the Human Rights Council found that exports of weapons materials from Singapore to Myanmar had dropped by 83 percent,” Andrews said. “This is a significant step forward and an example of how governments can make a difference for those who are in harm’s way in Myanmar.”

Singapore’s crackdown has raised costs for army chief Min Aung Hlaing and his forces at a time when they are facing unprecedented battlefield disasters – struggling to quell opposition against their rule in the country’s heartland, and failing to push back against a coalition of ethnic minority and majority Bamar

resistance forces that have forced the military out of territory bordering Thailand, China and India. In what analysts see as a sign of the generals’ increasing desperation, they have imposed a sweeping conscription law in a bid to boost their ranks. Andrews’s 2023 report, *The Billion Dollar Death Trade*, provided details of more than \$1bn of transfers of arms and related materials to Myanmar’s ruling generals, officially styled as the State Administration Council (SAC). The report revealed that 138 Singapore-based firms were involved in the transfer of \$254m in weapons materials to the SAC from 2021 to 2022. It did not name the companies, unlike the sections on China, Russia and India. In response, the spokesperson of Singapore’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the government appreciated Andrews’s efforts “to provide information to aid Singapore’s investigations into whether any offences were committed under Singapore law”.

It added that the country had taken a “principled position against the Myanmar military’s use of lethal force against unarmed civilians and has worked to prevent the flow of arms into Myanmar”. At least 4,882 civilians have been killed, according to the Assistance Association

for Political Prisoners, which has been tracking the toll, and the military has been accused of war crimes in its use of air power and attacks on civilians. “Singapore has been quietly tightening the screws on Myanmar,” said Zachary Abuza, a professor at the National War College in Washington, DC. “While there’s more they could do, Singapore deserves a lot of credit for quietly bringing the pressure on the military government in the past year. “For decades, Singapore was the primary financial conduit for Myanmar. It is a much less permissive environment for the junta and their cronies today, forcing them to reroute their transactions through different jurisdictions. It doesn’t stop the financial flows, but it imposes new costs.”

In his recent follow-up report to the UN Human Rights Council, Andrews noted that there was no evidence that the Singaporean government had any knowledge of the transfers that were taking place. He also described how, after the 2023 findings were published, and following diplomatic efforts, the Singapore government launched an investigation into the findings and welcomed Andrews to the city-state, where he provided further information to assist with the investigation. After the US imposed sanc-

tions on 21 June 2023 on Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank and the Myanma Investment and Commercial Bank, the Monetary Authority of Singapore also gave the green light to UOB and other Singapore banks to stop servicing Myanmar-linked accounts. Myanmar’s National Unity Government (NUG), established by lawmakers from Aung San Suu Kyi’s ruling National League for Democracy, who were overthrown in the coup, said Singapore’s intervention had significantly curtailed the generals’ procurement abilities.

“Singapore’s actions have highlighted the power that ASEAN members possess to disrupt the Myanmar military junta’s acts of terrorism against its own people by cutting off their access to weapons, finance, and legitimacy,” said NUG cabinet minister, Sasa. “Every bullet and dollar provided to the junta translates into more death, destruction, pain and suffering for the people of Myanmar.” Sasa called on other countries within the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to help end Myanmar’s “reign of terror” and stressed that removing the generals from power would benefit the stability and prosperity not only of the region but the world. — Aljazeera

## Japan, Philippines and US rebuke China

WASHINGTON: The leaders of Japan, the Philippines and the United States have voiced “serious concern” over China’s actions in the disputed South China Sea. Beijing has stepped up its activities in the strategic waterway in recent years, and tensions have risen, particularly with the Philippines, one of several Southeast Asian countries that claim the parts of the sea around their coasts.

Last month, Philippines’ President Ferdinand Marcos said Manila would take countermeasures against China after a confrontation off Second Thomas Shoal injured Filipino soldiers and damaged vessels. “We express our serious concerns about the People’s Republic of China’s [PRC] dangerous and aggressive behaviour in the South China Sea,” the three leaders said in a joint statement at the end of a first-ever summit between the three countries, which took place in Washington, DC.

Beijing claims almost the entire South China Sea under its so-called nine-dash line, which was rejected by an international court in 2016. As well as the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam also claim parts of the sea. The statement noted the “importance of respecting the sovereign rights of states within their exclusive economic zones [EEZ] consistent with international law, as reflected in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea [UNCLOS]”.

It also reiterated the three state’s opposition to China’s “dangerous and coercive use of Coast Guard and maritime militia vessels in the South China Sea”. Second Thomas Shoal, known as Ayungin in the Philippines, has been the site of multiple stand-offs between Beijing and Manila in recent months, with China’s coastguard using water cannon against ships trying to resupply a contingent of Filipino sailors living aboard the deliberately grounded Sierra Madre. The shoal lies about 200 kilometres (124 miles) from the western Philippine island of Palawan, placing it within the Philippines’ EEZ, according to UNCLOS. It lies more than 1,000 kilometres (621 miles) from China’s southern Hainan island. — Aljazeera

## Mexico calls on ICJ to expel Ecuador from UN

MEXICO CITY: Mexico has appealed to the International Court of Justice to boot Ecuador from the United Nations, following a late night police raid on its embassy in Quito. President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said Mexico filed a complaint with the court on Thursday, calling Ecuador’s actions a violation of international law. “The court, in accordance with the United Nations Charter, should approve the expulsion, and there should be no veto,” Lopez Obrador said at a news conference. On social media, Mexican Foreign Minister Alicia Barcena echoed the president’s statement, saying Ecuador should be held “to account for flagrant violation of the inviolability of our embassy and attacks on our staff”.

“The letter and spirit of international law is the guide for our steps,” she wrote. Mexico’s case centres on a controversial police raid that resulted in the capture of former Ecuadorian Vice President Jorge Glas, who had been sheltering in the Mexican embassy in Quito to avoid arrest. Embassies are considered protected spaces. Although they are not “foreign soil” — a common misconception — international law places them off limits to local police.

That, in turn, allows embassy employees to carry out their work without fear of arrest or harassment from local authorities. The 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, for example, says: “The premises of the [diplomatic] mission shall be inviolable. — Aljazeera

## ‘At war until you die’ Ukraine scraps service limit, angering tired troops

KYIV: After almost two years of military service on the front lines of the Russian-Ukrainian war, Alina’s husband is “enraged” about the new mobilisation law. Ukraine’s parliament opted the law on Thursday after months of debates and almost 4,300 revisions. Alina said her husband, who requested anonymity, and brothers-in-arms are dumbfounded by the scrapping of service limits. Earlier versions of the law had envisaged demobilisation after 36 months of service. Without the limits – and with the failure of last year’s counteroffensive and months-long delays of Western military aid – they realise that their service may only end with their disability or death. “The government humiliated and offended them,” Alina, who lives in Kyiv with two children, told Al Jazeera. “They’re not eternal. They want to see their children grow, to be at home,” she said.

The demobilisation provision was scrapped at the request of Ukraine’s top brass who cited a severe shortage of servicemen on the front lines, especially in eastern Ukraine. “The enemy outnumbers us seven to 10 times,” Joint Forces Commander Yuriy Sodom told lawmakers on Wednesday, urging them to pass the law. But President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has not announced a formal mobilisation fearing backlash and protests, and preferring to focus on the law. The law was passed with 283 votes in favour in the 450-member parliament, mostly because Servant of the People, Zelenskyy’s party that dominates the Verkhovna Rada, backed it. The law boosts pay for front-line service and death benefits for families, but Zelenskyy’s political rivals lambast the scrapping of service limits.

“There’s a lot that makes the law a whip without any stimuli,” wrote Volodymyr Aryev, a lawmaker with the European Solidarity, a party centred around former President Petro Poroshenko. “The government wrote it to treat defenders like a resource, not like heroes.” Hours after the law was adopted, the parliament urged the government to develop an additional bill on demobilisation and rotation of servicemen on the front lines. The scrapping of service limits predictably enraged seasoned soldiers – especially those who started their service in 2014, when Moscow backed pro-Russian separatists in southeastern Ukraine helping them carve out two separatist “People’s Republics”. “Knowingly and voluntarily, I will become part of the most depraved category of citizens in my own country,” Artem Osipyan, a psychologist-turned-serviceman, wrote on Facebook.

“Who will I be next? Do I have to always remain a serviceman? Has my life been that insignificant? What makes other people’s lives more meaningful and less worthy of sacrifice than mine?” he asked rhetorically. Younger servicemen also find the scrapping utterly confusing. Shortly after Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine began in 2022, Taras signed up for three years of military service. “It was supposed to be like a job –

three years in and then out,” the bespectacled 23-year-old with sparse stubble on his sun-tanned face told Al Jazeera. Like all other servicemen on active duty, he has to withhold his name and details of his service.

“Looks like I’m serving until the victory” over Russia, Taras said with a tight smile. To the families of servicemen, the uncertainty about demobilisation is depressing and demoralising. “You don’t have to be at war until you die, you need to know when your service ends,” the wife of a soldier stationed in the eastern town of Kramatorsk told Al Jazeera. He husband joined the military in 2015 but switched to volunteer work after wounds that affected his walking. He went back to the service in 2022 and is still on the front line after suffering half a dozen contusions, developing problems with sight and digestion and spending weeks in hospitals. “They will be there until last man standing. Literally, last man,” his wife said. The uncertainty about the service limits also repels potential conscripts.

Within hours of the full-scale invasion that began in February 2022, volunteers thronged conscription offices, especially in eastern and central regions, and some even had to go to Ukraine’s west to enlist. But the general enthusiasm sank after news of severe losses and horrible conditions in the trenches and military barracks amid the corruption of officers and suppliers. The mobilisation law envisages the creation of an electronic registry instead of the obsolete paper-based system that bred corruption.

In the past two years, police and investigators have reported arrests of dozens of conscription officials. Some amassed millions of dollars in cash and bought pricey real estate in Ukraine and in Europe. Every man of fighting age will have 60 days to register in person or through the electronic registry, and those who do not will be considered draft dodgers. Men will have to have their registration papers on them at all times. Some servicemen say the mobilisation should go hand in hand with better training for conscripts. “The enemy is strong, it has enough resources, enough people – if you can call them that,” a soldier stationed in the southern Kherson region told Al Jazeera. “We need people who are better trained, who understand what they’ll be doing, what they’re signing up for,” he said. Forced conscription has already become a scourge all over Ukraine.

In many rural areas, most men of fighting age have been drafted, while in urban centres potential soldiers avoid showing up in public places or using public transportation because of patrols of conscription officials and police officers. Some men are urged to go to conscription offices to simply clarify their personal details – but never come out in their civilian clothes. “Five guys I know went to a conscription office and didn’t come back” because they were dispatched to training bases right away, Tetiana Bozhko, who works at a hospital canteen in northern Kyiv, told Al Jazeera. — Aljazeera

## Election body asks top court to resolve Zuma candidacy

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa’s electoral commission said it has appealed to the country’s highest court to rule on whether former President Jacob Zuma can stand as a candidate in general elections in May. The commission said in a statement on Friday that it had lodged an “urgent and direct” appeal to the Constitutional Court to provide “certainty” on the proper interpretation of the constitutional article relating to candidacies of people who have been convicted. “Such clarity is important in the present matter because of a live issue but also for future elections,” it said.

The appeal is the latest twist in a legal wrangle over the eligibility of the 81-year-old politician, after an electoral court ruled this week that Zuma could run for office, overturning an earlier decision that had barred him from contesting. Zuma is hoping to run for president on behalf of the uMkhonto weSizwe Party (MK), which he joined last year after denouncing the

governing African National Congress (ANC) party that he once led. On May 29, South Africans will head to the polls to elect 400 members of the General Assembly. A month later, lawmakers in the new parliament will choose the next president. Banking on the popularity of Zuma, MK hopes to win enough votes that would ensure them parliament seats, while also cutting into the vote share of the ANC.

The ANC could see its vote share drop below 50 percent for the first time since 1994. Short of a parliamentary majority, it would be forced to seek coalition partners to remain in power, turning Zuma into a possible kingmaker, analysts say. Some opinion polls suggested MK at above 10 percent nationwide, a share that would make it the third or fourth political force behind the ANC and the liberal Democratic Alliance. The party is projected to make a particularly strong showing in the battleground region

of KwaZulu-Natal – Zuma’s home province.

It largely relies on the considerable political clout still wielded by Zuma, who despite scandals and corruption allegations is popular, particularly among the country’s more than 10 million Zulus. The electoral commission had disqualified Zuma, saying the constitution bars anyone sentenced to more than 12 months’ imprisonment. Zuma was sentenced to 15 months in jail in June 2021 after refusing to testify to a panel investigating financial corruption and cronyism during his presidency. His lawyers argued the sentence did not disqualify him as it followed civil rather than criminal proceedings and it had been shortened by a remission. Zuma was freed on medical parole just two months into his jail term. The commission stressed that the appeal “is not intended to involve itself in the political field of play” rather to ensure a “free and fair” electoral process. — Aljazeera

## Thailand’s top diplomat visits Myanmar border

YANGON: Thailand’s foreign minister has visited a border town near Myanmar, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said, after days of clashes in which the military government’s troops were expelled by ethnic minority armed groups that displaced hundreds of residents.

On Friday, Foreign Minister Parnpree Bahiddha-Nukara visited the Thai town of Mae Sot that lies across from Myanmar’s Myawaddy, which has been wrested out of the military’s control. “Thailand wants to see peace and dialogue,” Parnpree told reporters, adding that it was considering alternative trade routes

in case of road closures caused by the fighting.

Thailand’s Foreign Ministry said he would review preparations for a further influx of people from Myanmar. Earlier this week Thailand said it was prepared to accept 100,000 people fleeing from Myanmar. But Thai Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin warned on Thursday that the fighting should not spill into his country’s airspace. Fighting between Myanmar’s military and ethnic minority armed groups has rocked Myawaddy this week, sending people rushing into Thailand, from where the boom of artillery shells and gunfire could be heard.

The conflict in Myanmar set off by the military’s 2021 coup regularly sends people fleeing across the two countries’ shared 2,400km (1,490-mile) border. On Thursday, the Karen National Union (KNU) rebel group said it displaced troops loyal to the military-backed government, who were sheltering near one of the bridges on the Myanmar side. As fighting intensified, the numbers crossing to Mae Sot from Myawaddy doubled this week to about 4,000 a day, according to the Reuters news agency. Among those trying to cross into Thailand were Moe Moe Thet San and her son, residents of Myawaddy. — Aljazeera



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# Wildlife, animals rights in Pakistan

**SENIOR Minister Punjab, Marriyum Aurangzeb** has recently told the media that the government of the Punjab would roll out a province-wide network of rehabilitation centers to treat and cure ailing wildlife being poached and mutilated for entertainment purposes. While diverse measures would be taken to enhance public education and awareness on biodiversity with the technical assistance of Four Paws. During a visit to the Margallah Wildlife Rescue Centre, the Minister examined the newly rehabilitated black bears which were rescued by the Punjab Wildlife Department from wildlife traffickers/ poachers on the special directives of the Chief Minister of Punjab.

Wild life is an important part of our planet's ecosystem which plays a vital role in stabilizing the environment and maintaining biodiversity and ecological balance in the universe. Wildlife also provides important items to human beings such as food, clothes, comforts, earning, and multiple other economic benefits and pleasures. Meanwhile, Wildlife provides countless opportunities for scientific study, which can lead to discoveries in medicine, technology, and conservation. It contributes to natural processes like pollination, seed dispersal, and the decomposition of organic matter, which are essential for human survival and preservation of the global ecosystem.

Unfortunately, our nation has a poor record in respect of wildlife preservation, safety and protection of animals rights in our country. The wildlife is in miserable and unhealthy conditions in the zoo as well as in the wildlife parks and forests. Generally animals are treated as inferior, and their life is considered to be less important for the society and the country as well. Animals are used for travel, transport of goods, hunting and gaming purposes and mostly face malnutrition and poor treatment .Ironically, the situations had been worse in the wildlife parks and state run zoos where untrained staff treats the animals mercilessly without any assistance/guidance from trained veterinarian or animal pathologist to help reclaim captive animals from agony and serious mental trauma causing their deaths. It has been a national tragedy throughout the past and several precious animals including Karachi Zoo elephant Kaavan and Noor Jehan had died or were living with poor health conditions and a miserable environment. The Punjab government has announced the establishment of animal rehabilitation centers in the province which is a delayed but sane idea and needs to be implemented in the whole country. In addition, there should be a nationwide awareness campaign regarding the safety and rights of animals, so the wildlife and animals' rights could be ensured in the country.

# Japan and Philippines gambling on US game

**BEFORE** setting off from Manila on Wednesday for Washington for the first trilateral summit between the United States, the Philippines and Japan, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. claimed that there would be an agreement among the three on South China Sea issues. "The main intent of this trilateral agreement is for us to be able to continue to flourish, to be able to help one another, and of course to keep the peace in the South China Sea and the freedom of navigation," Marcos told the media.

At the same time, Marcos said he aims to explore ways to advance cooperation with Japan and the United States in defense and maritime cooperation and key areas such as infrastructure, semiconductors, cybersecurity, critical minerals and renewable energy. That leaves no doubt about what the Philippines can give to the United States, and what it looks forward to getting from Washington for that.

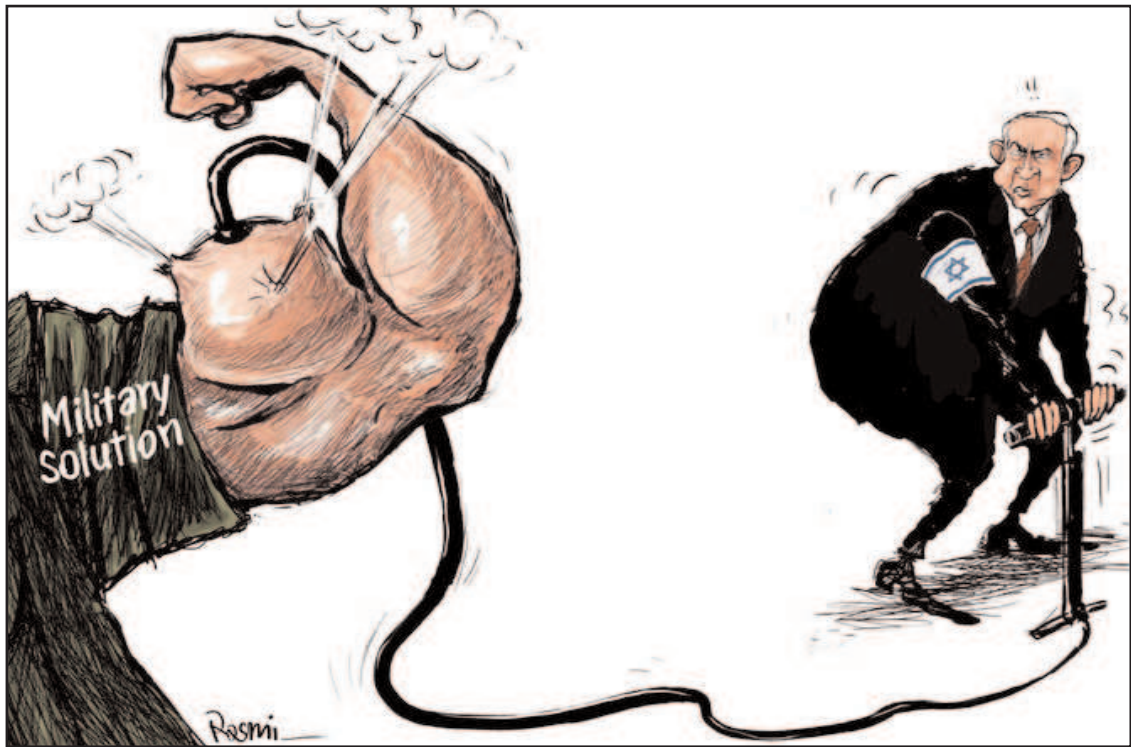
That Marcos still needs to keep stressing the same thing to Washington after sacrificing the Philippines' strategic autonomy to the latter's geopolitical game for about two years since he took office demonstrates the Philippines has not been satisfied with what the US has provided it so far, despite it doing everything it can to do the US' bidding in provoking China in the South China Sea. That's why US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo made a visit to the Philippines in March to verbally offer \$1 billion in investment in the aforementioned sectors.

What the US has promised to the other members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations is even more limited and symbolic, meaning there is little support for the Philippines' actions under that collective framework. The Philippine president's reiterating of his demands that the US needs to increase its investment and input in these sectors shortly before leaving for the summit in Washington on Thursday indicates the gathering is by no means about strengthening the three countries' economic partnership on an equal footing but an occasion for haggling over the price of their security and military cooperation targeting China.

Moreover, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Wednesday made clear that China is the focus of the three leaders' get-together. In a slip of the tongue in his joint news conference with US President Joe Biden, he referred to China as Japan's close ally, instantly correcting it to the US. By acting as willing and proactive proxies of Washington, both the Philippines and Japan are doing a disservice to the other regional countries in the Asia-Pacific, which are working together to maintain peace and stability, and strengthen their development cooperation. Their betting on the success of the US' China containment strategy will prove to be a costly strategic misjudgment for themselves, and their tangible inputs will far outweigh what the US promises to actually deliver.

## Important Notice

The Frontier Post will not be responsible for the comments in the articles and letters. The Frontier Post requests the writers of articles and letters to please make sure that they write their email addresses and mention the names of the cities, towns, districts or tehsil of their residences at the bottom of their articles and letters.



# Solidarity of shared trauma: De-exceptionalising Gaza

**"I live out by O'Hare. Every time a plane flies overhead at night, my hands shake. I'm looking for a place to hide. And then the sirens too – the police and ambulance sirens. I know they're not there, but it feels like soldiers are just outside the windows. We used to watch them walk up and down the road by my grandparents' house, and we weren't to say anything."**

They'd harass everyone, beat people up, including my grandpa. We were supposed to stay inside. My cousin was killed," my patient told me last November during a psychotherapy session in Chicago, home to the largest population of Palestinian people in the United States. "I haven't felt like this, had nightmares like this, since I was a kid."

Since the Israeli bombing and invasion of Gaza began last October, a long-simmering global movement has emerged, particularly from the Global South, in solidarity with the Palestinian people. At least tens of millions of people have marched through the cities of the world in protest of Israeli-perpetrated genocide. In the US, the ruling class and closely linked media have typically portrayed such expressions of solidarity, if acknowledged at all, as simply a matter of vague ideological kinship or abstract anti-US or anti-Israel sentiment, often taking recourse to misleading accusations of anti-Semitism to explain it all away. By doing so, they ignore its historical roots and the ongoing truth to which this movement testifies: There is a deep psychic and visceral connection that binds countless people from diverse backgrounds to the gruesome oppression of Palestinians and to the enabling indifference to it shown by so many North American and European observers.

"I'm trying not to watch it, to look at the videos and the pictures of little kids trying to wake up their dead siblings, but it's impossible to avoid – and I don't want to avoid it. It's the truth. It's their truth, but it's also mine and my family's. But I just can't deal with it," another patient said. Yet another explained, "You leave, thinking it'll be better. But it doesn't stop. It just changes. Now you get to watch and pay for it rather than be stuck underneath it. I don't know which feels worse."

When viewed through the psychiatric and psychoanalytic clinic, it's clear

Eric Reinhart

that, for many, behind their solidarity with Palestinians today lies shared experiences of intergenerational suffering stemming from the legacy of ongoing American and European imperialism abroad and racism within. With social media allowing for an unprecedented level of worldwide proximity to an unfolding genocide after over four centuries of colonial violence has generated a compounding reservoir of trauma passed from generation to generation on every continent across the globe, the images and cries of devastation in Gaza evoke not just sympathy. They are triggering a profound sense of personal resonance. Many Pakistani, Iraqi, Afghan, Yemeni, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Myanmar, Irish, Haitian, Rwandan, Somali, Black and Indigenous American, Filipino, Puerto Rican, South African, Colombian, etc. people are now, like my patient, experiencing planes above or cops on the streets as if they're part of one big murderous machine that they too know very intimately.

From my vantage as both a clinician and political anthropologist, the growing uprising against US-backed genocide in Gaza reflects an emerging revolutionary subjectivity born of massive trauma now coalescing around a singular stage of cruelty. This isn't about individual empathy, an imagined identification with the other as if you are the same as them – a sentimental virtue so often celebrated by white liberalism to validate its sense of its own righteousness while conveniently erasing both history and the otherness of the other and evading any responsibility to act. It is instead about a collectivisation of otherness in a rejection of the Euro-American "rules-based international order" that has always depended upon the creation and subordination of supposedly threatening racial, ethnic, and sexual others to justify itself.

The identification at play in this collectivity is not with Palestinians nor Palestinian cultures, per se, but rather with the position of the paradigmatic other that the Palestinian people have for so long been forced by Euro-American hegemony – and the Israeli state it created and whose military it props up – to occupy. Consider, for instance, how the label "terrorist" has so frequently been indiscriminately thrown at Palestinians, from

small children to poets, such that American commentators and Israeli officials can unabashedly dismiss via these terms the entire population of Gaza as deserving of death. For migrants vilified as rapists and drug smugglers or Black people called thugs in order to rationalise xenophobic violence and racist policing, for example, such practices are very familiar.

It is in this context that queer, trans, Indigenous, and Black communities in the US have joined together with diverse Arab, Muslim, Asian, and Jewish communities around the world, including within Israel, to protest Israeli violence and shameless support for it by the administration of US President Joe Biden. What unites these individuals and groups is not a shared religion, ethnicity, nor cultural worldview but an embodied knowledge of what it feels like to have one's loved ones – present and past – be ostracised, demonised, and violated simply because they are marked as a threat to Euro-American power and associated white-supremacist norms. This deep knowledge that derives more from the truth of feeling than from any explicit ideology or identity is now fostering a shared ethical refusal to accept the perpetuation of such violence against others.

As the writer Viet Thanh Nguyen has noted, "otherness and its history demands grief." Our ethical challenge in the face of colonial violence and its legacies is to expand grief, "to make it ever more capacious, rather than reducing it to a singular sorrow. Capacious grief acknowledges that the trauma of the other is neither singular nor unique – that there are other others out there with whom we can share the burden. Perhaps only by expanding our grief may we be able to leave our trauma behind ... of otherness, we might also transform that burden into a gift."

In accounts shared by my patients, students, colleagues, and friends, especially those from marginalised backgrounds, I see this revolutionary subjectivity and the solidarity it fuels taking shape and gaining force. It's not just about acting on moral principles or historical knowledge of Israeli occupation and Euro-American complicity in a project of ethnic cleansing; it's about reclaiming power over oneself, taking in one's own family and communal history as con-

fluent with the present, and reasserting the felt truth of one's being and that of one's ancestors in the face of radically dehumanising violence. It is a refusal to be passively swept along by the systems of oppression that surround us and to which the US government, in particular, continues to display a bipartisan commitment.

The burgeoning internationalist movement dedicated to freeing Palestine from violent oppression is not a trendy, transient political cause, as some cynical observers have claimed. It is a collective ethical awakening and formation of an affective community derived from a growing postcolonial consciousness – a transnational reckoning with the still-reverberating legacy of colonial violence and neocolonial financial manipulations. It is a rekindling recognition that struggles for justice and freedom are necessarily interconnected in both space and time, spanning continents and generations. The voices rising and feet marching each weekend in solidarity with Gaza over a half-year into the slaughter of its communities are not only protesting the specific injustices perpetrated against Palestinians. They are challenging the very foundations of a global economic and associated moral order built on exploitation and the systematic devaluation of some lives to prop up the plainly false image of postcolonial Europe and North America as emblems of benevolence and freedom. The task of freeing Palestine is simultaneously a task of freeing ourselves, of making a world characterised by – in the words of the families of Israeli hostages beseeching Benjamin Netanyahu to end his violent campaign against Gaza – an ethics of "everyone for everyone."

Despite the slogans, we are not all Palestinians. We are instead all radically different from one another, with unique life histories, places in the world, and ways of desiring and living. And it is because of the differences that constitute each one of us and how important it is to protect them that the struggle for Palestinian liberation has become the defining ethical and political matter of our era. Its consequences are already reverberating far beyond any single territory or people, and they will demarcate the lines of global ethical-political struggle for the coming generation – one that will not remember our present political leaders kindly.

# Trump and US media's conflict of interest

Waleed Salem

**ON** the last day of the Republican National Convention in July 2016, which nominated Donald Trump as the GOP's candidate for the presidential election, CNN's Anderson Cooper led a panel of pundits commenting on the event. Among them was cotton-haired Jeffrey Lord, who was eager to report on a call he had had with Trump.

"He has a message for you, Anderson, that he is not pleased. He feels we are not accurately representing this convention," Lord said on air. "He [asked] me to say that your ratings, our ratings at CNN, are up here because of his presence in the convention," he added. "There is no doubt about Donald Trump's impact on ratings." Cooper responded, amiably.

Trump's assertion was not inaccurate. The year he first ran for election was the most profitable in CNN's history. Interest in the new, unorthodox candidate – whether it was fascination, alarm, or glee – boosted profits for media outlets left and right. Online subscriptions soared for The New York Times and The Washington Post. Fox News's ratings reached new highs. The boost continued throughout the Trump presidency but wore off as soon as he left office.

The real estate mogul has now returned to the centre of American politics as the presumptive nominee for the Republican Party after Nikki Haley dropped out of the race. The possibility of another Trump term has led to a bout of public acknowledgements among media professionals that while the former president threatens democracy with his incessant falsehoods and norm-busting practices, he is actually good for business.

"In crude material terms," The New York Times columnist Michelle Goldberg wrote in January, "Donald Trump's presidency benefited the media, with subscriptions, ratings and clicks all soaring." Acknowledgement is important, but stopping at that without changing conduct seems like a shrug of resignation, a self-serving free pass for coverage and business as usual to continue. Instead of soul-searching, we are getting disclaimers.

The words that even the thoughtful voices seem reluctant to use are "conflict of interest". It is clear that media outlets stand to benefit from their coverage of Trump. That is bad for journalism and, by extension, for democracy. As American journalist George Packer noted in a December article for the Atlantic, while newspapers and TV channels are raking in record profits from milking the Trump phenomenon, they are starting to resemble him. They have become more "solipsistic ... divisive, and self-righteous".

Journalism standards have declined as news is becoming "almost indistinguishable from fluff and lies" and media outlets are abandoning "independence for activism", Packer wrote. In effect, many media outlets have relinquished a core duty and privilege: determining what is newsworthy.

Much of the Trump coverage has been just click-bait in various incarnations, a ceaseless stream of alarm bells for the distressed liberals and catnip for the gleeful MAGA crowd. TV networks have aired hours of Trump's rallies, unfiltered and unscrutinised. National newspapers have featured his tweets

about political non-sequiturs on their front pages, online and in print. Many in the news media have capitalised on the political polarisation that Trump stoked, further deepening it. Otherwise excellent journalists, like CNN's Anderson Cooper and Jake Tapper, have too often slipped into unseemly editorialising monologues.

The media have increasingly mirrored the information bubbles of social media. That has worked better for ratings and clicks. This type of profit-seeking coverage is not just bad for journalism, but also for democracy. The media's fixation with Trump – his antics and insults, his taunts and vulgarities, his gleeful breach of norms – has indirectly affirmed a brand of politics that the former president embodies and thrives in.

He has turned political life into a mud-slinging arena where politicians are viewed as cynical, self-dealing hacks whose goal is to inflict the greatest humiliation possible on their opponents. In this political environment, every policy – even benign public health measures like the face mask mandate during the pandemic – can become grounds for toxic, polarising politicking.

This type of political behaviour encourages voters to cast their ballots in accordance with a tribal vision of politics – one based not on merits but on rage. As another Trump term emerges as a real possibility, US media outlets can and should do more than throw their arms up in resignation. If they are serious about addressing the conflict-of-interest problem, they should adopt what I will call the Lonely Planet test.

This test takes its name from the popular travel guide. In a 2010 lecture on how to improve trust in government, Harvard law professor Lawrence Lessig, a prominent advocate of reforming Congress campaign finance laws, used Lonely Planet's practices as an example. Lonely Planet avoids any appearance of conflict of interest by assuring its readers that, among other practices, it does not "accept payment for listing or endorsing any place or business". Lonely Planet understands that even a slight suspicion that it is making money from the places or businesses it features could undercut its credibility.

They should scrutinise every potential story about Trump for "conflict of interest" by asking three questions. Should we report on the story? If we do, do we benefit financially from it more than our average gain from other coverage? And if we do, would it benefit Trump and advance his brand of politics?

When it comes to Trump coverage, editors and journalists should lean towards the principle of less is more. Not just because that would restore proportionality in coverage, but also because it would reduce their outlet's conflict of interest. None of this guarantees that a second Trump term would be less polarising or less nerve-racking. The test I am proposing would mean, though, that media outlets can do more to preserve their integrity and the public's trust. For years, The Washington Post has put its Trump-era motto front and centre, "Democracy Dies in Darkness". But if the media continue on the current path and into another Trump term, democracy as well as journalism may suffer gravely in the glare of light, too.

Arab News

# US wooing Iraqi PM in bid to reduce Iran's influence

Maria Maalouf

**NEXT** week's visit to the US by Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani will take place in a very complex regional context. Israel's ongoing military operations in the Gaza Strip have been exploited by pro-Iranian militias to carry out armed attacks against American military bases in Iraq and Syria.

Meanwhile, the US wants to strengthen the capabilities of its partners in the region to confront terrorist organizations. This comes at a time when Washington is seeking to transform its military role in the Middle East, within the framework of focusing on the most potent threats to America's security and its interests in the international arena.

Several issues will be on the agenda on Monday, when the Iraqi PM holds

his first meeting at the White House since he assumed power in October 2022. He will meet US President Joe Biden and many American officials. US Ambassador to Iraq Alina Romanowski said in an interview with Reuters last month that Daesh still poses a threat to the security and stability of the Iraqi state and that the mission of the military coalition led by the US to rout the group is not yet over. Therefore, Washington is focusing on building Iraq's security capabilities to ensure the permanent defeat of Daesh and allow it to confront future terrorist threats. Since 2012, the US Congress has allocated more than \$2 billion of Foreign Military Financing to build Iraqi security capabilities.

However, in January, Al-Sudani stated that the justification for the presence of

the US-led coalition in Iraq had come to an end and that there was a need for dialogue with Washington to set a timetable for ending the mission of combating Daesh in Iraq. With the increase in American military strikes against armed militias in the country in response to the attacks on its bases since Oct. 7, pressure has increased on Al-Sudani to remove US troops from Iraq. This is despite the fact that their mission is today limited to providing support and training to Iraqi forces to enhance their capabilities to prevent the return of Daesh and protecting the Iraqi state against the threats of other terrorist organizations.

The US administration opposes any unplanned withdrawal from Iraq, as it fears a complete withdrawal may lead to the return of

Daesh, in addition to making Iraq even more of an arena for Iranian influence, thus wasting the efforts that America has made in Iraq over the past two decades. With the increase in armed operations by pro-Iranian Iraqi militias against American military bases in Iraq and Syria, Washington has, in recent months, urged Baghdad to make more efforts to prevent such attacks. The US administration has called for Iraq to increase security around all military bases that host American forces, prevent the militias from obtaining advanced weaponry, prosecute those who have carried out attacks against American bases and installations in Iraq, and respect the pledge it made to guarantee the security of American diplomatic and military facilities in the country.

The Biden administration also seeks to prevent Iran from using the Iraqi financial system to circumvent US sanctions. Therefore, it restricts Iraq's access to its funds in America in an attempt to eliminate money laundering, which many trends indicate benefits both Iran and Syria. The US Federal Reserve imposes strict restrictions on international dollar transfers to Iraqi commercial banks.

Washington has also called on Baghdad to reform its financial system to prevent Iran from benefiting from it. Among the most prominent required reforms are improving the oversight of monetary transfers, preventing the financing of Iranian-backed militias and enhancing transparency in the economic system. The Iraqi government has pledged to implement these reforms

but little progress has been made so far. The US is pressuring the Baghdad government to act as soon as possible.

The multiple visits exchanged between American and Iraqi officials reveal that Iraq is still a priority in US foreign policy and that it is the cornerstone of regional stability. The Biden administration is focusing on consolidating relations with Baghdad and moving their bilateral relations into a permanent strategic security partnership, as Iraq remains one of the most essential battlefields against terrorism. America's search for a stable strategic partnership with Iraq comes within the framework of its policy to limit Iranian influence, which Washington sees as one of the key threats to its strategic interests in the region.



# Weaponising underwear: Genocide with a semi-pornographic twist

Belén Fernández

LET'S pretend for a moment that, in the course of waging war against the state of Israel, Hamas militants from the Gaza Strip had taken to posing for social media posts with lingerie belonging to Israeli women who had been forced to flee their homes and/or killed in the war. Imagine the moral outrage that would swiftly ensue, inevitably entailing racist and self-righteous allegations of Arab perverseness, the barbaric sexism of Islam, and the violent tendencies of sexually repressed Muslims. The Fox Newses of the world would have had a field day.

As it turns out, a version of this hypothetical spectacle is true – except that it stars Israeli soldiers and Palestinian women's lingerie. A recent Reuters article titled "Israeli soldiers play with Gaza women's underwear in online posts" describes how combatants from the world's self-appointed "most moral army" have been "posting photos and videos of themselves toying with lingerie found in Palestinian homes, creating a dissonant visual record of the war in Gaza". In one video highlighted by Reuters, an Israeli soldier "sits in an armchair in a room in Gaza grinning, with a gun in one hand and dangling white satin underwear from the other over the open mouth of a comrade lying on a sofa".

Another visually "dissonant" episode features a soldier perched

on a tank, who proceeds to introduce his "beautiful wife": a female mannequin sporting a helmet and black bra. In response to the news agency's inquiry, an Israeli military spokesperson "sent a statement saying the [army] investigates incidents that deviate from the orders and expected values" of Israeli soldiers. And yet it is pretty perverse in itself to even talk about "values" in the middle of a genocide and Israeli-made famine in the Gaza Strip.

Since October 7, Israel has killed nearly 34,000 Palestinians in Gaza, among them some 14,500 children and 9,500 women – numbers which are presumed to be grave underestimates. More than 76,000 people have been wounded as homes, hospitals, schools and everything else that is bombable have been bombed. Children are starving to death. Rather than constituting an isolated blot on the morality of the Israeli armed forces, then, social media posts of Palestinian women's underwear would seem to be aligned with general moral depravity and therefore entirely consistent with Israeli military "values".

The United Nations Human Rights Office spokesperson has declared such posts to be "demeaning to Palestinian women, and all women". So, to be sure, is mass slaughter. That said, there is plenty to say about this sort of exercise in militarised semi-pornography as a

calculated assault on the dignity of women in an overwhelmingly conservative society. Ultimately, the taunting display of Palestinian lingerie amounts to an almost pathetically clichéd violation of the intimate space of Gazan women. But to be playing around with the panties of people you are killing takes depravity to another level.

Call it Orientalist fetishization with a genocidal twist. Granted, it's not just the females of Gaza who are eligible for such "demeaning" treatment; Gazan males can be intimately humiliated, too. In December, dozens of Palestinian men and boys sheltering at two Gaza schools were detained by the Israeli army, stripped to their underwear, and made to kneel on the ground. The degradation of Palestinian women is all the more obscenely hypocritical, however, in light of the Israeli military's condemnation of Hamas for its "discrimination" against women in the territory it controls. A section on the military's English-language website devoted to "The Status of Women in Gaza" laments that "basic rights are often systematically denied" to females, who are faced with "decreased educational opportunities" as well as "limited employment opportunities" – a situation that is clearly best rectified by Israel's bombing of most such opportunities to smithereens.

The website reports that "violence against women continues at

alarming rates" in the Gaza Strip. With at least 9,500 women now killed by Israel in the past six months, you can say that again. And while the Israeli army's co-ed nature enables the institution to portray itself as a bastion of women's rights and female empowerment – read: equal-opportunity killing – there's no shortage of intra-institutional sexism and gender-based oppression. A 2022 report by Israel's State Comptroller, for example, found that approximately one-third of Israeli women performing mandatory military service had experienced sexual harassment the previous year.

The state of Israel has also weaponised the bikini-clad and otherwise half-naked bodies of its female fighting forces in order to effectively sexualise ethnic cleansing, as in the case of the 2007 Maxim magazine spread that tantalisingly wondered whether Israel's female militants were not in fact "the world's sexiest soldiers". As for the current lingerie tactic being deployed by social media-savvy troops in Gaza, the weaponisation of humiliation only compounds the suffering of Palestinian women – and men – who, forced to flee their homes, have already had their intimate space violated in every possible way. And as the Israeli military simultaneously gets off playing with underwear and perpetrating genocide, it is a "dissonant visual record", indeed.

Aljazeera

# For Roma, justice truly is blind

Jonathan Lee

successfully prosecuted.

These cases of police brutality, all caught on camera but denied justice, speak to a rotten system which goes beyond law enforcement and extends to a criminal legal system that is structurally racist towards Romani people. While Black Lives Matter brought about a change in how Europe talks about racist police violence, the gains made seem to be fast disappearing. The supposed democratisation of evidence gathering through the filming of police discrimination already seems to have lost its impact for a Europe desensitised to racist suffering. We live in an increasingly brutal world; one where human rights violations stack up by the day and post-truth political rhetoric denies facts before our very eyes. In this context, some shaky footage of Roma being tor-

to secure a conviction in a case involving racist violence against Romani people is not a new phenomenon in Europe. In the Czech Republic, video evidence of the 2021 police killing of Stanislav Tomas (as well as evidence from the ombudsman that the police had lied about the chain of events leading to his death) did nothing to convince the Czech legal system of the guilt of the attending officers. The case, dubbed the Romani George Floyd because an officer knelt on the back of Stanislav's neck before he died, was tried by public opinion as much as it was before the courts. Before the results of the autopsy had even been released, Prime Minister Andrej Babis made a public statement in support of the police officers accused of

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causing Tomas's death and commended them on their conduct. The prime minister even noted that a "normal person" would never have found themselves in the position Tomas did. The case is now before the ECHR after the Czech Constitutional Court dismissed an appeal to prosecute the officers involved. In a similar case, the 2016 death of a Romani man in a pizzeria in the Czech town of Zatec at the hands of an angry mob was partially filmed by a witness. The Romani man, having been nearly beaten to death by four customers and later the police themselves, can be heard crying in pain while an officer pins him to the ground in the video. He is known to have died moments after that video was filmed. The autopsy, as in the case of Tomas, concluded that the cause of death cannot be attributed to third-party actions. Despite the video evidence of the assault, no police officers or civilians involved in the incident have been charged with a crime. In Romania's Bolintin-Vale, witnesses filmed police officers beating and racially abusing Roma as they lay face down in the dirt with their hands tied behind their backs in April 2020. The screams of one victim are clearly audible as four officers set about him, two striking him all over his body, and two others beating the soles of his bare feet.

The victims – eight Romani men and one 13-year-old boy – were beaten for about 30 minutes and threatened with repercussions if they made any complaints. Much of the assault is caught on video. One police officer can be heard using racial slurs and threatening the person filming the incident. The criminal investigation remains open nearly four years later without any officers being

tured and killed on camera does little to prick societal consciousness or sway institutionally racist judicial systems.

Europe is facing an access to justice crisis, one that has been building for some time. When an entire judicial system can wave away video evidence of brazen brutality carried out by racists who have vowed to protect and serve the public, the ramifications go beyond Roma. Police impunity, guaranteed by a structurally racist judicial system, affects every underclass person in Europe; anyone who cannot afford the best legal representation.

As we approach a choke point for the rise of far-right politics in Europe with this summer's European elections, the access to justice crisis has consequences for everyone. If the judiciary, a pillar of our democracies, is unable to carry out its function and deliver justice to victims even when provided with blatant video evidence of the crime, it is a worrying omen for the fate of democratic societies considering the direction of the current political winds. In Slovakia, the rot that has existed for some time in the criminal legal system is becoming more and more obscene with each case of police brutality. The children from the video in Kosice police station, who were humiliated and abused for police officers' entertainment, are now adults (the oldest will be in their 30s by now) and still awaiting justice.

The force of their case will continue for who-knows-how-long in the court where it originated over a decade ago. Human rights activists often say that justice delayed is justice denied, but that assumes that eventually the truth will prevail. Increasingly for Roma, justice truly is blind.

# Africa can be a catalyst for global economic transformation

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

AS we approach the mid-point of the third decade of the 21st century, the global economic landscape is poised for a profound shift, with Africa at its heart. Africa stands out as the continent with the most rapidly expanding and youthful population. It is inhabited by 1.5 billion individuals, with a significant proportion of those entering the labor force worldwide projected to reside on the continent by the 2030s, amounting to one in three individuals. As a result, the challenges and opportunities presented by the continent are monumental.

Africa's growth trajectory is not only pivotal for the continent itself, but it also holds the key to unlocking sustained global economic prosperity. However, realizing Africa's vast potential requires concerted efforts to overcome entrenched obstacles and harness the continent's abundant resources, youthful population and strategic geographical position. That is why we should explore the multifaceted nature of Africa's role in the future of the global economy and outline actionable solutions.

The first issue to consider is Africa's demographic profile, which presents both a dividend and a challenge. With its youthful population, Africa has the potential to drive innovation, productivity and consumer demand on a global scale. By 2050, Africa's population is expected to nearly double to 2.5 billion, creating a massive consumer market for a wide range of goods and services. However, harnessing this demographic dividend requires investment in education, skills develop-

ment and job creation to ensure that young Africans are equipped to participate meaningfully in the global economy. Moreover, addressing pressing issues such as youth unemployment, gender inequality and access to healthcare is essential.

This brings us to the importance of infrastructure development. One of the most pressing challenges hindering Africa's integration into the global economy is its lack of adequate infrastructure. Despite being endowed with abundant natural resources, including key minerals crucial for emerging technologies, Africa's economic potential remains largely untapped due to inadequate transport networks, energy grids and digital infrastructure.

There must be a concentrated effort to expand infrastructure investment across the continent. This entails not only addressing physical infrastructure gaps, but also investing in digital infrastructure to enhance connectivity, access to information and e-commerce capabilities. In addition, by improving its transport networks, energy infrastructure and digital connectivity, Africa can attract foreign investment and integrate more effectively into global value chains.

Secondly, investing in education and skills development is critical in order to boost Africa's human capital and drive sustainable economic growth. In spite of the progress made in increasing access to education across the continent, quality and relevance remain significant challenges.

Moreover, there is a mismatch between the skills demanded by

the labor market and those possessed by the workforce, exacerbating youth unemployment and underemployment. Addressing these challenges requires reforms in education curricula, vocational training programs and lifelong learning initiatives. Such reforms would equip Africa's youth with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in the modern economy.

One solution would be to promote science, technology, engineering and mathematics education, entrepreneurship and innovation, which are essential if Africa's potential as a hub for technological advancement and digital innovation is to be fulfilled. But these developments also require effective governance and policy reforms in order to create an enabling environment for business investment, entrepreneurship and economic growth. Simplifying regulatory processes, reducing bureaucratic red tape and enhancing transparency and accountability can foster a conducive business environment and attract both domestic and foreign investment.

More fundamentally, the promotion of good governance, the rule of law and anti-corruption measures is critical for building trust, reducing investment risks and ensuring sustainable development outcomes. In addition, enhancing regional integration and trade facilitation efforts are critical due to the fact that they can create new market opportunities, increase employment rates, stimulate economic diversification and enhance Africa's competitiveness on the global stage.

Sustainable development should be prioritized because it is

paramount for Africa's long-term prosperity and resilience. This includes embracing renewable energy sources, promoting sustainable agriculture practices and adopting ecofriendly technologies that can mitigate environmental degradation, combat climate change and ensure the preservation of the continent's natural capital for future generations.

Moreover, investing in climate resilience and adaptation measures is essential to safeguard Africa's vulnerable populations from the adverse impacts of climate change. By leveraging its vast renewable energy potential and embracing sustainable development practices, Africa can emerge as a global leader in green growth, attracting investment and fostering inclusive and environmentally sustainable economic development.

In a nutshell, Africa's ascent is not merely a regional phenomenon but a global imperative. As its population continues to soar and its economic potential expands, the urgent need for the international community to prioritize and invest in Africa's development has never been greater. By addressing key challenges such as infrastructure deficits, education gaps, policy bottlenecks and environmental sustainability, we can pave the way for a new era of shared prosperity and sustainable development.

The time to act is now, for Africa's success is not only essential for the continent itself, but also for the broader advancement of the global economy. The international community ought to seize this historic opportunity to unlock Africa's potential and chart a course toward a brighter, more prosperous future for all.

# Strengthening G20 Common Framework a global public good that benefits all

Hazar Caracalla

RECORD debt levels and increasing debt servicing costs, exacerbated by successive shocks since 2020, have placed about half of low-income countries in, or at an elevated risk of, debt distress. Recently published data paints a stark picture of the challenges. Total debt stock accumulation has significantly outpaced gross national incomes, raising concerns about the ability of low-income countries to service their debt.

The International Monetary Fund estimates that, for a typical low-income borrower, external debt servicing costs – a key indicator used in the framework for assessing debt sustainability – are about two-and-a-half times higher than a decade earlier. The World Bank's 2023 "International Debt Report" projects that debt servicing costs on public and publicly guaranteed debt will increase by nearly 40 percent during 2023-24. Over the next two years, low-income countries need to refinance annually about \$60 billion in external debt owed to multilateral, official and private creditors, according to the IMF.

These momentous financing pressures will further constrain already severely strained domestic resources in low-income countries and crowd out critical spending to fight poverty, develop social safety nets, support human capital development and tackle climate challenges. The UN has warned that, given the significant financing shortfall, there is a risk that the gap in the outcomes of the Sustainable

Development Goals between high- and low-income countries will be larger in 2030 than when the goals were universally adopted in 2015. According to IMF estimates, low-income countries need an additional \$440 billion in financing through 2026, from all available sources, to put them back on a path to income convergence with advanced economies.

The situation leaves low-income countries extremely vulnerable in the face of high global uncertainty and future shocks and amplifies concerns of an emerging threat of debt crises. It underscores the need for better coordinated and more determined international cooperation to deliver a smoother debt restructuring process – one that would incentivize low-income countries to turn to it, including preemptively, when warranted.

The G20 Common Framework is a notable and promising stride toward delivering a coordinated international debt relief scheme for low-income countries. Established in late 2020 under the presidency of Saudi Arabia, the Common Framework has been endorsed by the Paris Club. Importantly, it reflects a changed bilateral creditors landscape by including major creditors like Saudi Arabia, India and China; it demonstrates a collective commitment by all bilateral creditors to coordinate and support countries to reach sovereign debt resolution using a case-by-case voluntary approach; and it seeks to achieve comparable treatment from private creditors.

Notwithstanding the important efforts devoted so far by the G20 members to make the framework deliver, the process for the four countries currently undertaking debt treatment under it – Chad, Ethiopia, Ghana and Zambia – has been slower than hoped. At the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in January, Saudi Arabian Finance Minister Mohammed Al-Jadaan highlighted "the need to institutionalize and improve the Common Framework so it can quickly and efficiently lessen the crushing burden of debt" on poor nations. In her statement to the G20 last month, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva identified "timeliness, predictability and comparability of treatment" as issues that need to be better addressed for the framework to work more efficiently.

The Global Sovereign Debt Roundtable, set up in February 2023, is helping to advance common understanding among key stakeholders, including private sector creditors, on debt sustainability and debt restructuring challenges. However, a number of technical issues require continued engagement, including some related to restructuring perimeters and parameters. The comparability of treatment between official bilateral and private sector creditors, a key principle of debt restructuring, remains a divisive issue. Agreement on this matter would allow bilateral and commercial creditors to reach a restructuring deal jointly rather than separately and consecutive-

ly, which in turn would speed up the delivery of debt relief programs, making them more impactful.

The IMF's role in advancing the Common Framework and shielding it from the challenges associated with geopolitical tensions will be instrumental. Through its convening power, the fund can keep all stakeholders engaged in resolving technical issues and disagreements, including by bridging the gap between official and commercial creditors. Together with the World Bank, the IMF can design solutions and provide incentives for all stakeholders to double down on their efforts, demonstrate flexibility and make bold decisions. The upcoming Spring Meetings, to be held in Washington from April 15 to 20, present an opportunity to make meaningful progress and signal that international cooperation can deliver on a global public good that benefits all.

A timely, predictable and smooth debt resolution process is necessary – but not sufficient – to provide better lives and economic opportunities to the world's poorest nations. It needs to be accompanied by new, scaled-up and well-coordinated highly concessional multilateral financial support that can put their economies and human capital back on a solid development path. Low-income countries need to do their part by building domestic capacities and delivering on policy reforms to attract the private investments that will spur growth and generate higher sustainable incomes.





# ADB predicts 1.9 per cent growth for Pak's economy

KARACHI (INP): Predicting Pakistan's growth rate to be 1.9 percent this fiscal year, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in its report has anticipated a reduction in the wave of inflation in the next financial year, says on Friday.

The Asian Development Bank's annual Outlook Report for 2024 revealed that the inflation in Pakistan has surged to its highest level in the past five decades last year, meanwhile, the inflation has continues to rise this year due to the surge in energy prices

as part of the IMF program. In its annual report, the Asian Development Bank stated that political instability in Pakistan is a major challenge for economic recovery and reforms.

Meanwhile the inflation in Pakistan is expected to remain at a high level of 25 percent this fiscal year and it is likely to decrease significantly in the next fiscal year.

According to the report, Pakistan's economy shrank due to political uncertainty and extensive flooding, adding that the growth of

the construction sector has been affected by rising costs and rising taxes.

The report suggested that the actions are needed for financial inclusion of women in Pakistan, expressing optimism that the agricultural production and industrial sector are expected to improve in the current fiscal year.

The ADB report stated that, if the reforms are implemented, the economic recovery will start from this year and the inflation for Pakistanis is likely to decrease in the next finan-

cial year. Food prices are expected to stabilize. By which the rate of inflation will reach 15 percent.

The ADB report highlighted that if the proposed reforms are implemented, economic recovery could commence as early as this year, potentially leading to a decrease in inflation for Pakistanis in the upcoming financial year.

Additionally, it anticipates stabilization in food prices, which could contribute to bringing the inflation rate down to 15 percent.

## Experts laud China's role in advancing Hybrid Rice cultivation in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): Experts lauded China's role in advancing Hybrid Rice cultivation in Pakistan, according to a report published by Gwadar Pro.

The Chairman of the Pakistan Hitech Hybrid Seed Association (PHHSA), Shahzad Ali Malik, in a press briefing, highlighted the pivotal role of Chinese expertise in revolutionizing Pakistan's agriculture through hybrid seed technology.

This collaboration marks a significant stride towards self-sufficiency and the bolstering of Pakistan's export potential in key crops including cotton, wheat, edible oils, and pulses.

Malik pointed out that the adoption of hybrid rice

technology from China has already showcased remarkable yield improvements, setting a precedent for its application across other agricultural sectors.

The initiative aims at reducing Pakistan's heavy reliance on imports by enhancing local production capabilities.

For cotton, a critical export commodity, hybrid technology promises higher yields and quality, positioning Pakistan to reduce imports and explore export opportunities.

Similarly, the introduction of hybrid wheat and oilseed varieties like soybean and sunflower is expected to boost productivity, quality, and domestic availability, potentially

transforming Pakistan into a net exporter of these commodities.

Malik also touched upon the issue of pulse shortages, emphasizing that hybrid varieties could significantly enhance local production, thereby decreasing the need for imports and enabling Pakistan to meet its domestic demand more effectively.

This strategic move towards hybrid varieties, in collaboration with China, aims to ensure food security, achieve economic stability, and foster export growth, underlining the crucial role of advanced agricultural technologies in Pakistan's development, he maintained.

## Asian stocks struggle to track Wall Street higher

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian markets mostly fell Friday as traders struggled to build on Wall Street's positive lead, with hopes for a June interest rate cut fading, while earnings season gets underway in the United States amid optimism for companies' profit outlooks.

Tech titans helped drive gains in the Nasdaq and S&P 500 after producer price index data broadly met expectations, tempering worries about inflation following Wednesday's figures showing a third successive upside miss in consumer prices.

The CPI figures followed a series of indicators suggesting the world's number one economy remained resilient and the jobs market strong despite interest rates sitting at two-decade highs and inflation still well above the Federal Reserve's target.

That has seen investors trim their rate cut bets from six at the start of the year to two now, while former Treasury secretary Lawrence Summers has even warned a hike could not be ruled out.

Central bank officials were reluctant to give their full backing to any reductions soon.

New York Fed chief John Williams said "tremendous progress" had been made in the battle against inflation but there was little need to move in the "very near term", while Richmond boss Thomas Barkin added that decision-makers could take their time.

Their Boston counterpart Susan Collins said the latest data "implies that less easing of policy this year than previously thought may be warranted".

While US traders pounced on the producer price numbers, Michael Shaoul at Marketfield Asset Management said: "Although we understand the relief with which this report will be received, there is nothing very encouraging contained within it -- and the best that can be said is that there was 'no new bad news' either."

Asian traders were also less impressed.

Hong Kong, Shanghai, Sydney, Seoul, Singapore and Wellington were all in the red, while Tokyo, Taipei and Manila edged up.

Dimming hopes for rate cuts continued to support the dollar, which surged to another 34-year high above 153 yen, putting Japanese officials in the spotlight after they said they were ready to intervene in markets to support their currency.



MULTAN: A vendor preparing flower garlands to attract customers at his roadside setup.

## CHINT signs contracts with Pakistani PV distributors

BEIJING (INP): China's CHINT Power signed contracts with Pakistani PV distributors, Gwadar Pro reported.

According to the report, CHINT Power signed cooperation agreements with two photovoltaic companies for the distribution of 200MW inverters.

CHINT Power introduced industrial and commercial PV, ground power plant PV and energy storage system solutions at SolarEX in Turkey and reached these cooperation.

CHINT Power is a solar power system solution provider that designs, manufactures, and supplies high-reliability PV inverters and power solutions for customers.

It will work with these two Pakistani partners to explore the local PV market and provide a strong impetus for renewable energy development in Pakistan.

As a key node of the Belt and Road Initiative, Pakistan's abundant natural resources and strategic geographic location offer sig-

nificant advantages for the development of new energy sources.

In order to further reduce dependence on fossil fuels, the world has begun to develop a sustainable energy industry, and Pakistan is no exception. Especially in the area of solar PV and wind power generation, the Pakistani government has proposed ambitious goals.

They plan to achieve a renewable energy power generation share of 20% by 2025 and 30% by 2030.

According to the agreements, CHINT Power will provide optical storage system products and solutions, including inverters, and will also offer technical and service support to the two trading companies.

CHINT Power, in the future, they will share innovative technologies and efficient solutions with local customers, and add momentum to Pakistan's PV market with high-quality products, professional technology, and technical talent training.

## PFC concerns over dwindling Shisham population

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq Friday cautioned that the population of Shisham trees (Dalbergia sissoo) has dwindled to dangerously low due to rampant deforestation, illegal logging, and habitat destruction.

Chairing the PFC Board of Directors meeting here, he added that Shisham trees, also known as rosewood were facing a grave threat of extinction in Pakistan. These magnificent trees, prized for their sturdy timber and beautiful

grain are integral to the country's ecosystem and economy. He said that one of the primary reasons for decline is the high demand for timber, both domestically and internationally.

It is highly valued for its durability and aesthetic appeal, making it a sought-after material for furniture, musical instruments and decorative items.

Unfortunately, this demand has led to widespread exploitation of Shisham forests, often through illegal logging practices.

PFC chief said that the expansion of agriculture

and urbanization has further encroached upon the natural habitats of Shisham trees, leaving them vulnerable to destruction.

Deforestation not only diminishes the these trees but also disrupts the delicate balance of the ecosystem, leading to soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, and adverse effects on climate patterns. Concerted efforts are needed at both governmental and societal levels to save it. Strict enforcement of forestry laws and regulations were essential to curb illegal logging and protect Shisham forests

from further degradation.

He also called for undertaking initiatives to promote sustainable forestry practices and reforestation efforts to replenish depleted Shisham populations.

Mian Kashif Ashfaq said that awareness campaigns among the public about the importance of preserving Shisham trees and their ecosystems was crucial which can highlight the ecological significance of these trees and the adverse consequences of their decline on biodiversity, climate, and livelihoods, he concluded.

## United Kingdom growth uptick fuels hopes of recession exit

LONDON (AFP/APP): Britain's economy expanded by 0.1 percent in February, further fuelling recovery hopes after sliding into a shallow recession in the second half of last year, official data showed Friday.

The gross domestic product uptick followed an upwardly revised 0.3 percent rise in January, after an initial reading of 0.2 percent growth, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement.

Growth for the first quarter as a whole would signal the end of the UK's recession, and many economists say another contraction now appears unlikely.

"The economy grew slightly in February with widespread growth across manufacturing, particularly in the car sector," said ONS director of economic statistics Liz McKeown.

"Services also grew a little with public transport and haulage, and telecom-

munications having strong months," she added.

"Partially offsetting this there were notable falls across construction as the wet weather hampered many building projects."

The UK economy shrank in both the third and fourth quarters of 2023, meeting the technical definition of a recession on high interest rates and a cost-of-living crisis. "The sun is finally out but the UK economy outlook remains foggy," said Yael Selfin, chief economist at KPMG UK.

"Despite weaker momentum in February, the economy's ongoing recovery is the latest piece of evidence that the shallow technical recession is already behind us." Capital Economics economist Paul Dales said GDP would need to slump by an "unlikely" 1.0 percent in March in order to spark a first-quarter contraction that would prolong the recession.

"As a result, we can safely say that, after lasting just two quarters and involving a total fall in GDP of just 0.4 percent or so, the recession ended in the fourth quarter," he said. In reaction to Friday's news, finance minister Jeremy Hunt said that the figures were a "welcome sign" that the economy was "turning a corner".

An emergence from recession would hand a

major boost to embattled Prime Minister Rishi Sunak ahead of a general election this year.

His governing Conservatives are trailing far behind Keir Starmer's main opposition Labour Party in opinion polls. Sunak was buoyed last month by news that inflation had hit a nearly two-and-a-half-year low of 3.4 percent in February, easing the nation's cost-of-living crunch.

## Skardu International Airport received three flights

**F.P. Report**

SKARDU: As summer approaches, tourists are heading towards the North. On the day of Eid, Skardu International Airport received three flights - one each from Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad, all operated by PIA.

The three Airbus 320 aircraft operated within a 15 to 20-minute interval of each other. Skardu International Airport is prepared to welcome international flights as well, starting from April 29, connecting Dubai and Skardu, also operated by PIA.

## SOGO delegation visit China's Consulate



**F.P. Report**

KARACHI: A delegation from SOGO Group of

Companies, visited Consulate of the Peoples Republic of China at the occasion of Eidul Fitr, gifts were

exchanged and bilateral trade opportunities were further discussed between Chairman SOGO and C.G of China.

## BBQ, Chappli Kabab among other cusines add colours to Eid parties

PESHAWAR (APP): The food lovers, tourists and local residents on Friday thronged to Namak Mandi where they enjoyed the mouthwatering cuisines followed by an aromatic green tea, making their happiness doubled on third day of Eid. Chappli Kabab, BBQ, paye, lamb chops, and maton karahi among other food cuisines outlets at Namak Mandi have attracted influx of foodies enjoying its delectable bites during Eid holidays.

Sitting in hammock charpoys in primitive food shops at Namak Mandi, architects Shahryar Khan and Ghafoor Ahmed along with college's friends were seen enjoying the mouth-watering cuisines including

BBQ, Mattan Karahi, Chappli Kabab, Peshawar rice Polao, Paye, Haleem, Baryani and others followed by an aromatic Peshawari Qehwa on third day of Eid and swaped tales of the past college days amid laughter

"Chappli Kabab and maton karahi are my favorite dish and my Eid seems incomplete without tasting its delectable bites," said architect Shahryar while talking to APP at Namak Mandi Peshawar.

"As per our planned program, we came to our favorite food place to enjoy Chappli Kabab, Sri Paye and Mattan Karhai that doubled our happiness on this Eid after 10 years," he said while enjoying tradi-

tional food with college friends.

"I have also purchased two kilogram Chappli Kabab and three parcels of Peshawari rice polao for Eid party at home tonight," he said.

Like Shahryar, a large number of food lovers visited Namak Mandi and others food streets of Peshawar where they enjoyed traditional cuisines including the mouthwatering mutton and beef nehari besides Chappli Kabab due to its excellent taste and deliciousness.

The sellers said the demands of Chappli Kabab have increased manifolds during Eid holidays due to pleasant weather.

Besides enjoying an

appetizing traditional cuisines at hotels and open restaurants at night, most of Chappli Kabab lovers asked for parcels upto five Kg for Eid parties at home.

Inherited Chappli Kabab's business from his father, Arif Ahmad, a famous Chappli Kabab seller said, "my father Jalil Ahmad had took over from his father, Jumma Khan in 1950.

Following the death of my father, all his (Jalil Ahmed) six sons had carried forward the legacy of this hard-earned business and continued it till date with a lot of hope to transfer it to the next generation," he said.

"My grandfather had started chappli kabab busi-

ness from a single 'Karahi' (frypane) 74 years ago and today with grace of Allah Almighty, we have six more shops including one at melody food street, Islamabad, two each at Firdous and University Road, one each at Gul Bahar and Faqirabad Peshawar," he added.

The people of united India were mostly vegetarians but all kings and invaders from the west including Mughals, Turks, Ghazni and Afghans who conquered India love meat dishes.

They introduced the habit of eating meat in new ways and customs in the United India where Mughals made meat-eating a cultural dish by making it

a substitute for beef and buffalo' meat by adding various spices and ingredients to it.

Before marching towards India, the kings, warriors and invaders had stayed in Peshawar by introducing Chappli Kabab's recipe during Mughal dynasty, which had later gained international fame owing to its appetizing aroma and delectable taste.

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

In Peshawar, he said more than 3,500 chappli kebabs' small and big out-

lets were existed mostly in Firdus, Bakhsu bridge, Warsak Road, Ring Road, Nothia, Namak Mandai, Hastnagri, Ramadas, Faqirabad and Board bazaars, attracting foodies during Eid.

Besides Chappli Kabab, Arif said takeaway service of traditional cuisines including Peshawari rice polao, paye, dampokh, namak mandi karahi, lamb chops, BBQ and others traditional foods have shined during Ramadan iftar parties and Eid days.

He said people also dispatch it to UAE, Saudi Arabia and other countries for their friends, relatives and loved ones besides used in walima, engagements and haqeeqa of the

newborn.

Former Ambassador Manzoorul Haq said that Namak Mandi was his favorite food place in Peshawar where he came for the last three years to enjoy its Matton Karhai and BBQ due to its unique taste and energy perspective on Eid.

"It give us an opportunity to spend some times with old friends on Eid as the orders generally take close to an hour to prepare, with customers enjoying tea ahead of the meal here."

The people urged KP government to covert Namak Mandai a full fledged food street on the patterns of Gawal Mandi Lahore to generate jobs opportunities and provide quality food to people.





In brief

Steve Smith sign agreement

NEW YORK (Agencies): Australian batsman Steve Smith said Thursday he has signed to play for Major League Cricket's Washington Freedom when the US T20 series begins its second season in July. Smith will play under a fellow Aussie in Freedom head coach Ricky Ponting in the 2024 campaign, which begins in July after the United States co-hosts the T20 World Cup with the West Indies. "I'm super excited to be joining the Washington Freedom for season two of the MLC," former Australia captain Smith said in a video on the club's social media. "I can't wait to meet all of my new teammates and play in front of some incredible crowds in America. "I'm also really looking forward to working with Ricky Ponting again and his amazing staff. "Can't wait for the season. Come on the Freedom." In the six-team league's inaugural 2023 campaign, Washington went 3-2 to finish third overall in the regular season and lost in the play-offs to eventual champion MI New York.

Tiger begins long walk

AUGUSTA (AFP): Tiger Woods began a 23-hole walk aimed at making Masters history while three early contenders chased leader Bryson DeChambeau as the first round of the 88th Masters resumed Friday. There were 27 players from the field of 89 still on the course when darkness fell Thursday at Augusta National after the opening round was delayed by two and one-half hours due to rain. Woods, the 48-year-old legend whose 15 major titles include five Masters green jackets, was one-under par after 13 holes of his first round when play was halted, leaving him to finish five in round one and play a full 18 holes in round two. He suffered severe leg injuries in a 2021 car crash and has struggled to walk 18 holes since then even after several operations, including a right ankle fusion last April after plantar fasciitis forced him to withdraw from the Masters in the third round after making the cut. "I ache every day," Woods said on Tuesday. Woods has made 23 consecutive Masters cuts to share the record with Gary Player and Fred Couples, but he would grab the mark all to himself if he stands in the low 50 and ties after 36 holes. This will be his toughest test of major holes in a day since Woods returned from the accident at the 2022 Masters. Woods, whose most recent major victory came at the 2019 Masters, arrived at the course before dawn and worked out at the practice facility in cool conditions. DeChambeau, who fired a seven-under par 65 on Thursday to grab a one-stroke lead over world number one Scottie Scheffler, was set to begin his second round just before noon (1600 GMT). The 2020 US Open winner birdied five of the last seven holes in his best round ever at Augusta National to set the pace while Scheffler, the 2022 Masters champion, birdied four of the final seven to stay on DeChambeau's heels. Scheffler, who could join Woods as the only players to win the Masters twice while atop the rankings, tees off in the afternoon's penultimate group alongside four-time major winner Rory McIlroy and Tokyo Olympic champion Xander Schauffele.

Tsitsipas eases into Monte Carlos semi-finals

MONTE CARLO (AFP): Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas kept alive his hopes of a third Monte Carlos Masters title as on Friday he breezed into the semi-finals dismissing Russian opponent Karen Khachanov 6-4, 6-2. Tsitsipas, winner in Monte Carlo in 2021 and 2022, needed just 81 minutes to record his eighth win in nine meetings with an out of sorts Khachanov. The 25-year-old Greek will meet the winner of the quarter-final between Holger Rune and Australian Open champion Jannik Sinner. "I was very effective from the start, I had a lot of pace and gained momentum," said Tsitsipas. "I tried to do my part and press and it worked out really well." Khachanov had cheekily said to the umpire prior to the match "Are you going to stay focussed?" to

which the official replied "Always, of course." It was Khachanov who should have asked himself the question as he rarely seemed to be and was way off the form he had shown in Thursday's defeat of compatriot Daniil Medvedev. The opening exchanges were messy from both players with three successive breaks of serve -- Tsitsipas breaking the run to open up a 3-1 lead. Khachanov finally won a service game of his own -- to make it 3-2 -- displaying a fine mix of power hitting, delicate touch and agility. However, he required medical attention at the change over at 5-4 down, but returned to the fray only for Tsitsipas to serve out the set. Khachanov, who seemed to be troubled by a pain in an upper quad, came under pressure on his

serve at 1-1 in the second set -- but he saved a break point and then held. However, it was a very unhappy Khachanov who returned to his chair at the next change over as a series of errors gave his Greek rival the break at 3-2. The 27-year-old Russian flung his racket angrily to the ground as he took his seat. Tsitsipas did not ease up winning 11 points in a row to surge to a 5-2 lead and served out easily for a place in the last eight. He admitted the tournament brought out the best in him though it is yet to lead to him winning the big one on clay, The French Open. "I would lie if I said it did not bring out the best in me," he said grinning. "There are many good memories and stepping out here and coming back here it revives those good memories. "It brings me alive."



MONTE-CARLO: Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece prepares for a backhand shot against Karen Kchachanov during the quarter-final match on day six of the Rolex Monte-Carlo Masters.

Allen and Milne ruled out of Pakistan series

WELLINGTON (Agencies): Finn Allen and Adam Milne have been ruled out of New Zealand's tour of Pakistan raising concerns as to whether they will be fit for the T20 World Cup. Allen suffered a back injury and Milne picked up an ankle problem during training ahead of the team's departure for the five-match T20I series. Tom Blundell and uncapped allrounder Zak Foulkes have been called in as their replacements. Tom Bruce was considered but made himself unavailable due to family reasons and to continue his county deal with Lancashire. Allen, the powerful opening batter who has a T20I strike-rate of 163.60, would be certain of his place in New Zealand's T20 World Cup squad. Milne, who has had an injury-hit

career, is less assured of a spot in the final 15 for the USA and Caribbean depending on how many quick bowlers are taken. "We feel for both Finn and Adam, suffering injuries so close to the start of the tour. They have been strong performers for us in the T20 format since the last World Cup," New Zealand coach Gary Stead said. "Our support staff and medical networks will be working closely with both players over the next few weeks to complete plans for their treatment and subsequent return to cricket." The 21-year-old Foulkes took 14 wickets at 16.28 for Canterbury in the 2023-24 Super Smash and had a batting strike-rate of 150. Blundell, New Zealand's Test wicketkeeper, has previously played seven T20Is. "Zak has had an impressive season for Canterbury

including being their leading wicket taker in all three competitions," Stead said. "He has displayed impressive skills with the ball, particularly in T20 cricket for the Kings. We also know he has skills with the bat and it will be an excellent opportunity for him to be part of the group." New Zealand were already without nine players for the Pakistan tour due to IPL commitments while Will Young (county cricket), Tom Latham (paternity) and Tim Southee (strength and conditioning) were also not available. Allrounder Michael Bracewell will captain the side with the squad also including uncapped batter Tim Robinson. The initial T20 World Cup squad needs to be named by May 1 but can be freely amended until May 25.

Under fire Haaland can get better: Guardiola

MANCHESTER (AFP): Erling Haaland has room for improvement according to Pep Guardiola, but the Manchester City boss defended the Norway striker from mounting criticism over his performances. Haaland has netted 30 times this season and scored 52 goals last term when City won the Champions League, Premier League and FA Cup. However, the 23-year-old failed to score for the third time against Real Madrid over the past two seasons in City's 3-3 draw in their Champions League quarter-final first leg on Tuesday. Haaland's hold up play was labelled "League Two" standard by former Manchester United captain Roy Keane after a 0-0 draw against Arsenal last month. Guardiola was quizzed on whether Haaland needed to improve if he is to win the Ballon d'Or, the annual award given to the world's best player. But the City manager was quick to point to Haaland's record of silverware in less than two years in Manchester.

City have already won the UEFA Super Cup and Club World Cup this season and remain in contention to defend their treble. "He needs to play more minutes, to learn from what you have to do," Guardiola said at his pre-match press conference before Saturday's Premier League clash against Luton. "But the target is not the Ballon d'Or, the target is to win trophies and he did. Would we have won five trophies last year without him? Not a chance. "It's not about Erling or any other player. Until you retire, you can be better." City's quest for another treble has taken its toll with key midfielder Rodri admitting this week he is in need of a rest. Guardiola conceded his side have looked jaded in recent weeks after already playing 49 games this season. The English champions could have a further 13 matches to play if they progress to the finals of the Champions League and FA Cup. But Guardiola said his options to rotate have been

hindered by injuries picked up by defenders John Stones and Kyle Walker on international duty with England last month. "Take a look at our games and you realise. It is simple. He (Rodri) is so important for the quality he gives us. But if you have a player that doesn't want to play, he won't play," added Guardiola. "I need to rest the centre-halves also but in friendly games, (Stones and Walker) got injured so they get cannot rest. We are in big, big trouble. "I had the feeling we were tired in the last games. We will decide tomorrow what we have to do." One key player coming back from injury is goalkeeper Ederson. The Brazilian has missed the last five games due to a thigh problem, but was left on the bench against Madrid in mid-week, leading to questions over whether Stefan Ortega was Guardiola's new number one. "Eddie is the first choice," said Guardiola. "He was ready to play against Madrid. He is ready for tomorrow and we will make the decision."



ADELAIDE: Women's Heptathlon - Emma Surch of Queensland competes in the long jump during the 2024 Australian Athletics Championships.

Pak squash team displays top notch in Australia Jr Squash C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani squash team has showcased exceptional talent by clinching gold and bronze medals in the Australia Junior Squash Championships 2024 held at the Melbourne sports & Aquatic Centre at Albert Park, Victoria. Pakistani players, dominated the courts throughout the tournament, culminating in impressive victories on the final day, said a press release. In Boys U-13, Huzaifa Shahid (Pakistan) defeated 2nd seed Gng Hung Yu (Australia) by 3-0 (11-6, 11-3, 11-2). In U-15 Boys, Yahya Khan (Pakistan) triumphed over Henry Kross (Australia) by 3-0 (12-10, 11-7, 11-3). In Boys U-17, Ibrahim Zeb (Pakistan) secured victory against Brodie Bennett (New Zealand) by 3-0 (11-3, 11-7, 11-6). In Girls U-13, Mahnoor Ali (Pakistan) outshined Emily Senior (Malaysia) by 3-0 (11-5, 11-4, 11-4). In Girls U-17, Mehwish (Pakistan) emerged victorious over Erin Wyllie (Malaysia) by 3-2 (10-12, 11-6, 11-9, 9-11, 11-6). Meanwhile, Harmas Ali Raja, Fawad Khan and Azaan Ali Khan have secured bronze medals in U11, U13 and U15 categories, respectively, further highlighting Pakistan's success in the championships. Pakistan Squash Federation (PSF) congratulated all the young champions for their exceptional performances in the extravaganza. Their hard work, dedication, and sportsmanship have not only brought glory to the nation but also inspired countless others with their passion for the game.

Rizwan better than me, says Sarfaraz

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Former Pakistan captain Sarfaraz Ahmed commented on his competition with Mohammad Rizwan and termed the latter the better wicketkeeper batter currently. Sarfaraz appeared on a local news channel's sports show and talked about various aspects of cricket and his career before being asked to name the better wicketkeeper batter between himself and Rizwan. In reply, the former captain unhesitatingly named Rizwan. "Mohammad Rizwan has become more mature with time. The way he has been playing, everything about him has improved," said Sarfaraz. "So, I think, currently he is the better wicketkeeper

batter," he added. Sarfaraz Ahmed then claimed that providing a player with consistent chances gives him confidence which ultimately leads to better performances, while denying the claim that he strived less than Rizwan. "When I was playing, the performance was almost alike. [It's just that] when you play consistently, your confidence grows," stated Sarfaraz. "And, as I said earlier in international cricket, the more you play, the more you'll get better. "So that's the reason, like when I played, I gave some good performances. And now the way Rizwan is playing and getting consistent chances, he is grow-

ing in confidence and getting better and better." He then went on to offer a piece of advice to emerging wicketkeeper batters like Azam Khan, Mohammad Harris, Haseebullah Khan, Rohail Nazir and Saad Baig, who could go on to represent Pakistan as the first-choice wicketkeeper in the future. "Look, the wicketkeepers we have like Azam, Harris and Haseebullah, apart from them Rohail Nazir was in the pipeline. There are more kids like Saad Baig from Under-19. "So, we have the potential and the more they play cricket, especially four-day domestic, the more they'll get experience and will perform well for Pakistan," he concluded.

I tried to 'prove a point' after setback, says Bashir

LONDON (Agencies): Somerset and England off-spinner Shoaib Bashir says being told he was not good enough to make it made him more determined to "prove a point". The 20-year-old made his England debut in February after a surprise call-up for the Test Series in India. Bashir was released by Surrey as a teenager before being signed by Somerset. "It's not easy being a young kid and then getting told you're not quite good enough to make it," Bashir said. "Getting up from that and knowing if you want something that bad you want to put in work for it, that's sort of what I did. I really made an effort to improve myself as a cricketer and tried to prove a point." Bashir said it had been a "surreal couple of months" after making his England

debut. He only made his Somerset debut last season, playing in six first-class matches, seven limited-overs matches and five games during their T20 winning Blast campaign. "The winter's been quite the experience starting with the Lions out in Abu Dhabi on that two-week camp and then from there getting called up to play for your country. It's been such a surreal couple of months and one that I'll cherish for a long time," he told BBC Points West. "I got picked up from pretty much nowhere - Somerset came to me out of the blue and so has England as well. "I'm just so grateful for the opportunity and so thankful to God because without him none of this would have happened." Bashir was fast-tracked into the England side after

being spotted by Ben Stokes in a video that went viral, bowling to former England captain Sir Alastair Cook on the spinner's County Championship debut against Essex. Although Bashir's debut was delayed because of visa issues, which meant he had to fly back home before returning to the England camp, he stepped out on the first day of the second Test in India and claimed 2-100. "It was quite special. I remember walking out there and I was shaking - I was like, 'I'm walking out with Ben Stokes, Joe Root here, this is the experience'. "I was nervous until I had the ball in my hand and then I felt at home. I've been bowling a cricket ball for years and I sort of knew that in the back of my head and after I bowled that first bowl I was on it."

Waratahs down Crusaders 43-40 in Super Rugby rollercoaster

SYDNEY (AFP): Will Harrison nailed a drop goal in extra time as the NSW Waratahs snapped a five-match losing streak to beat the Canterbury Crusaders in a 43-40 thriller Friday that saw the lead change 12 times. The Crusaders' Christian Lio-Willie crossed for a try in the 78th minute to seemingly kill off the 'Tahs hopes in a see-sawing clash at Sydney's Allianz Stadium. But Johnny McNicoll conceded a penalty in the dying seconds and Harrison converted a pressure penalty after the final hooter to level the scores at 40-40. It sent the match into a golden point scenario where Harrison, who until recently had been out of the game for nearly two years with injury, was again the hero with a drop kick two minutes into extra-time. "It's a great feeling," said Waratahs skipper Jake Gordon. "We've been close in a lot of games and it feels extra special to close that one out. "I just thought throughout the night our energy was exceptional and to see Harro (Harrison)



step up after such a long time out was very special." While victory got the Waratahs' Super Rugby campaign back on track, it halted the Crusaders' revival after they beat the Waikato Chiefs a fortnight ago to halt a five-match losing run. Super Rugby champions for the past seven years, it was the New Zealand side's first back-to-back defeat against Australian opposition since 2015. In the earlier match at Whangarei, Moana

Pasifika's William Havili banked a last-gasp converted try to seal a 17-14 win over an ill-disciplined Queensland Reds, who had Tate McDermott and Fraser McReight sent off. Until then, the Reds had been the only Super Rugby team not to receive a red or yellow card this season. Moana raced 10-0 clear with the competition's record-try scorer Julian Savea adding another to his collection. But the Reds battled back and led 14-10 with

five minutes on the clock, only for Havili to shake off two tackles and cross for the winning try with a minute left. "Real happy after the last three weeks, we know we haven't been putting our best foot forward," said Tonga fly-half Havili after Moana ended a three-game losing streak. "We made it hard for ourselves tonight, and it means a lot. We've talked a lot about belief during the week, that we're good enough on our day."





## In brief

**41st death anniversary of singer Ahmed observed**

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 41st death anniversary of famous playback singer, Ahmed Rushdi was observed on Thursday. He was born on April 24, 1934, in Hyderabad Deccan and migrated to Pakistan after independence. Ahmed Rushdi recorded around 5000 songs for 583 films in Urdu, English, Punjabi, Bengali, Sindhi and Gujarati, which are the highest number of film songs in the history of Pakistani cinema. Twenty years after his death he was awarded with Sitara-e-Imtiaz for his contributions to the field of music in 2003. Ahmed Rushdi died on this day in 1983 in Karachi.

**12 people drowned**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Twelve people were reported to be drowned on Thursday as a tourist boat overturned in Indus river near Swabi. According to rescue sources, a boat carrying about twelve passengers was capsized and one of them was rescued. However, the bodies of two people, were fished out, reported by a private news channel. The search operation to recover bodies of missing persons was launched.

**Man held for molesting child**

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police on Friday arrested a man for molesting a child. According to a police spokesman, a case of sexual abuse was registered by Sadiq Abad police on a complaint lodged by father of 14 year old victim against the accused Rashid Aziz alias kodu, SHO Police Station Sadiq Abad informed that the victim has been medically examined. The accused had been arrested after the complaint was registered. All legal requirements will be fulfilled to punish the accused, he said. SP Rawal Faisal Salim said that incidents like rape and violence against women and children were intolerable, the accused couldn't escape from the grip of the law.

**Police vigilant on Eid**

RAWALPINDI, (APP): Rawalpindi Police, in collaboration with City Traffic Police (CTP) has mobilized over 300 officers to combat the dangerous practice of one-wheeling during the Eid days. The Police was making concerted efforts to prevent the reckless behaviour of one-wheeling, which poses a serious threat to public safety. These officers have been deployed across the city to deter and apprehend individuals attempting one-wheeling stunts on motorcycles, ensuring the safety of both riders and pedestrians. Along with the formation of special police deployment, special pickets have been established to prevent one-wheeling. Police pickets has been established on Peshawar Road, Mall Road, Jhelum Road, Old Airport Road, Murree Road, and Sixth Road, etc. Parents are requested to support City Traffic Police Rawalpindi to protect their children from accidents and prevent one-wheeling, the Chief Traffic Officer Taimoor Khan appealed to the parents. "Keep eyes on your children during Eid ul-Fitr and special days, and avoid giving them motorbikes and vehicles at a young age, which is against the law," said the CTO. He also warned that the motorcycle mechanics who modify motorcycles for wheelie are being secretly monitored, and strict legal action would be initiated against them, if caught red-handed.

## Eid celebrated with religious zeal

RAWALPINDI (APP): Eid-ul-Fitr celebrated across Rawalpindi division like other parts of the country with religious zeal and fervor while Rawalpindi district police had made foolproof security arrangements.

Rawalpindi District Police had finalized a foolproof security plan for Eid-ul-Fitr while over 2500 cops were on duty outside 659 mosques, 76 imambargahs and 77 open places to provide security to the worshippers, said a police spokesman.

He informed that 32 special pickets had been set up across the city, with over 450 officers on duty during Chand Raat to bolster the security measures.

To tackle the issue of one-wheeling, over 300 officers from Rawalpindi district police and Traffic Police were also on duty.

Moreover, a contingent of 500 Traffic Police Officers was managing the city's traffic flow to prevent congestion and ensure smooth movement. The security plan extends beyond prayer

spaces, with 250 officers stationed at public places, parks, and approximately 300 at important cemeteries.

City Police Officer (CPO) Khalid Mehmood Hamdani had directed that policemen deployed on security duty to use metal detectors to search the participants. Walk through gates were installed on important places where the events of Eid congregations were held, he added.

He said that on the special directives of City Police Officer, Rawalpindi Khalid Mehmood Hamdani police officers also ensured patrolling in their respective areas. The CPO had warned that negligence on part of officials concerned would not be tolerated at any cost and strict departmental action would be taken against them. The day dawned with special Eid sermons where Ulema stressed for unity of Muslim Ummah and prayed for the prosperity and well being of the country.

On this occasion, special prayers were also offered for

Palestine, the progress and prosperity of the country, unity of the 'Ummah', solution of their problems and liberation of Muslim territories, including occupied Kashmir. All important public and private buildings, including shopping centres and parks were decorated and illuminated.

Ulema and khateeb from different schools of thought delivered special sermons and lectures to highlight the significance of the day.

Following the Eid prayers, the citizens spent their time feasting with family and friends and feeding those who are less fortunate. Sweets and other special dishes were prepared for serving the guests. People also exchanged gifts on the occasion.

A large number of local residents as well as people from surrounding areas headed toward public parks and picnic spots in Rawalpindi on first, second and third day of Eid ul Fitr. The amusement parks remained the center of attention for the fami-

lies and visitors.

On the first day of Eid, the rain coupled with dark clouds and cold winds turned the weather pleasant as a large number of people visited major amusement parks to enjoy the Eid holidays. After Eid prayers and exchanging greetings with relatives, people visited parks and picnic places. All the amusement parks were jam-packed with the visitors as children enjoyed rides, swings, boating, and horses and camel rides.

The families and children also enjoyed mini-train rides while children enjoyed themselves by taking pictures with wild and caged animals in zoo and parks.

At Ayub National Park, the families indulged in riding motor boats while children enjoyed the waterfall at 'Joy land'. The toddlers enjoyed the rides on electronic swings.

The families including children flooded Ayub Park, Jinnah Park, Rumi Park, Ladies Park, Children's Park, Dhok Munshi

Park, Allama Iqbal Park, and other places during the Eid holidays.

The managements charged Rs800 per person for boating, Rs500 to 600 for a 'dodging' car ride, Rs250 for camel and horse riding, Rs200 for the train ride, Rs300 for electro swing games, etc. Food stalls and vendors also charged double from the families visiting the parks and public spots.

Ayub Park saw the families in droves as the newly built amusement park teeming with all kinds of flowers from around the world remained the main attraction. People also enjoyed wild animals, birds and pets in some parks and zoos.

The City Traffic Police (CTP) had also finalised a plan to regulate the traffic on city roads during the Eid days.

As many as 460 traffic wardens including eight DSPs, 112 Inspectors, 340 traffic wardens were deployed to regulate traffic and check one wheeling on Chand Raat and during Eid days. A special control room had

been set up which was working round-the-clock to cope with any emergency, he added.

He informed that Commissioner Rawalpindi Division had directed the departments concerned particularly police, City Traffic Police (CTP) and Rescue-1122 to remain alert during Eid ul Fitr holidays to ensure security and provide maximum relief to the citizens.

The Commissioner had instructed the authorities to pay more attention to parks and other public places besides setting up special posts at various points by Rescue-1122 to avoid any untoward incident.

CTP had also formulated a comprehensive plan to regulate the traffic in Murree.

He said as many as 300 officers and traffic wardens were deployed in Murree to ease traffic flow during Eid holidays.

Four Eid holidays were announced by the government from Wednesday, April 10 to Saturday, April 13.



ISLAMABAD: People offering Eid ul Fitr Prayer at Faisal Mosque. —INP Photo

## Commissioner visit Adyala, SOS village to spend Eid with prisoners

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Aamir Khattak and Regional Police Officer (RPO) Babar Sarfraz Alpa visited Adyala Jail and SOS Village, to spend Eid ul Fitr with prisoners and patients.

Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi Hasan Waqar Cheema was also among the visiting dignitaries. According to details, the commissioner distributed gifts to children under 15 years of age in Adyala Jail. He inspected the hospital established in the jail and met the patients.

Commissioner Aamir Khattak instructed the management of the hospital and review efforts for the treatment of patients. He directed

the jail administration for arrangement of special foods for the prisoners during the Eid days. The commissioner and RPO expressed satisfaction over the facilities being provided to the prisoners in Adiala Jail.

They also visited the SOS Village and spent time with the children. They cut the Eid cake and distributed gifts among the children.

Later, the Commissioner visited the Child Protection Bureau. He mingled with the children and exchanged views with them. The commissioner on the occasion said that the children in the Child Protection Bureau deserve special attention.

He instructed the adminis-

tration to arrange a visit to the amusement park and organize a pizza party for them. He said that children are very sensitive and there should be no shortage of anything.

The commissioner also visited the Holy Family Hospital, met with the patients and distributed Eid sweets among the doctors and paramedical staff. He appreciated the medical staff of the hospital for their services rendered during Eid holidays.

On this occasion, Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi Hasan Waqar Cheema said that special measures were taken for children in SOS Village and Child Protection Bureau on the happy occasion of Eid.

## Over 7,000 cars entered in Murree

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi has made special arrangements with aim to provide a hassle-free experience for visitors enjoying the picturesque hill station. With over 7,000 vehicles has entered in Murree and the continuous influx of visitors, Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Taimoor Khan said.

Despite the narrow and two-way roads, traffic in Murree is currently flowing smoothly, according to the CTO. However, due to limited parking space, vehicles are being parked on one side of the road. GPO Chowk is experiencing unusually high traffic pressure because of the large number of pedestrians in the area. To ensure a safe and pleasant journey for everyone, tourists are advised to adhere to traffic rules. Officers are actively patrolling to enforce no-parking regulations and maintain order on the roads.

Meanwhile, more than 700 police personnel were performed security and traffic duties to ensure peace and a smooth flow of traffic in Murree during Eid ul Fitr. As part of the plan, 260 traffic police officers were deployed to maintain the flow of traffic.

Special pickets were also installed at 14 different places to ensure the safety and convenience of tourists on Eid-ul-Fitr, the CTO said, adding that six facilitation centers have been set up in Murree to guide tourists.

## MWL Secy-Gen celebrates Eid with orphaned children, inaugurates new facilities

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Secretary-General of Muslim World League (MWL), Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, extended the spirit of Eid-ul-Fitr to orphaned children during a heartfelt visit to the Ali bin Abi Talib Orphanage on Thursday.

Dr. Al-Issa joined the children in celebrating the joyous occasion, spreading smiles and sharing moments of happiness.

During his visit, Dr. Al-Issa inaugurated new facilities aimed at enhancing the well-being and development of the orphaned children. Among the newly unveiled amenities were a state-of-the-art gymnasium and a training center, providing opportunities for physical fitness and educational advancement. These additions signify the MWL's commitment to supporting vulnerable communities and fostering a nurturing environment for orphaned children.

Dr. Al-Issa emphasized the importance of compassion, solidarity, and sup-



port for those in need, especially during festive occasions like Eid-ul-Fitr. He highlighted the significance of providing a loving and supportive environment for orphaned children, enabling them to thrive and realize their full potential.

Dr. Al-Issa's visit to orphanage is a poignant reminder of the MWL's dedication to humanitarian efforts and its ongoing mission to uplift marginalized communities worldwide. Through initiatives like the visit to the Ali bin Abi Talib Orphanage and the inauguration of new facilities,

the MWL continues to make tangible contributions towards building a more inclusive and compassionate society.

The children at the orphanage expressed their gratitude and joy for the memorable Eid celebration and the newly inaugurated facilities, which will undoubtedly enrich their lives and empower them to pursue their dreams with confidence and hope.

Dr. Al-Issa's visit resonated deeply with the values of empathy and kindness, underscoring the importance of collective efforts in creating a brighter future for all.



ISLAMABAD: People Visiting Lak View Park on 1st day of Eid ul Fitr. —INP Photo

## 12 arrested in miscellaneous crimes

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested 12 accused involved in various crimes during the Eid-ul-Fitr holidays.

According to a police spokesperson, Bani police have arrested 3 member gang involved in street crime and recovered stolen money of 83.0 thousand rupees, stolen motorcycle and weapons from the accused. The accused have been identified as Khalid, Zahir Shah and Nauman.

RA Bazar Police nabbed a 02-member bike lifter gang and recovered 02 stolen motorcycles from the accused Shakirullah and Imran.

Similarly, Naseer Abad police recovered 20 liters of alcohol from accused Amir, Waris Khan police recovered 10 liters of alcohol from accused Badal Mushtaq and Airport police recovered 06 liters of alcohol from the accused Danish. Police had registered sep-

arate cases against the accused.

Four more accused were arrested by the police in different areas on charge of possessing illegal weapons and recovered arms and ammunition, were recovered from the accused.

According to details, the Airport police arrested 02 accused Kamran and Sohaib and 01 pistol with 30 bore ammunition was recovered from accused Kamran while 01 pistol with 09mm ammunition was recovered from accused Sohaib.

Pirwadhai Police arrested the accused Faizan and recovered 02 Kalashnikovs along with ammunition from the accused.

The Race Course Police arrested the accused Khurram Shehzad and recovered 01 pistol with 30 rounds of ammunition from the accused. Separate cases were registered against all the accused.

## RWMC lifted hundreds of tons waste during Eid days

RAWALPINDI (APP): Waste Management Company (RWMC) removed hundreds of tons of waste from the city during two days of Eid ul Fitr. Talking to APP, Chairman RWMC Saqib Rafique said, a comprehensive cleanliness plan, following the policy of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, had been chalked out for making the district free from waste during Eid days.

He said that the company had lifted waste materials from around Masajid, graveyards and other open places where Eid prayers were offered. Saqib said he visited various areas of the city to review the Eid cleanliness operation. He said the department had cancelled the Eid holidays of sanitary workers and officials of the department to ensure cleanliness during the three days of Eid from Chand Raat. He said that mechanical sweeping and washing of roads was done while all graveyards of Rawalpindi and its tehsils had been cleared.



ISLAMABAD: People enjoying electric swing during Visiting at Lak View Park. —INP Photo



### Banning girls' education

KABUL (Ariana News): Officials from private schools say banning education of girls above the sixth grade has resulted in serious financial problems for these schools. With the ban on education for girls above the sixth grade, not only schools but also teachers and the transportation cycle have suffered economic problems. Meanwhile, girls who have been barred from going to school ask the IEA to reopen the gates of schools and universities to them by creating a suitable plan.

## The Frontier Post

Shawwal 4, 1445 — Saturday, April 13, 2024

### Turk Airlines flights start soon

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Taliban's Ministry of Transport and Aviation states that Turkish Airlines intends to resume its flights to Afghanistan soon. The spokesperson for this ministry wrote on its social media platform X, that there are no technical or airport-related issues for the company to begin its flights. Imamuddin Ahmadi stated that all facilities for foreign airlines are available at all Afghanistan airports.

# IEA representatives attend meeting



DOHA (Ariana News): Mohammad Naeem, charge d'affaires of Afghanistan embassy in Doha, and Sohail Shaheen, head of the political office of the Islamic Emirate in Doha, participated in the condolence meeting in memory of the sons and grandchildren of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh.

Three sons of Haniyeh were killed in an Israeli airstrike in the Gaza Strip on Wednesday. Four of his grandchildren were also killed in the attack.

Following the incident, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs Amir Khan Muttaqi phoned Ismail Haniyeh, telling him that as a result of such sacrifices, Palestine will be freed from Israeli occupation.

He also expressed hope for the Palestinian people's endurance, determination and patience.

Israel's attacks on Gaza since October 7 have left 33,634 dead. More than 76,000 others have been injured.

## Taliban claims killing two ISIS members

KUNAR (Khaama Press): According to a report from the media outlet, Taliban forces conducted an operation in Kunar province, eastern Afghanistan, resulting in the killing of two ISIS members.

In a report released by the Taliban-controlled state news agency, another ISIS member was detained in the operation.

Further information about the identities of these individuals has not been disclosed yet. The Bakhtar News Agency, citing officials from the Taliban's media office in Kunar province, reported that the operation was launched on Thursday night in the Diwgal Valley of Chawkay district.

According to the report, two rifles were also discovered and confiscated during the skirmish.

Recent reports reveal that ISIS has intensified its attacks in Afghanistan, with a recent attack in Kandahar resulting in the deaths of over 40 people and injuring dozens more.

ISIS-K, the primary rival of the Taliban, has posed a significant threat to the Taliban-led government since its takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021.

The escalation of attacks by ISIS in Afghanistan, particularly in regions like Kandahar, underscores the ongoing insecurity in the country. Despite the Taliban's control, the persistent threat of ISIS-K and other insurgent groups continues to destabilize the country, posing significant challenges to the region's peace and security.

# Work on Sheberghan-Mazar gas pipeline 60% completed

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum reported that 60% of the construction work on the Sheberghan to Mazar-e-Sharif gas pipeline has been completed.

According to the spokesperson of the ministry, the pipeline spans 95.5 kilometers and has been invested with a cost of 6.9 million Afghanis.

Meanwhile, the Chamber of Commerce and Investment emphasized investment in the country's mining sector, particularly in gas mines.

The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum said that the country's largest gas reserves are located in the Yatim Taq, Khwaja Gogerdak, and Jirqudoq mines, which are currently being legally extracted.

The spokesperson added

that the construction of the gas pipeline from Sheberghan, which costs 6.9 million Afghanis and spans 95.5 kilometers, has progressed 60% and upon completion, it will transport 1.5 million cubic meters of gas to Mazar-e-Sharif every day.

Humayun Afghan, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, said: "After this pipeline extends to Mazar-e-Sharif, it will have the capacity to transfer 1.5 million cubic meters of gas daily, transporting gas from Sheberghan to industrial parks, residential areas, and several factories with which we have contracts."

Meanwhile, the Chamber of Commerce and Investment emphasized the establishment of standard refineries and the processing of mines, especially gas mines in the country.

"It is very fundamental and vital for the economy of Afghanistan and attention must be paid to it, especially by the Islamic Emirate. I think we have sufficient reserves," said Khan Jan Alokozay, a member of the ACCI's board of directors.

Meanwhile, some economic analysts believe that investing in mining extraction in the country is important for economic growth and emphasized its extraction in a standard manner.

"A very large investment is needed which has its own specific conditions, and we are not yet fully prepared," said Mohammad Nabi Afghan, an economic analyst.

Despite having gas resources, the country currently imports the required gas from Central Asian countries and Iran.

# Residents urged to submit artifacts to museum

FAIZABAD (Pajhwok): Officials in northeastern Badakhshan province have asked the people to hand over artifacts in their houses to the local museum for better preservation and museum's enrichment.

Information and Culture director Engineer Zabihullah Amir told Pajhwok Afghan News the museum had a limited number of ancient artifacts and its doors remained closed for foreign tourists for 17 years since its establishment.

However, recently the artifacts of the museum were taken to another location and placed in special showcases and their number was also increased, attracting more than 100 domestic visitors during the past few months, Amir said.

He said 65 ancient and cultural artifacts existed in the museum including stone, clay, metal and leather artifacts. All the items in the museum are professionally secured in specialized cabinets and showcases, he said.

Some of the relics have been donated by people and others seized by security officials from smugglers and handed over to the Department of Information and Culture.

Amiri urged residents who kept such cultural and historic artifacts in their house to donate them to the local museum to further enrich the museum and announced that the directorate was ready to register all such artifacts in the names of their owners or better preservation.

One visitor of the museum Haji Abdul Samad said such historical and cultural relics described the traditions and customs of Islamic and modern eras and the existence of such items attracted foreign tourists.

He asked officials to add more such items to the museum.

There is another museum in the sixth district of Faizabad city called "Dasht-i-Ferugh Minar and Museum" where items belonging to the martyrs who were killed during the communist regime in the country are kept. The items reflect the crimes of the communist regime.

The items include handcuffs, barbed wires, legcuffs and some others left behind by the martyrs.

## Nangarhar ready to welcome returnees

JALALABAD (Pajhwok): The Refugee and Repatriation Department of eastern Nangarhar province is fully prepared to assist Afghan refugees to be expelled from Pakistan in the second phase of their repatriation after Eidul Fitr.

Baz Mohammad Abdul Rahman, director of the department, said they held meetings with NGOs in this regard and they pledged assistance to the returnees.

He said more than 90,000 families or half a million people returned to the country in the first phase of repatriation of "undocumented aliens" since November last year. He added about 92,286 families, comprising 535,562 individuals, returned to the country and 70 percent of them were resettled in Nangarhar province.

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) and partner institutions had provided assistance to each family twice or thrice, he explained.

Rahman said the repatriated families needed assistance in terms of shelter, food and non-food items, cash, vocational training, rent of house, clean drinking water, health, small businesses, agriculture and livestock and some other areas.

He added the Pakistani government might begin the second phase of the deportation of Afghan refugees after Eid-ul-Fitr and they had already started preparations in this regard.

Pakistan plans to start expelling Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders on April 15.

The decision to expel Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders came at a high-level meeting in the port city of Karachi, the Pakistani media reported.

On the other hand, refugees returning from Pakistan to their homeland are happy but they need shelter and job opportunities.

Haji Zhargi, who returned from Peshawar and currently is living in Sararod district, was concerned about lack of education and job for his children.

He told Pajhwok: "My children were studying in Pakistan. After returning to the country, I became jobless."

Atal Khan, who lived in Peshawar and returned to the country a few months ago, said unemployment had made his life miserable.

Officials of the caretaker government have repeatedly pledged providing job opportunities as well as shelter to the returnees.

# High cost make marriage difficult in Bamyan

BAMYAN

(Pajhwok): Some youths in central Bamyan province have complained about unfavorable traditions and the high cost of marriage and said old customs were not removed and remained hurdles in the way of timely marriage.

Najibullah, 27, from the Jigarkhel locality of Bamyan City, was engaged three years ago and was still unable to get married.

He worked as a daily wage and earned a livelihood for a six-member family.

He said: "About three years have passed since my engagement, but due to high cost and financial problems, I have not yet been able to get married, in the current situation, when unemployment has reached its peak, it is difficult to feed my family and provide them with basic facilities."

He said, besides the engagement expenses, he spent 120,000 on special occasions such as Eid during the past three years.

Najibullah believed if there were no such unpleasant and cumbersome traditions for young people, he might have already married and would have been able to form his own family.

By highlighting these difficulties and problems of life, this young man wanted to provide as much ground for the easy marriage of young people as possible and to prevent the promotion of unpleasant traditions and exorbitant expenses in such ceremonies.

It is not only Najibullah who complained about the bad customs and traditions,

other young people are also facing such problems.

Ghulam Nabi, another resident of Bamyan City, said unfavorable customs and traditions in the society have resulted in unfortunate social and economic consequences and have caused various problems.

He said: "More than a year had passed since my engagement and due to economic problems I was unable to go to my fiancé house in Eid, this led to crises in our engagement and even my in-laws wanted to dismiss this engagement."

He believed such traditions have made it difficult for young people to get married and have created social problems in society.

Meanwhile, the social affairs experts considered the exorbitant expenses in weddings against divine orders and called for its prevention.

Ali Mohammad, a social

affairs expert, said unnecessary and exorbitant expenses in wedding ceremonies, engagement and taking sweets on the occasion of Eid to the bride's family before marriage were against Islamic values and left negative consequences in the society.

He believed unfavorable traditions that did not correspond to Islamic values had caused social problems such as increasing illegal immigration, youth addiction to drugs, promoting moral corruption, and preventing young people from marrying.

He said some customs and traditions, such as taking sweets on the occasion

of Eid, which has no historical or Islamic roots, have been promoted in the society to such an extent that everyone considers themselves obliged to implement and institutionalize them.

Mohammadi asked people in such cases, to keep Islamic values and religious teachings in mind to facilitate easy marriage for young people and solve social problems.

Niamatullah Sadiqi, a religious scholar in Bamyan province, said Islam allowed Wallimah — reception — and Mehrar other customs have no justification. Mehrar is the right of the bride and others should not be benefited from this.

He said from the Islamic point of view, the best marriage is the simplest marriage from the material and spiritual point of view, and what is used today in ceremonies under different names is against the Sharia and the holy religion of Islam, and people should behave in such cases according to Islamic teachings.

Mawlavi Shamsullah Ahmadi, head of the Hajj and Religious Affairs Department said efforts were underway to improve public awareness about the implementation of Sharia laws and sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH) through mosques and ulema.

He said the Hajj and Religious Affairs Department had recently created a committee that will work on the prevention of unfavorable practices and traditions.

## Business activity licenses issued

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs reported that last year activity licenses were issued to nearly 30,000 women.

According to Samiullah Ebrahimi, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Labor, women who received activity licenses are currently employed in various sectors in both government and private institutions.

"Work permits have been distributed to women in sectors where there is a need and they can provide services to other women," Ebrahimi said.

Roya, who runs a tailoring workshop in the capital, said she established this workshop to support women who are the breadwinners of their families.

Nearly 30 women and girls are working in this workshop.

Roya told TOLONews: "I built this workshop with my own funds and provided work for thirty women. If the government cooperates, perhaps the number of these women could reach 100 to 150."

Fifteen-year-old Rubina, who sews Afghan dresses in this workshop, says she works here due to economic challenges and to support her family.

Rubina calls on the Islamic Emirate to provide more facilities for women in the country. "I have been working here for six months and am very happy with the opportunity provided. I work to support my family," said Rubina.

The Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment said women's activities in various sectors are beneficial for the economic growth of families and the creation of profitable employment opportunities.

Khanjan Alkozai, a member of the Board of Directors of the Chamber of Commerce and Investment, said: "Opportunities for women should be facilitated; they should take part in both the production and commerce sectors of Afghanistan's economy. They represent a very large segment of society."

Salma Yusufzai, head of the Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industries, said: "In provinces where we had no connections two years ago, today we see women's businesses flourishing, and now almost all provinces are involved."

According to information from the Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industries, over nine thousand women are currently working across Afghanistan in sectors like agriculture, health, animal husbandry, handicrafts, and carpet weaving with activity licenses.

# Ban on schooling takes joy out of Eid, says girls

KABUL (TOLONews): Female students expressed that their lack of education has diminished their enjoyment of the Eid holidays.

Despite this, they remain hopeful that school doors will open for them within this solar year.

Aysha, who has been waiting for schools to reopen for more than two years, told TOLONews: "Our Eid has become like ordinary days and has no joy. Unlike in the past, when we used to get holidays from school and the next day was Eid, it was very delightful, and we enjoyed our holidays."

Girls above the sixth grade, frustrated by the continued closure of school gates, once again asked the Islamic Emirate to open the

schools for them.

Ghazal, another student, said: "Our request of the Islamic Emirate is to open the schools as an Eid gift for us. We want our schools to be reopened."

Sheila, another student, said: "I would have graduated from school this year and not wasted my youth. Our request of the Islamic Emirate is just to reopen the schools so that we can make up for the years that have passed in the coming years."

Farhad Abrar, a university professor, on the negative impact of girls' school closures, said: "The closure of schools for girls above sixth grade, universities, and now other educational institutions like courses and institutes means that we are

heading towards a serious regression where illiterate mothers are raising illiterate children for society."

More than two and a half years have passed and with the start of the 1403 solar academic year, the Islamic Emirate has yet to make any new statements regarding the reopening of schools for girls above sixth grade.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum reported that an investment of ten billion afghani has been made in 150 small mines and 7 billion US dollars in 30 large mines.

Homayoun Afghan, the spokesperson for the ministry, stated that over 150,000 people are also employed in the Afghan mining sector.

## Khost to establish dedicated cancer treatment hospital

KHOST (TOLONews): Local authorities in Khost province say that the initial formalities for this hospital have been completed and they assure that practical work will begin in the near future. The hospital for treating cancer in Khost will be built on a hundred jeribs (acres) of land by a businessman in coordination with the Ministry of Interior.

Some residents of Khost, whose patients are under treatment in a private medical center, are concerned about their relatives' health.

Rahim Shah, a caregiver, says: "When we take our patients to Pakistan, the first problem is the lack of convenience in commuting and roads. Even if this problem is solved, it is very costly and people cannot afford to treat their

patients."

Another caregiver, Shir Adam, says: "There are many problems, the Torkham route and other roads are closed. We take our patients to Kabul, but the medication and treatment that the patient needs are not available."

Doctors also say that cancer requires long-term care and treatment, which will be greatly facilitated

by the construction of this hospital.

Noor Zadrar, a doctor, says: "Cancer patients who are under care and treatment in India and Pakistan need to be treated for three to four years and must be hospitalized there for months, but due to economic problems, they spend twenty days to a month and then return to the country."

Residents of Khost,

expressing their satisfaction with the construction of this hospital, urge the authorities to start its practical work as soon as possible.

According to them, most people cannot afford to treat their patients.

Tasawar Khan, a resident of Khost, says: "We, the people of Khost, are very happy and there is a great need for a cancer treatment hospital here, and land has

already been allocated for it." Aziz Pasarli, another resident of Khost, says: "The practical work of this hospital has not yet started, and we hope that it will start soon."

On the other hand, the

deputy governor of Khost says that the use of chemical weapons in recent decades in the country has led to an increase in cancer.

Mahboob Shah Qanet

adds that the administrative works of this hospital have been finalized and its practical work will start in the near future.

According to him, with the construction of this hospital, not only for the residents of Khost, but also for the residents of neighboring provinces, many facilities will be provided.

"Unfortunately, in some cases our patients face

many problems, which with the effort of the active minister of Interior, a hospital at the level of Afghanistan is supposed to be built here." He added.

Officials of the Cancer Patient Registration Commission in Khost say that currently 14,000 patients are registered with them and are waiting to cross the Ghulam Khan crossing into Pakistan.





**SHAHEED BENAZIRABAD:** President Asif Ali Zardari offering fateha over the graves of his parents and relatives.

## Balochistan braces for stormy rains; alert issued

**F.P. Report**

QUETTA: A high alert was issued throughout Balochistan on Friday as a new system of westerly waves has entered the province with prediction of heavy rains and flash floods in 20 districts.

The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) issued on the high alert along with a warning that heavy/torrential rains may generate flash floods in local nullahs of Dera Ghazi Khan, Lasbela, Kalat, Khuzdar, Ziarat, Kohlu, Barkhan, Zhob, Sherani, Muslim Bagh, Turbat, Harnai, Kohlu, Naseerabad, Jafarabad, Chagai, Panjgur, Gwadar and Ketch from 12th to 14 April.

Flooding may also occur in low-lying areas during the forecast period, the PDMA said and added that heavy rainfall may generate flash flooding in local nullahs/streams of Dir, Swat, Chitral, Kohistan, Mansehra, tributaries of Kabul River, Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir from 13th to 15th April. Chaman, Kalat hit by strong winds, rain. The new system of westerly wave hit border town of Chaman on Friday with strong winds and rain lashing the city. There was a powerful duststorm in Kalat city reducing the visibility to dangerously low level and confining the people in their houses. Pishin and Killa Abdullah were also hit by strong windstorms. A strong westerly wave is affecting western parts of the country that may grip most parts of the country on 13th April and may persist in upper parts

till 15th April.

Mainly dry weather is expected in most parts of the country, while partly cloudy in upper areas. However, rain-windstorm/thunderstorm is likely in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, south Punjab, Gilgit-Baltistan, Kashmir and adjoining hilly areas. Heavyfall/hailstorm is also likely at isolated places in eastern/northeastern Balochistan during the forecast period.

Rain-windstorm/thunderstorm is likely in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, upper Sindh, Islamabad, Punjab, Gilgit-Baltistan, Kashmir and adjoining hilly areas. Heavyfall/hailstorm is also likely at isolated places in Balochistan and Punjab while, snowfall is expected in upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Dry weather prevailed in most parts of the country, while hot in southern parts. However, rain-wind/thunderstorm occurred in upper Kashmir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Samungli. Rainfall(mm): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Malam Jabba 17, Dir 05, Drosh 04, Pattan 03, Saidu Sharif, Kalam 02, Balochistan: Samungli 01.

Yesterday's Recorded Highest Maximum Temperature's (°C): Khairpur, Shaheed Benazirabad 43, Padidan, Jacobabad 42. Earlier, the Met Office informed that a westerly wave is likely to enter upper parts of the country from 10th April followed by another strong westerly wave on 12th April that may grip most parts of the country on 13th April and persist till 15th April. Heavy rainfall may generate flash flooding in local nul-

lahs/Streams of Dir, Swat, Chitral, Kohistan, Manshera, Tributaries of Kabul River, Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir from 13th to 15th April. Possibility of landslides in Upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Murree, Galiyat, Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan and may affect the vulnerable locations from 13th to 15th April.

Windstorm/hailstorm and lightning may damage standing crops, loose structures like electric poles, vehicles and solar panels etc during the period. Farmers especially in wheat harvested areas are advised to manage their crops according to weather conditions. Tourists are advised to avoid unnecessary traveling during the wet period. Temperatures are likely to drop during the wet spell.

It may be mentioned here that early last month, heavy rainfall had wreaked havoc in Quetta and other parts of Balochistan, submerging the provincial capital and triggering a state of emergency declared by the PDMA. The downpour had caused widespread disruption, with train services between Pakistan and Iran suspended and communication networks throughout Balochistan severely impacted.

Moreover, the onslaught of the deluge had led to significant challenges for residents, including shortages of gas and electricity, exacerbating the difficulties faced by the populace in their daily lives. The inundation had severely hindered movement for residents, prompting frustration and inconvenience.

## Justice Ishtiaq named acting CJ in PHC

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: The President of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari, appointed the most senior judge, Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim, as the Acting Chief Justice of Peshawar High Court.

In another development, the Law Ministry in Islamabad has issued a significant notification regarding judicial appointments in Sindh and Peshawar.

Meanwhile, in a move to bolster the Sindh High Court's bench, the President has appointed six additional judges, including a female judge. Among the newly appointed judges are Justice Sana Akram Minhas, Justice Amjad Ali, Justice Jawad Akbar Sarwana, Justice Khadim Hussain Soomro, Justice Muhammad Abdul Rehman, and Justice Arbab Ali Hakro, all of whom are poised to contribute significantly to the Sindh High Court's judicial proceedings.

## Russian troops arrive in Niger

NIAMEY (BBC): Dozens of Russian military instructors have arrived in Niger as part of a new agreement with the country's junta, which has cut links with the West. State media reported that they arrived along with a state-of-the-art air defence system. They are expected to install the system and teach Niger's army how to use it.

The West African country is one several in the Sahel region ruled by military authorities to have recently strengthened ties with Russia. A spokesperson for Niger's military government on Friday said the Russians were in the country to train soldiers. The Russian Defence Ministry's paramilitary group Africa Corps, also known as the Russian Expeditionary Corps (REK), wrote on Telegram that this was the first group of servicemen and volunteers to go to Niger.

In an attached video, a serviceman of the corps said in French that they were there to "develop military cooperation" between the countries and had brought "various special military equipment" to help with training. Footage of the Russian instructors unloading a cargo plane full of equipment was broadcast on Niger's state television. Ulf Laessing, a specialist in the Sahel region for the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, which promotes democracy, told the BBC World Service's Newday programme that the military supplies appeared to be part of a "regime survival package".

Niger's democratically elected President Mohamed Bazoum was overthrown last year by the junta, which has since cut military and diplomatic ties with France - the former colonial power - and revoked an agreement with the US. The European Union suspended its security cooperation with the country in the wake of the coup. Mr Laessing said the military government was still concerned about some form of physical interference in Niger by the political and economic alliance of West African states, known as Ecowas.

He added that this is probably the reason for the supply of a Russian air defence system, rather than to help suppress Islamist fighters. "I don't have any other explanations because jihadists don't have planes," Mr Laessing said. Kabir Adamu, of the intelligence organisation Beacon Security, said Niger was moving closer to countries outside the Western bloc including Russia, China and Iran. He said he feared the alliance with Russia could encourage the junta to further delay a return to civilian rule, as has happened in neighbouring Mali. Abdel-Fatau Musa, Ecowas commissioner for political affairs, peace and security, noted that Niger was following in the footsteps of Mali and Burkina Faso - the three countries have formed a military alliance.

Niger had already been suspended from Ecowas - which has been urging the country to return to democratic rule along with Burkina Faso and Mali - but in January, the junta-led countries announced they would quit the bloc. He expressed fears of a long period of conflict in the Sahel region. "Our position is clear.

# Electricity prices go down for April's power bills

**F.P. Report**

LAHORE: In a much-needed relief to inflation-stricken people, Federal Energy Minister Awais Leghari has announced that the electricity prices for April's power bills have become cheaper compared to the last month. "The per unit price of electricity fell by Rs3.83 in the month of April. The overall reduction is due to the quarterly and fuel price adjustments in dollar terms," the minister stated in a statement. He said the fuel price adjustment has been reduced to Rs4.92 from Rs7.6 for the current month of April and the quarterly adjustment has come down to Rs2.75 from Rs4.43.

"Electricity bills have witnessed a decline of Rs1.68," Leghari said adding that the per unit price of electricity will be reduced as compared to the last month. Explaining the method to calculate the cost

of electricity prices, the energy minister said fuel price adjustment calculates the cost incurred on generating power in a month. "The price of electricity is reduced for consumers when fuel price becomes lower compared to a price fixed by Nepra," he explained.

He said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif issued directives to provide maximum relief to the nation. The minister detailed that the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) would fix "reference tariff" for 12 months at the beginning of every year, and set fuel price adjustment on a monthly basis. In case of an increase in fuel expenditures for electricity generation, the national exchequer would suffer losses if the additional amount is not charged from the consumers, Leghari said.

Earlier this week, the Nepra allowed ex-Wapda

power distribution companies (XWDISCOs) to make a whopping Rs4,921 per unit additional collection from consumers in their April 2024 bills, according to The News. In February, they paid less than what was cost of power generation, especially from costly imported fuel. Notably, on March 28, Nepra held a public hearing on a petition of the Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA-G) on behalf of XWDISCOs. It had requested Rs4.99/unit positive fuel charges adjustments (FCA) for February 2024.

In its decision released on Monday, Nepra said the increase in the power price would apply to all consumer categories except for electric vehicle charging stations (EVCS) and life-line consumers of all DISCOs. The said adjustment would be shown separately in bills based on units billed in the month of February.

## 17 killed as truck carrying pilgrims falls into ravine

HUB (INP): At least 17 people were killed while over 40 sustained injuries after a truck carrying pilgrims plunged into a ravine in Balochistan's Hub district, officials said.

Hub Assistant Superintendent of Police Ahmed Talha Wali confirmed the death toll and injuries. He told reporters that the truck, carrying more than 50 people, was en route to the Shah Noorani shrine in Khuzdar from Thatta. He said the incident took place at 10pm last night, adding that critically wounded persons had been referred to the Jam Ghulam Qadir Hospital in Hub and Civil Hospital's Trauma Centre in Karachi.

Earlier, Manan Baloch, the Edhi Foundation's Hub in-charge, said that the rescue operation to retrieve the bodies and injured concluded Thursday morning. Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner Munir

Ahmed informed that the truck was overspeeding and went out of the driver's control while negotiating a turn.

In a statement issued earlier today, Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti expressed deep grief and sorrow over the loss of precious lives, according to state-run Radio Pakistan. He directed officials to provide the best health facilities to injured people.

Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah also expressed deep grief at the high number of casualties and prayed for the families of the deceased. He also visited the Civil Hospital's Trauma Centre and met with the injured persons. Speaking to the media outside the facility, he said 40 people had been discharged so far while five were in critical condition. "All efforts are being made to provide the best medical facilities to the injured," he

added.

Separately, the president and prime minister extended condolences to the grieving families and prayed for the speedy recovery of the wounded. Road accidents with high fatalities are common in the country due to lax safety measures, poor driver training and decrepit transport infrastructure.

Passenger buses and trucks are frequently crammed to capacity and seatbelts are not commonly worn, meaning high death tolls from single-vehicle accidents are common. According to the World Health Organisation estimates, more than 27,000 people were killed on Pakistan's roads in 2018. In January last year, 41 people were killed when their passenger bus, which was also loaded with containers of flammable oil, plunged into a ravine in Balochistan and burst into flames.



**HYDERABAD:** Sindh Information Minister, Sharjeel Inam Memon addressing a press conference.

## UK laser could be used against Russian drones

LONDON (BBC): A UK high-power laser weapon could be sent to Ukraine to take down Russian drones, the defence secretary says. According to Grant Shapps, the weapon could have "huge ramifications" for the conflict in Europe.

The DragonFire weapon is expected to be rolled out by 2027, but Mr Shapps said he wanted to "speed up" production and make it available sooner. It follows a successful trial of the laser, carried out against an aerial target for the first time in January.

The laser was originally expected to be operational by 2032, but new reforms intended to speed up government procurement of weapons mean that it will now be ready five years earlier. Despite this, the defence secretary told reporters while on a visit to Porton Down military research centre near Salisbury that he wanted to speed this up even further.

"Let's say that it didn't have to be 100% perfect in order for Ukrainians perhaps to get their hands on it," he said. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) says the faster timetable comes in response to the "rapidly changing threat environ-

ment" faced by the UK. "It's designed to not wait until we have this at 99.9% perfection before it goes into the field, but get it to sort of 70% and then get it out there and then develop it from there," Mr Shapps said.

"But 2027 is still the date as of this moment," he continued. The weapon is precise enough to hit a £1 coin from a kilometre away, according to the MoD. It is hoped that it will pave the way for a low-cost alternative to missiles, to shoot down targets such as drones.

January's successful test of the weapon was carried out at the MoD's Hebrides Range in Scotland and was hailed as a "major step" in bringing laser-directed energy weapons (LDEWs) into service. The greatest advantage of lasers is cost and, in theory, an "unlimited magazine" of ammunition - as long as there is a reliable source of power. But the big drawback is that they can only fire at targets in the line of sight, unlike most missiles.

The US has been testing directed-energy weapons for decades. They have been fitted on to several warships for trials and evaluation. The UK's ambition to do the same by 2027 might be pos-

sible, but lasers have not been tried and tested in battle. US warships are still shooting down Houthi drones in the Red Sea with conventional missiles.

Any suggestion that UK lasers could be sent to Ukraine to take out Russian drones is optimistic. Ukraine's demands are more urgent. It requires mobile air defence systems which have been proven in battle. With its electrical grid constantly being targeted by Russia, lasers which require a source of power, are unlikely to be the solution to Ukraine's urgent needs.

LDEWs use an intense light beam to cut through their target and can strike at the speed of light. As a line-of-sight weapon, it can attack any visible target that is close enough, although the range of the DragonFire system is classified. Missiles can be far more expensive than the drones they destroy, with some costing millions of pounds compared with a few thousand. The MoD says firing the DragonFire system for 10 seconds is the cost equivalent of using a regular heater for an hour, with the operating expense typically less than £10 a shot.

## Norway says ready to recognize a Palestinian state

OSLO (AFP): Norway is ready to recognize a Palestinian state together with other countries, its prime minister said on Friday while hosting Spanish counterpart Pedro Sanchez, who is seeking support for the cause.

Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store told reporters that such a decision would need to be taken in close coordination with "like-minded countries." "Norway stands ready to recognize the state of Palestine," Store told a joint press conference with Sanchez. "We have not set a firm timetable," Store added.

In November, Norway's parliament adopted a government proposal for the country to be prepared to recognize an independent Palestinian state. Norway also hosted Israeli-Palestinian peace talks at the beginning of the 1990s, which led to the Oslo Accords. Sanchez is currently on a tour of Poland, Norway and Ireland this week to drum up support for the recognition of a Palestinian state, according to a Spanish government spokesperson.

Speaking alongside Store, Sanchez said Spain was "committed to recognizing Palestine as a state, as soon as possible, when the conditions are appropriate, and in a way that can have the most positive impact to the peace process."

On March 22, Spain issued a statement with Ireland, Malta and Slovenia on the sidelines of an EU leaders summit, saying they were "ready to recognize Palestine" in a move that would happen when "the circumstances are right." Last week, Sanchez told reporters traveling with him on his Middle East tour that he hoped it would happen by the end of June.

## Dozens of Palestinians killed in Gaza

GAZA (Reuters): Israeli forces fought Palestinian militants in the north and center of the Gaza Strip on Friday as Khaled Meshaal, a senior official in Gaza's ruling Hamas movement, said its six-month-old battle with Israel would "break the enemy soon."

Most Israeli troops have been pulled out of Gaza in preparation for an assault on the southern city of Rafah, where more than 1 million Palestinians are sheltering, but fighting has continued in various areas. Residents of Al-Nusseirat camp in central Gaza said dozens were dead or wounded after Israeli bombardment from air, land and sea that had followed a surprise ground offensive on Thursday, and that houses and two mosques had been destroyed.

Health officials said earlier that six people had been killed in strikes on the camp, and around 70 wounded, including three Palestinian journalists. In Gaza City, Palestinian health officials said at least 25 people had been killed and several wounded in an Israeli air strike on a house in Al-Daraj neighborhood. Gaza's health ministry said 89 Palestinians had been killed by Israeli military strikes in the space of 24 hours.

The Israel military (IDF) said it was pursuing "a precise intelligence-based operation" against militants and their infrastructure in central Gaza. "Over the past day, IDF fighter jets struck over 60 terror targets in the Gaza Strip, including underground launch posts, military infrastructure and sites in which armed terrorists operated," a military statement said. "In parallel, IDF artillery struck terrorist infrastructure in the central Gaza Strip."

Meshaal spoke at an event in Doha, Qatar, to mourn members of Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh's family killed in an Israeli air strike in Gaza on Wednesday. "This is not the

final round," he said. "It is an important round on the path of liberating Palestine and defeating the Zionist project." At least 33,545 Palestinians have now been killed since the Israeli offensive began, Gaza's health ministry said, with most of the 2.3 million population displaced and much of the enclave laid to waste. The war began when Hamas led an attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7 in which 1,200 people were killed and 253 taken hostage. Around 130 are still being held incommunicado in Gaza, Israel says.

Meanwhile, a British surgeon who volunteered in Gaza has said a "huge amount" of her operations were on children younger than 16, the BBC reported on Friday. Dr. Victoria Rose added that common injuries included bullet wounds, shrapnel injuries and burns, and that she had performed surgery on many children younger than 6. Many patients are unable to heal from surgery due to malnutrition, she said.

The consultant plastic surgeon spent two weeks working in late March at the European Hospital in Khan Younis, southern Gaza. In that time, she only operated on one person older than her — a 53-year-old. That fact was the "most shocking bit" of her time in Gaza, she told the "Today" program.

Rose added: "Everybody else was younger than me. A huge amount of my work was under-16s. Quite a worrying proportion of my work was 6 and under." Injuries to Palestinians required "removing foreign bodies from tissue, reconstructing defects in faces, removing bullets from jaws, that kind of thing," she said. "When we were looking at some of our patients who were not doing so well, there was a lot more infection than I've ever seen anywhere else.

"A lot of people's protein levels were in their boots, their haemoglobin

## Govt will provide relief to common man

**F.P. Report**

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader and former prime minister Mian Nawaz Sharif has said that government will spare no effort to provide relief to common man.

PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif ranged up Member Punjab Assembly (MPA) Rana Muhammad Arshad who was elected from Shahkot and congratulated him on his victory in the recount, according to a statement on Friday. Speaking on this occasion, PML-N leader Sharif acknowledge the contributions of people of Nankana Shahkot and said government would keep all promises made with the public at Nankana rally.

He further said that educational institutions would be established in Nankana and government would bring back the era of prosperity throughout the province. The PML-N would leave no stone unturned to provide relief to youth, farmers and the ordinary man.