

3 terrorists killed in Pishin  
F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Security forces conducted an intelligence based operation in Pishin District of Balochistan on reported presence of terrorists. During the conduct of operation, after intense fire exchange, three terrorists were sent to hell, while one terrorist was apprehended in injured condition, who has been identified as an Afghan national.



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KARACHI: Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah attending a ceremony.

## Raisi, Murad discuss economic opportunities

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi met Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Tuesday during his visit to Karachi and had a detailed discussion on Pakistan-Iran economic opportunities, including issues concerning investment.

A statement issued by CM Shah's spokesperson Abdul Rasheed Channa said the Iranian president and provincial chief held a meeting discussing investment issues and bilateral economic opportunities. Provincial ministers also attended the meeting. CM Shah said the Sindh government had always encouraged private enterprise and there were "vast investment opportunities" in various sectors across the province.

A ceremony was later held in honour of the Iranian president who also addressed it and "expressed his delight" at being hosted in Sindh. Addressing the ceremony, CM Shah said: "It is a matter of pride and honour for me that today I am welcoming the president of a brotherly country, a long-time friend, sympathiser and benefactor of Pakistan," adding that Pakistan-Iran relations spanned "centuries".

"The religious, academic, cultural and economic ties between us are strong and deepening with time. Pakistan and Iran have supported each other wholeheartedly," he said. CM Shah said the two countries were passing through an "important period in history" where brotherhood, unity and mutual support were "essential".

### Punjab has robust investment opportunities, Maryam tells Raisi

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz said Tuesday that the Pakistan-Iran friendship comprised over decades and Pakistan wanted to enhance cooperation with Iran in various economic welfare projects, especially poverty eradication.

Punjab Chief Minister said this while talking to Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and First Lady Jamileh Alamolhoda at Governor House Lahore today during a luncheon arranged in the honour of Iranian dignitaries. The Iranian delegation was served with traditional foods of Punjab. On the occasion, Maryam Nawaz said there was a need to increase bilateral cooperation for industrial and agricultural development. The CM said Pakistan would welcome Iran's investment in Punjab's value-added livestock market, adding that the two countries can earn a lot of foreign exchange by establishing FMD zones and exporting halal meat. Maryam Nawaz said the Iranian delegation that Punjab possessed excellent investment opportunities in the green energy sector. On the occasion, Maryam Nawaz prayed for the prosperity and peace of the people of Iran. Chief Minister Maryam also thanked the Iranian President and his wife for their visit to Lahore. Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and First Lady Jamileh Alamolhoda thanked Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz for the warm welcome.

"We are facing various problems in which terrorism, illegal trade, climate change and its negative effects, increasing atrocities in Palestine and Kashmir are the top. "Genocide of Muslims in Palestine and Kashmir is a matter of concern. In the eyes of Pakistan, a peaceful solution to the problems of Palestine and Kashmir is the most important need of the hour," the chief minister said.

He added that Muslims should unite and support Palestinians in this difficult time. Shah further said that Pakistan's "firm and principled stand" was that there should be an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and Palestinians should be

given their rights while the problem of Kashmiris must be solved in the light of UN resolutions.

Raisi earlier landed at Jinnah International Airport's old terminal where he was received by Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori. Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah and provincial ministers. He later visited Mazar-i-Quaid where he laid a floral wreath and offered prayers with provincial officials and his delegation in tow. Raisi's subsequent visit was to the Sindh Chief Minister's House. A ceremony was held in which an honorary doctorate was awarded to the Iranian president by Governor Tessori.

### Nawaz leaves for China

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Former prime minister and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supreme Nawaz Sharif left for China on a five-day personal visit.

Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar is accompanying Nawaz Sharif on visit to China. According to media reports, Nawaz Sharif would hold meetings related to the development works of the Punjab province and will also meet the owners of Chinese companies. He will also undergo a medical checkup during his stay in China.

Moreover, the selection of China for his first foreign visit after returning to Pakistan in October last also signifies the importance Nawaz and his party gives to the Asian giant. Earlier, it was reported that 16 Chinese companies had shown interest in the Nawaz Sharif IT City – a brainchild of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz who has envisaged similar projects in all the major cities of the province – while eight others were ready to work immediately. Interestingly, the elder Sharif's sojourn to China comes before the planned visit by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif who is expected to hold talks with the Chinese leadership next month. At the same time, Dar accompanying Nawaz shows how much trust he enjoys by the party leadership and highlights the reason for his appointment as foreign minister.

Maryam Nawaz who has envisaged similar projects in all the major cities of the province – while eight others were ready to work immediately. Interestingly, the elder Sharif's sojourn to China comes before the planned visit by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif who is expected to hold talks with the Chinese leadership next month. At the same time, Dar accompanying Nawaz shows how much trust he enjoys by the party leadership and highlights the reason for his appointment as foreign minister.

### 8 terrorists killed in D I Khan action

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Tuesday claimed to have killed at least eight terrorists who were involved in attacks on Customs officials in Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

One of the most-wanted terrorists, Jahanzaib, was also among those killed in the operation conducted on Monday in the KP district, the CTD said in a statement. The dead terrorists, according to the statement, were also involved in extortion and attacks on security forces as well as target killing.

The terrorists were present in the district with plans to cause sabotage, it added. "The escape routes of the terrorists were blocked," the CTD said, adding that there is a fear of the presence of facilitators of terrorists in the local population. "Strict action is also being taken against the facilitators," the agency maintained.

Last weekend, two officials of Customs were gunned down in an attack near York Toll Plaza in DI Khan, while four others sustained injuries in the gun attack. This attack came just days after a previous one on April 18, during which six people, including five customs officials, were killed in a firing incident on the Sago Road in Daraban tehsil of the district.

# The Frontier Post

Swati's bail confirmed  
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The district and sessions court has confirmed bail of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Azam Khan Swati in Section 144 violation case against him. Swati appeared before the court along with his counsel. Judge Awais Muhammad Khan heard the case. The court confirmed the bail against a surety bond of Rs5,000.

## PM seeks UK's support to promote higher education

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday expressed the government's desire for working together with the United Kingdom to promote higher education and improve quality of education in Pakistan.

The desire was expressed during a meeting with the delegation of representatives from leading UK universities here at the PM House. The delegation was led by UK's International Education Champion Sir Steve Smith.

The prime minister welcomed the delegation and emphasized the importance of promoting quality education, saying that it was the top priority of the government. He expressed his commitment to ensuring that every child had access to education, and that the Federal Government was working with the provincial governments to achieve that goal.

The prime minister said as Punjab chief minister he had established the Education Endowment Fund in the province, and a similar initiative would also be taken at the federal level. He said the government was taking steps on emergency basis for the development of the education sector. The prime minister, praising the UK's support for Pakistan's education sector, expressed his desire to strengthen bilateral cooperation in the fields of education and trade.

He highlighted that the launch of degree programmes in the universities of Pakistan and the UK on reciprocal basis was a welcome step. The modern education, especially science and technology, was guarantee of development of any nation, he added. PM Shehbaz underscored that the bilateral relations with UK spanned over decades which were further strengthening with the passage of time. He emphasized that there should be collaboration in the fields of research and technology in the universities of the two countries.

He further said Pakistan wanted to

take benefit of the capacity of the UK's education sector. The delegation expressed their interest in collaborating with Pakistani universities and offered assistance in teacher training and capacity building.

The prime minister was informed by the delegation that the scope of the Education Gateway Pakistan was being extended which would help enhance bilateral cooperation in the education sector. The delegation also appreciated the warm hospitality extended to them by the prime minister and government officials.

The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Education Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, MNA Romina Khurshed Alam, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Tariq Fatemi, British Council Country Director James Hampson, and other high officials.

Shehbaz directs to suspend Chief Commissioner Inland Revenue officials over delay in tax cases: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif took notice of the "willful" delay in tax cases and ordered for suspension of Commissioner Inland Revenue Islamabad and other relevant officials.

While issuing a directive for the suspension of all the relevant officials, the prime minister also asked for initiating an inquiry against them, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. Soon after assuming the office, the prime minister had directed for immediate reforms in the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and decided to oversee the process himself.

As per details, billions of rupees' cases related to government revenues have been pending for adjudication in the Tax Tribunals. The prime minister had requested the Chief Justice of Pakistan for the early disposal of such cases. Recently, the prime minister took a notice of one of these pending cases in which an FBR counsel had sought adjournment and directed the relevant authorities to inquire into the matter.

The prime minister observed that the national exchequer had been suf-

### Premier invites Australian companies

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday invited the Australian companies and experts to share their expertise and best practices with Pakistani counterparts.

He was talking to High Commissioner of Australia Neil Hawkins who paid a courtesy call on him at the PM House. The prime minister said both Pakistan and Australia enjoyed friendly and cordial ties. He expressed satisfaction over the current state of bilateral relations, saying Pakistan was keen to enhance cooperation in agriculture, livestock, mining etc.

The prime minister also acknowledged the contribution of Pakistani diaspora in Australia, including a significant number of students. The high commissioner reaffirmed the desire of the Australian side to strengthen its ties with Pakistan and assured the prime minister of his cooperation.

He also briefed the prime minister on some of the upcoming bilateral engagements, including visits of senior Australian defence officials to Pakistan. While noting the priority areas indicated by the prime minister, the high commissioner also expressed interest in strengthening sports and cultural cooperation, particularly in cricket and hockey.

fering due to the pendency of such cases involving worth billions of rupees tax matters. Shehbaz Sharif made it clear that he would not tolerate any kind of lethargy in pursuance of such legal matters, and under his pledge with the nation, would continue monitoring the tax reforms. "For enhancing the revenues and saving every penny of the country and nation, they would have to strive day and night," the press release quoted the prime minister as saying.

### Govt to re-constitute body on missing persons issue

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar on Tuesday said that the incumbent government was serious to address the long standing issue of missing persons and was going to re-constitute the committee on it.

He was addressing a press conference here along with Federal Minister for Information Attaulah Tarar. The law minister said that 10,200 cases of missing persons were registered in the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances (CIOED) out of which around 8,000 case have been addressed.

He said that the former PDM led government formed a committee on the issue with the representation of all stakeholders including BAP party, PMQ, JUI, PPP and others. Now the incumbent government was going to re-constitute the Parliamentary committee to continue its work on the subject. Azam Nazeer said that the issue of missing persons was four decades old thus it could not be resolved over the night. He said that the involvement of government institutions in the matter couldn't be denied but no concrete evidence was ever produced before the committee in this regard.

He said that reports of missing persons were also not 100% correct every time. Two people were facing jail sentences in various cases while one was found among the attackers of Gawadar attack, he said. The Pakistan army and people, he said, have lost number of lives in the incidents of terrorism in the country. He said that there was a need to get a political solution along with the legal efforts, adding that if anyone was found involved in a crime he must be prosecuted.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of representatives of leading universities of United Kingdom called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

## Voters rejected PTI's narrative in by-polls: Tarar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar said on Tuesday that the voters during the recent bye-elections had rejected the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's narrative of hatred, hypocrisy and lies.

Addressing a press conference along with Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar here, he said much hue and cry was made about so-called rigging in the by-elections but even a single proof could not be presented by the PTI leadership. He said that the outcome of bye elections also cleared doubts about February 8 general elections created by a certain political party.

By the grace of Allah Almighty, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz swept the by-elections as the masses voted for love of Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's economic reforms. The minister remarked that people of Pakistan had buried the PTI's narrative based on violence, duplicity and lies as not PML-N voters, but other people also voted for PML-N due to its pro-people policies and track record of servicing the masses.

Regarding Bushra Bibi's health, he said funny things were being shared on social media, though all her medical tests were clear. He said it appeared that the PTI leaders had sworn that they have to speak against the country's national and defense institutions. He said that due to the efforts of the government, the country was moving towards progress and development.

The Iranian President had vowed to increase trade volume with Pakistan upto 10 billion dollars per year. Earlier, he said the high level Saudi Arabian delegation had also discussed prospects of major investment in Pakistan. He said the stock market had broken all previous records due to the favorable environment.

The government under the leadership of

Shehbaz Sharif wanted to introduce serious economic reforms in the country. He said that IT exports reached 306 million dollars. Investment was coming in the country owing to the good policies of the government of Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. He recalled that the PTI founder was serving jail sentence due to corruption and now he was feeling that he had become irrelevant.

Tarar said that concocted stories about Bushra Bibi's health were being spread to get attention. Referring to Imran Khan he said that a person in the prison was a victim of paranoia. He recalled that the PTI even sold gifts given by heads of friendly countries. He said Pakistan's interest was foremost, politics and political parties came later.

He said that due to the pragmatic policies and vision of the present elected representatives, development was the destiny of Pakistan. "The government is taking steps for the development of Pakistan and with the grace of Allah, it will out the country on the road to prosperity. Attaulah Tarar said that the minister for law and justice had shed light on the missing persons issue in detail.

The minister said that the families of martyrs who were victims of terrorist attacks had many reservations in this regard. He recalled that in 2022, Iman Mazari had mentioned the name of one Naeem Rehmat as a missing person who was serving a life sentence in Landhi Jail in connection with a drug case in 2019 in a drug case. He said that in 2011, the Supreme Court formed an inquiry commission about missing persons which sorted out 7900 cases out of 10,023 cases and now 23 percent of the cases were pending.

He said a cabinet Committee had been constituted on the issue and it will present proposals for solution of the matter. The government had the intention to solve this problem, he said, adding that the previous government also worked on it, and the present government was also striving to settle the matter.

## Extortionists to be dealt with iron hands: KP CM

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: An important meeting of the Apex Committee of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Integrated Security Architecture (KPISA) was held here at Civil Secretariat Peshawar on Tuesday with Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur in the chair. The participants of the meeting reviewed implementation status of the decisions taken in the last meeting against illegal spectrum in the province.

Both the civil and military high-ups on this occasion reiterated their commitment to eliminate extortion, hawala hundi, illegal weapons, smuggling, fake documentation, narcotics and all other illegal spectrum supporting or facilitating terrorist activities in the province. Corps Commander Peshawar Lieutenant General Hassan Azhar Hayat, provincial cabinet members Mian Khaliq-ul-Rehman, Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif, Muzammil Aslam, Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry, IGP Akhtar Hayat Khan Gandapur, other civil and military high ups and representatives from the relevant federal departments attended

the meeting. The forum underlined the need to strengthen coordination mechanism among relevant provincial and federal institutions in order to eliminate illegal spectrum.

They also recommended that the next meeting of the Central Apex Committee should be held at Peshawar to resolve the issues related to federation in this regard. The forum also reviewed the matters related to profiling of NCP vehicles and decided to carry on strict actions against all type of illegal activities proved to be as supporter or facilitator of terrorism in the province, further deciding that relevant federal and provincial departments/agencies will take joint and integrated actions against those activities. It was further decided to create a joint task force consist of law enforcing agencies in addition to increasing the powers of Counter Terrorism Department, so as to effectively deal with the issue of extortion.

"Elements found involved in smuggling, extortion, narcotics and other illegal spectrum would be dealt with iron hands", the participants expressed their commitment and decided to take stern action against the govern-

ment officials found involved in facilitating the smugglers. Similarly, the forum decided to further strengthen the joint check posts equipping them with the latest technology for this purpose.

Moreover, it was decided to have vigilant eye on drugs trafficking in the educational institutions, adding that elements involved in drugs production and trafficking would be dealt with iron hands; necessary amendments would be made in the relevant legal framework for this purpose. The forum also decided to establish a state of the art rehabilitation centre for the rehabilitation of drug addicts in the province.

The meeting decided to put in place a track and trace mechanism to stop the smuggling and transportation of illegal items besides strengthening of police, excise, custom, ANF and other relevant institutions to curb the illegal spectrum. It was also decided to fully operationalize the district implementation committees for the enforcement of Apex committee decisions in letter and spirit and authorities concerned were directed to devise a plan in consultation with all stakeholders in this regard.





## City receives light rain, more from Friday

LAHORE (APP): The provincial capital on Tuesday received light rain which turned weather pleasant, bringing maximum temperature down while the Met office has predicted rain-wind/thunderstorm (few moderate/heavy falls) from Friday to Saturday.

The city witnessed drizzle on Jail Road, Gulberg, Airport, Muslim Town, Green Town, Samanabad, Laxmi Chowk, Gulshan-e-Ravi, Farrukhabad, Iqbal Town, Johar Town and other areas while light rain occurred at some places.

According to a spokesman for the Pakistan Meteorological Department, a westerly wave is likely to enter western parts of the country on 24th of April (night) and likely to grip most upper parts on 26th of April. Under the influence of this weather system Rain-wind/thunderstorm (few moderate/heavy falls) is expected in Chakwal, Jhelum, Mandi Bahauddin, Gujrat, Gujranwala, Hafizabad, Sialkot, Narowal, Lahore, Kasur, Okara, Faisalabad, Toba Tek Singh, Jhang, Khushab, Sargodha, Mianwali, Pakpattan and Sahiwal from 26th to 29th April (morning). While, in Dera Ghazi Khan, Rajanpur, Bhakkar, Layyah, Multan, Kot Addu, Muzaffargarh, Rahim Yar Khan, Sadiqabad, Khanpur, Bahawalpur and Bahawalnagar with occasional gaps from April 26-28. Hailstorm is also expected at isolated places during the period.

## Knowledge without morality serves powerful: Dr Jamileh

LAHORE (APP): Prof Dr Jamileh-Sadat Alamolhoda, the wife of Iranian President, said on Tuesday that knowledge without morality serves the purpose of powerful and cruel ones.

Addressing the international seminar: exhibition and launching of book titled 'The Art of Living Femininely' by Prof Dr Jamileh Alamolhoda here at the University of Home Economics, she said that she was happy to visit the women university, adding that there were women universities in Iran as well.

She underscored the need for giving adequate attention towards women whether it was a women university or a co-educational institute.

She said: "Culture of Iran and Pakistan have some common characteristics". Independence of women was compared with western countries, she said and added that for us providing protection and taking women along was independence of women. Jamileh Alamolhoda said: "There are a lot of challenges with regard to upbringing of coming generations and all of us have to play our special role in this regard". She said that it was a high time to stand up for protecting the values of morality, adding that each of us was aggrieved over the killing of humans in Gaza.

## Punjab Governor sees off Iranian President

LAHORE (APP): President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi along with his entourage departed for Karachi from Old Airport here on Tuesday evening.

Punjab Governor Muhammad Baligh-ur-Rehman along with his wife Aisha Baligh and provincial ministers saw off the Iranian dignitaries.

Punjab Information Minister Azma Zahid Bukhari, Finance Minister Mujtaba Shuja-ur-Rehman, Minister for Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education Khawaja Salman Rafique, Minister for Food and Livestock Bilal Yasin, Minister for Industries Chaudhry Shafay Hussain, Chief Secretary, Inspector General Police, Iranian Consul General in Lahore Mehran Mawahid Far, Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner Lahore,

CCPO and other officers were present.

During the day-long visit to Lahore, the Iranian President and other dignitaries had a very busy schedule packed with multiple official engagements, reflecting the importance of bilateral discussions and cooperation between the two brotherly Muslim nations. These engagements aim to further strengthen the existing relationship and explore new avenues for collaboration in various sectors. After accomplishing the engagements in Lahore, the high-level Iranian delegation departed for Karachi.

It is to mention that this visit underscores the commitment of both the neighbouring countries to foster regional stability and prosperity through diplomatic channels and mutual cooperation.

## WHO delegation calls on Chairman FBR



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of World Health Organization (WHO) comprising Mr. Roberto Iglesias, Consultant, and Mr. Santiago Carrillo expert on Track & Trace called on Chairman Federal Board of Revenue Malik Amjed Zubair Tiwana at FBR Headquarters today in Islamabad. Member IR (Operations) Mir Badshah

Khan Wazir was also present on the occasion.

During the meeting, matters pertaining to tobacco taxation were discussed.

They also deliberated upon operational challenges in implementation and enforcement of Track and Trace System on Tobacco Sector in order to eliminate the menace of illicit trade of tobacco.

## SNGPL disconnecting another 119 connections

F.P. Report

LAHORE: During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, disconnecting another 119 connections; Rs 4 million fine imposed in Lahore, the regional team disconnected 5 connections on illegal use of gas.

The team also imposed fine of Rs 0.18 against gas pilferers. In Multan 7 connections were disconnected on illegal use while another two disconnected on use of compressor.

In Peshawar and Karak, the company disconnected 97 connections on account of direct use of gas

and illegal use of gas and amount of Rs 3.6 million have been booked against gas theft cases.

The team also lodged 1 FIR against gas thieves. The regional team of Rawalpindi disconnected one connection on illegal use of gas while imposing fine of Rs 0.1 million against gas theft cases. In Sahiwal one connection was disconnected on illegal use of gas.

In Faisalabad the team disconnected 1 connection on illegal use of gas while imposing fine of Rs 0.02 against gas pilferers. The regional team of Mardan disconnected 5 connections on illegal use of gas and also imposed fine of Rs 0.1 million against gas theft cases.



LAHORE: Punjab Governor, Muhammad Balighur Rahman meets with President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi at Governor House. —APP Photo

## Salman Rafique chairs 36th FJMU syndicate meeting

LAHORE (APP): The 36th syndicate meeting of Fatima Jinnah Medical University (FJMU) was held under the chairmanship of Provincial Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique, here on Tuesday.

In the meeting, Additional Secretary Zahida Azhar, Additional Technical Secretary Dr. Hafiz Shahid Latif, and Deputy Secretary Finance Hamad Al-Rab from the Department of Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education were present. Also in attendance were Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Khalid Masood Gondal, Vice Chancellor King Edward Medical University Prof. Dr. Mehmood Ayaz, Pro Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Kamran Khalid Khawaja, Registrar Prof. Nadeem Kasuri, Prof. Dr. Balqis Shabbir, Prof. Dr. Shamsa Humayun, Prof. Dr. Shireen Khawar, MS Gangaram Hospital Dr. Moin, MS Shahdara Teaching Hospital Dr. Frayad, MS Mazing Teaching Hospital, Member of Punjab Assembly Nosheen Adnan, and Farrukh Shah. Officers from the Finance Department and Higher Education Commission, along with other departments as Syndicate members, also participated in the syndicate meeting.

Provincial Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique confirmed the decisions made during the 35th meeting of Fatima Jinnah Medical University. During the syndicate meeting, tribute was paid to Prof. Dr. Kamran Khalid Khawaja for being recognized as the best teacher and Prof. Dr. Balqis Shabbir for receiving the presidential award.

Approval was given during the syndicate meeting for the purchase of biomedical equipment for the under-construction mother and child block. Additionally, Fatima Jinnah Medical University was granted approval to hire cleaning and security services for the next year. Permission was also granted to hire a tax consultant for Academics and an Assistant Registrar for Legal matters.

## Punjab to establish PEA against various offenses

LAHORE (INP): Chief Minister of Punjab, Maryam Nawaz, has approved the establishment of a Provincial Enforcement Authority (PEA) in Punjab and directed immediate legislative action to initiate the creation of this authority, which includes amendments to 11 laws, rules, and ordinances.

During a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, a comprehensive briefing was provided regarding the formation of the provincial enforcement authority at the district and tehsil levels.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has set a target to activate the enforcement authorities across the province within the next six

months. Under this initiative, enforcement bodies will be established in every district and tehsil of Punjab.

The Provincial Enforcement Authority will be headed by the Chief Secretary, with a Director General (DG) also to be appointed. At the district level, the authority will be led by a Deputy Commissioner, while an Assistant Commissioner (AC) will head the Tehsil Enforcement Authority.

At the tehsil level, police stations and special forces will be established under the supervision of the Tehsil Enforcement Unit. This unit will comprise unit in-charges, investigation officers, enforcement officers, and constables.

The Tehsil Enforcement Unit will have the authority not only to enforce the law but also to register cases, conduct investigations, and make arrests. Additionally, offices for monitoring will be set up for both the Provincial and District Enforcement Authorities.

The Provincial Enforcement Authorities will be empowered to take action against various offenses, including price control, illegal occupation of government lands, encroachments, and hoarding. This move is aimed at enhancing law enforcement, ensuring compliance with regulations, and safeguarding public and government interests across Punjab.

## Chinese company delegation meets Ch Shafay Hussain

LAHORE (APP): A delegation from a chip manufacturing company in China met with Provincial Minister for Industries and Commerce Chaudhry Shafay Hussain, here on Tuesday at the Punjab Investment Board.

The Chinese company expressed interest in investing in chip and card manufacturing. Andrew Leong from XH Smart Tech Limited stated that their group aims to establish a chip manufacturing plant in Punjab and requested land in Bhalwal Industrial Estate. During the meeting,

Provincial Minister Chaudhry Shafay Hussain highlighted the extensive investment opportunities in Punjab's industrial zones.

He mentioned the benefits of Special Economic Zones, including ten years of income tax exemption and one-time duty-free machinery import. The minister assured the Chinese company of full support for investing in the industrial zone and emphasized the potential in chip and card manufacturing. He affirmed the Punjab government's commitment to

providing necessary support for establishing the chip manufacturing plant.

Chaudhry Shafay Hussain reiterated his determination to attract new investments to Punjab, emphasizing the province's investor-friendly environment and the streamlined support provided to both domestic and foreign investors. Present at the meeting were Secretary of Industries and Commerce, Ehsan Bhutta, CEO of Punjab Investment Board, Jalal Hasan, and officials from XH Smart Tech Limited.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman PCP Mr Arshad Khan Jadoon presenting a souvenir to Secretary information and Broadcasting Ms Shaheera Shahid during her visit to PCP.

## Karachi roads closed ahead of Iranian president's visit

KARACHI (PPI): Security has been put on high alert on Tuesday ahead of the arrival of Iranian President Dr. Ibrahim Raisi and his delegation to Karachi.

The containers have been placed on the roads from the Shahrah-e-Quaideen Khudaddad Colony to the Numaish Road. MA Jinnah Road heading towards Saddar has been closed off by placing containers, while the road heading towards Saddar from the People's Secretariat has also been closed off with containers.

According to the traffic plan issued by the Karachi police, Club Road from PIDC to Metropole will remain completely closed to traffic. As per the plan, Doctor Ziauddin Road and Signal Chowk to PIDC will be completely closed. Doctor Ziauddin Road will be closed from Khajoor Chowk to PIDC, traffic from Sultanabad will be diverted from Doctor Ziauddin Road Khajoor Chowk to Aitwan-e-Sadar Road. Those coming from Shara-e-Faisal to

Sultanabad will take a left turn from Club Chowk, citizens can go from Club Chowk to Clifton Bridge from the left side, while those coming from Khaliq-uz-Zaman Road and Gizri can take a straight turn from Ziauddin Signal. The Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG), Ahmed Nawaz, announced the closure of both tracks of Shara-e-Faisal from 3 pm to 5 pm due to security concerns.

## Two held, betel nuts, gutka, mawa seized

KARACHI (APP): The Orangi Police Station in District West intervened on Tuesday to thwart an attempt to smuggle betel nuts and hazardous gutka/mawa, leading to the arrest of two individuals involved in the illegal activity.

As per the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) West, police officials apprehended two suspects during a routine snap checking, seizing a motorcycle loaded with betel nuts in the process. Upon further checking, authorities uncovered 72 kg of betel nuts stashed in six sacks and an additional 5 kg of gutka/mawa concealed within the motorcycle belonging to the arrested individuals.

A formal case has been filed against the detainees, with investigations already underway into the matter. Furthermore, valuable information regarding the supplier has been gleaned from the arrested suspects, prompting ongoing efforts to apprehend the individual responsible.

## 100,000 students registered through PITB's e-Bikes Portal

LAHORE (APP): The e-Bikes Portal developed by the Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) for providing 20,000 interest-free motorcycles on installments to students in Punjab has successfully registered over 100,000 students.

Through the e-Bikes Portal, students across Punjab have availed themselves of the opportunity to register for the initiative. More than 16,000 online applications have been received so far with over 13,500 students applying for petrol bikes and over 3,800 for e-bikes.

## The 7th edition of LIIBS kicked off

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The 7th Edition of LEADERS IN ISLAMABAD BUSINESS SUMMIT (LIIBS) kicked off at a local hotel in Islamabad. More than 15 global speakers and 1000+ delegates were present at the event to unlock growth opportunities and collaborate for mutual benefit and advancement.

The 7th Edition of LIIBS is jointly hosted by Nutshell Group and Unity Foods Limited, in collaboration with OICCI (Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry), with Faysal Bank Limited as the Platinum partner, and InfraZamin Pakistan as the strategic partner. The theme of the event this year is 'Collaborating for Growth'.

Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue, having recently returned from Washington after deliberations with the IMF, focused on the 'need to do' on an immediate basis. Commenting on the proac-



tive role of government he said, "Agriculture and IT exports are the two sectors that can be the driver of growth for Pakistan's economy. It is up to us as a country to come up with investable, bankable projects. There has been a 33.6% increase in agricultural loans between July and February of the current fiscal year.

The government aims at alleviating inflation and providing relief to the weaker segments of society. Efforts are being made to control inflation and provide relief to the weaker segments of society. FBR tax collection

increased by 30.2%, exceeding the target of PKR 6,707 billion. Ministry of Finance, FBR, and the Ministry of Law are taking steps to increase collaboration in revenue collection."

Welcoming the honorable public sector leadership, global leaders, and delegates to the 7th Edition of LIIBS, Muhammad Azfar Ahsan, Pakistan's Former Minister for Investment, reinforced the shared vision of Unity Foods Limited and Nutshell Group, for a successful, self-sufficient, and sustainable Pakistan. Azfar emphasized the need for collaboration

between the Private, Public, and Military sectors. "Pakistan is at a crossroads, but I am optimistic that the finance team under the dynamic leadership of Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb will collaborate and do the needful. To progress as a country, we need competent teams in four main stakeholder domains: political government, bureaucracy, business leadership, and business community."

Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, graced the event and in a conversation titled, The BIG Picture, he said, "We are committed to making Pakistan stand as an honorable country. Let us stop playing politics for the next few years and become an economic nation. The key to success is to compete and collaborate simultaneously. When it comes to market share, we should compete but when it comes to industry share, we should collaborate, with this strategy we can be on a growth trajectory within the next 2 years."

In his welcome address,

Lt. Gen. Omar Mahmood Hayat (Rtd), Chairman of Unity Foods Limited, while expressing his eagerness to engage in more collaborative efforts for the benefit of Pakistan's national interests, stated, "Given the current environment, if there was ever a time for a collaborative approach, specifically for businesses in Pakistan, that time is now. It is imperative to encourage participation in public-private partnerships to address industry challenges, advocate for regulatory reforms, and promote sustainable development initiatives."

Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani, Chairman, Senate of Pakistan while focusing on the futuristic approach to strengthen the infrastructure of Pakistan, and the proven success of regional corporations across the globe, said, "Ending differences between political powers is imperative. Inflation is at its highest level in the country's history. Due to a decline in investment in Pakistan, there is a fall in per capita

income. Pakistan is facing numerous environmental issues, including floods, rainfall, rising temperatures, & others. We possess abundant resources and talent, but optimizing our potential requires a concerted effort marked by collaboration at all levels - within government, across industries, with public and private sector working together, and with our regional and global partners."

Session on Energy was chaired by Sardar Awaiz Ahmad Khan Leghari, Federal Minister for Energy (Power Division), spoke on the historical and present paradigms of the power sector in Pakistan. Commenting on the required steps to be taken he said, "The power sector in Pakistan is facing numerous challenges, it is unfeasible to hinder growth because certain items require subsidies to cater to all socioeconomic classes. The government must demonstrate the courage to embrace its social responsibility while fostering industrial growth. This needs to

find a balance between supporting industry development and ensuring essential items remain affordable for all segments of society."

## UNIVERSITY OF PESHAWAR

### CORRIGENDUM – CHANGE/EXTENSION IN THE BID SUBMISSION DATE

#### Invitation to Bid for Civil Work at the Business Incubation Center (BIC) and Central Library,

University of Peshawar  
(ITB No.32/UoP/MP-IV/CW)

Reference the subject Invitation to Bid, it is for the information of all concerned that the date for issuance and submission of bidding documents/BoQ for the Civil Work at business Incubation Center & Central Library is extended up to 10:00 am on Monday 29.04.2024. The bids will be opened on the same date at 10:30 am in the Office of the Project Director, Quaid-e-Azam College of Commerce, University of Peshawar.

All other terms and conditions mentioned in the advertisement will remain the same.

#### Project Director

Strengthening of Academic and Professional Facilities at  
University of Peshawar; Email: mp4@uop.edu.pk  
Project Assistant: +92-91-334-9143744



# Capacity of rescue teams be increased for quality services to tourists: Chanzeb

PESHAWAR (APP): Zahid Chanzeb, Adviser to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism, Culture, Archeology and Museums, accompanied by Director General KP Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) Barkatullah Marwat and other high-ups Tuesday visited the provincial headquarters of Rescue 1122 at Peshawar.

On arrival there, Director General Rescue 1122 Dr. Muhammad Ayaz Khan welcomed them and took them on inspection of the stalls of equipment and machinery used by Rescue 1122 in various emergencies and rescue services including practical demonstrations of dealing with different mishaps. A detailed briefing was also given to him on this occasion.

Adviser Tourism eulogized the rescue services and said that this institution is not only providing the best services in accordance with international standards in emergencies, but in addition to providing assistance in safe travel and tours for tourists, the body has established temporary rescue stations at various tourist spots where the tourists are provided medical assistance and weather awareness on the spot.

In this regard, he appreciated the services of Rescue 1122 especially for providing the full support to the Tourism Department.

He paid rich tribute to this prestigious rescue body and its organizers for their excellent service to humanity with missionary spirit. He said that Rescue 1122 has proved its professional capabilities and has ensured the safety of people's lives and property.

Zahid Chanzeb said that for the promotion of tourism, the efficiency of this most important institution will be increased by the provincial government so that the tourists can be provided with the best and timely services and in the tourist season its contributions in serene places of Nathiagali, Abbottabad, Thandiani, Kiwai, Naran, Mansehra, Swat, Gabin Jabba, Malam Jabba, Kumrat, Chitral, Kailash, Bomburet and Shandur will be specially utilized. He said that due to the start of the tourist season, the rush of tourists is also increasing towards the tourist places of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, therefore it has been decided to increase the number of rescue 1122 personnel.

The CM's Adviser added that the Tourism and the Relief departments together can not only boost the tourism sector but also stabilize the economy of the province.

Zahid Chanzeb added that we are introducing tourism as an industry in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to attract domestic as well as foreign tourists to visit Pakistan and especially Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

He asked DG Rescue Dr Muhammad Ayaz Khan to increase the number of ambulances in the rescue centers established under the supervision of KITE Project in tourist places especially in Nathiagali, Abbottabad, Thandiani, Kiwai Naran, Kailash Bomburit Chitral Lower and Gabin Jabba Swat.

He stressed the need to increase and provide all possible facilities, in such serene areas upon which the rescue chief assured immediate implementation.

On this occasion, Barkatullah Marwat, Director General of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority, told that the tourism police stationed at the tourist spots are already trying to serve the tourists together with the rescue 1122 officials, and the tourists have one window facilities including first aid and emergency.

The rescue 1122 officials thanked the Tourism Advisor for visiting their headquarters and encouraging the personnel and assured that as resources are made available, deployment of rescue teams, ambulances and boats at more tourist spots will be ensured in addition to first aid services.

## Irrigation, Mines Deptt to cooperate with KPRA

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Secretaries of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Irrigation Department and Secretary Mines and Minerals Departments on Tuesday announced to extend full support and cooperation to KPRA in ensuring tax compliance.

Director General KPRA Fouzia Iqbal and her team on Tuesday visited the offices of the Secretary Irrigation KP Muhammad Tahir Orakzai and Secretary Mines and Minerals Development Department Mutahir Zeb and had detailed meetings with the teams of both the departments.

The DG KPRA briefed the officials about the sales tax on services and thanked them for taking out time to listen to her team. She pointed out the areas where the KPRA team needed support and cooperation from both departments and requested data sharing and tax compliance in projects executed by both departments.

The DG KPRA told Secretary Mines and Minerals that KPRA would need data of leaseholders and full compliance of sales tax on services in royalties and contracting of heavy machinery. She further informed that the exemption to erstwhile FATA and PATA has expired on October 31, 2023 and there is no exemption from sales tax on services to FATA and PATA after that. "We assure full support and cooperation to the team of KPRA as we own KPRA," Mutahir Zeb said and directed his staff to provide leaseholders data to the KPRA team and ensure that tax is being paid from all projects.

Muhammad Tahir Orakzai, who has served as DG of KPRA, welcomed the KPRA team and assured them of full support from his side and the officials of the Irrigation Department. "It is a pleasure for me to see that KPRA is expanding and thriving," he said adding that he and his team will be available for any support to KPRA and will make sure of complete tax compliance once his department resumes work on projects after release of funds from KP Finance Department. The DG KPRA informed the secretary that mostly due to the misclassification of taxes the KPRA sales tax on services is submitted in the federal government's accounts which needs to be controlled.

## Weather to remain cloudy in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The weather will remain cloudy while rains, hailstorm, strong winds present in the upper districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, an official of the Meteorological Department said here Tuesday.

Chance of rain and hailstorm with strong winds in some districts of the province and rain predicted in Chitral, Dir, Malakand, Swat, Buner, Shangla, Battagram, Torghar, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, the official of the Meteorological Department said.

He disclosed the chance of rain with thunderstorms in Khyber, Kurram, Bannu, Tank, North and South Waziristan.

It rained in Swat, Buner, Abbottabad, Dir, Bajaur and Chitral last day and a total of 24 mm of rain was recorded in Malam Jabba and 16 mm in Dir and Saud Sharif, Mingora, Swat, the official of the Meteorological Department said.

Besides this the rain was also recorded 10mm in Buner and Kakul, 1 mm of rain was recorded in Dir while Peshawar recorded a minimum temperature of 18 degrees Celsius; the minimum temperature of Malam Jabba was recorded at 4 and Dir Upper and Saidu Sharif at 11 degrees Celsius, the official said.

## Religious intolerance in society urged

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar: Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) organized a conference on "Strengthening Democracy: Delivering on Pledges regarding human rights" wherein human rights defenders and representatives from political parties emphasized that the government needs to make concerted efforts to curb religious intolerance and introduce substantial measures to uphold equality of rights and citizenship.

Peter Jacob, Dr. Khadim Hussain (Awami National Party), Bishop Earnest Jacob, Aasiya Jehangir (Former minister of social welfare), Wazir Zada (former MPA, PTI), Dr. Sawera Parkash (Pakistan Peoples Party), Shakeel Waheed Ullah (Qaumi Watan Party), Mehmood Jan Babar (Journalist), Muhammad Faheem (Journalist), Dr. Nadeem (PTI), Suneel Malik, Augustine Jacob and Nasir William were among the speakers.

Speaking on the occasion, Peter Jacob, the executive director of the Centre for Social Justice emphasized the critical need for the government to refrain from surrendering power to groups that religion for political gains, which hampers progressive reforms vital for addressing underlying socio-political and economic challenges. He stressed that discrimination rooted in religion fuels hatred and violence against minority groups, with perpetrators often misinterpreting the religion to justify hate crimes. He underscored that the establishment of an inquiry commission is imperative to identify factors and hold those actors accountable for inciting violence and misusing blasphemy laws. He stressed substantial legal reforms, particularly including in the preamble of the constitution of Pakistan the Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's first address of 11 August 1947 to the first constituent assembly as a guiding beacon towards addressing marginalization, and enabling structural and systemic inclusion of citizens, and inculcating standards of justice and equality in the governance, which would ultimately take the country to the right direction.

A representative of the Awami National Party, Dr. Khadim Hussain highlighted systemic barriers hindering the equality of human rights for citizens including disparities in citizenship status, unequal distribution of resource allocation, poor governance, terrorism, and religious intolerance. He highlighted that the entrenched discrimination within governance structures perpetuates divisive attitudes based on religious, ethnic, racial, linguistic, and gender identities.

Bishop Ernest Jacob underscored that the political parties ought to prioritize fulfilling their pledges to the electorate made in the election manifesto, and take concrete actions to address human rights issues religious minorities face. A representative of the Pakistan Peoples Party, Dr. Sawera Parkash encouraged citizens to collectively raise their voices against human rights violations targeting minorities. She emphasized that legislators are responsible for effectively representing the concerns of citizens within legislative assemblies and party platforms to address human rights issues.

A former MPA, and representative of PTI, Wazir Zada voiced support for substantial demands including: a law to end child marriage and forced faith conversions, the constitution of a statutory National Commission for minorities' Rights, and the adoption of rules facilitating jail remission for minority prisoners for studying their religion, which would improve implementation of human rights of minorities.



PESHAWAR: Labourers busy in renovation work of historic Qissa Khawani Bazaar Gate.

## Govt to provide full support to NCRC in child registration: CS

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will provide full support to the National Commission for Child Rights (NCRC) to facilitate the process of registration of children and its awareness.

The complete coordination between the concerned institutions will be continued in this regard. Registration of children at birth is a very crucial process.

Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhary National Commission for Children's Rights Ayesha Raza Farooq participated in a meeting organized on children's birth registration along with Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhary in Peshawar on Tuesday.

In the meeting, various feasible suggestions were considered regarding increasing the rate of registration at the time of birth of children.

On this occasion, the Chief Secretary said that to facilitate the process of registration of children at the time of birth in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, they will ensure the implementation of all feasible suggestions, and will fully cooperate with the NCRC to protect the rights of children. The Chief Secretary also emphasized on the need to create more awareness regarding the registration and rights of children in this regard. He further said that the provincial government will continue regular monitoring along with full cooperation in this regard. The meeting also considered various recommendations to ensure registration of children at the time of birth.

Various proposals regarding making the process of registration of children at the time of birth easier at the provincial level were discussed in detail.

On this occasion, Chairperson Ayesha Raza Farooq said that the registration rate of children in Pakistan is very low. We are Working with the government to further improve the registration process. The Chairperson further said that the rate of registration of children at birth in Pakistan is low as compared to other countries. NCRC is working closely with the federal and provincial governments to facilitate the process of child registration.

Secretary Social Welfare, Secretary Local Government, Secretary Health, Secretary Education, NADRA, UNICEF representatives and other officers also participated in the meeting.

## Contempt of Court plea files against IG KP

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A Contempt of Court plea has been filed against the Inspector General (IG) and Additional IG at Peshawar High Court (PHC) as the respondents didn't ensure compliance of court's orders regarding promotion of 35 Assistants at police department from grade 16 to grade 17. The petition is filed by 35 petitioners, including Muhammad Hamid through Saadullah Marwat advocate at PHC.

PHC's ordered placement of petitioners' promotion case before Departmental Promotion Committee (DPC) on 6th February, the contempt of court plea stated. Neither the applicants are promoted to grade 17 nor their case has been forwarded DPC for promotion after two months of PHC's judgement, the COC pleaded.

The petitioners were recruited in 2013 on permanent basis while confirmed in 2016 as assistant in the police department. However, promotion policy benefitted 153 employees in which several assistants were promoted to BPS17 as superintendent on DPC recommendations but in 2021 IG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa issued a notification for departmental exam on petitioners' turn, COC pleaded.

The petition argued that PHC's had ordered redressal of the issue within two months but the respondents didn't comply the court's judgement which lay in the jurisdiction of Contempt of Court, the petition stated.

The petition argued for initiation of Contempt of Court proceedings against IG and Additional IG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for did not implementing PHC's orders.



PESHAWAR: A man selling strawberries on his cart in Ghanta Ghar market. — INP photo

## KP's largest IT recruitment drive held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's largest IT recruitment drive, was organised on Tuesday by Sustainable Energy and Economic Development (SEED) in partnership with Change Mechanics, Adam Smith and LMKT at CECOS University Peshawar.

The job fair was arranged for over 300 top graduates who were trained extensively in E-Commerce (Shopify and Amazon), Data Analytics (Power BI certified), App Development (Flutter), and Cloud Computing (AWS certified) from various institutions across KP including Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University Peshawar. Over 30 potential employers took on desk interviews and offered internship and job opportunities to the trained students.

The Recruitment drive was followed by a graduation ceremony wherein certificates were distributed among the trainees. Also future vision regarding the upcoming projects were also shared.

On the Occasion, Asim Inshaq Khan, Director Innovation LMKT while his address said that our vision is youth empowerment especially in the tech sector. We aim at transforming Kp into digital hub.

The project DECODE focused on providing digital skill development among youth and provide them potential job opportunities. Not only this but the e-commerce course has enabled the youth to initiate their own startups.

He lauded the efforts of the collaborating partners and institutions and appreciated more than 100 female graduates. Also, many of the employers have finalised the recruitment process on spot.

Taimoor, Advisor SEED enlightened the audience that providing students with an extensive training that would fill the gap between digital skill market and the students being graduating from different colleges and universities.





## In brief

### 6 robbers killed in encounter F.P. Report

LARKANA: As many as six bandits were killed in police encounters including proclaimed offender while two hostages were rescued safely. During the ongoing operation in Kacha in Kashmore, six robbers, including two million prize-winning robbers, were killed two days, and two hostages who were abducted a month ago from district Shikarpur were also rescued safely. According to the details, under the leadership of DIGP Larkana, within two days in the Larkana range, among those killed in police encounters in district Shikarpur, 1.2 lakh prize-winning bandit SP Tegghani, 2 bandits Ali Jan Sabzavi, 3 bandits Rafiq Jafri were killed in police encounters, which is notorious. The gang was related to Arslan Sabzoi gang. Among those killed in police encounters within two days in district Kashmore are 1 bandit Sanul Muhammadani 2, bandit Deen Muhammad alias Babul Bhiyo 3 bandit Bago Bhiyo, were killed within two days a month ago in district Shikarpur. Imran Pahod and Chanesar Pahod, who were abducted from Karampur Laro police station, have been safely recovered.

### Kuli Katcheri held in Buner F.P. Report

BUNER: Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for sports, culture and youth affairs Syed Fakhar Jahan held 'Kuli Katcheri' for the voters of PK26 at tehsil Gagra chairman office, on Tuesday. During the 'Kuli Katcheri' Chairman Gagra Syed Salar Jahan Bacha, District Information Secretary of PTI, Bakhrad Khan, Chairman village council Gagra, Waqar-ul-Mulk Khan, Qaiser Khan advocate, Muhammad Rasool Khan and elders of the area were present. CM advisor said that the people have given us huge mandate to solve their problems and to provide immediate relief to the people and their pressing difficulties. The advisor for sports and youth affairs added 'Kuli Katcheri' are being held for redressal problems faced by residents at the doorstep to reduce their difficulties. Whatever problems the people of both tehsil Gagra and Chaghorzai and other circles of the district are facing, they should present their opinions. On this occasion, he issued orders on the spot to solve some problems too.

### Minor girl dies in water tank F.P. Report

JAMRUD: A three-year-old girl died after falling into a water tank in Shah Zaman village of Jamrud tehsil in Khyber district on Tuesday morning. Police said the daughter of one Zahir Shah was playing near the water tank when she fell into the tank. Oblivious to the tragedy, the girl's family was searching for her outside the house but after sometime they found the lifeless body of the girl in the water storing tank. The girl was rushed to a nearby hospital where the doctors confirmed her as dead.

### Two shot dead

TURBAT (INP): Unidentified armed men gunned two people here on Tuesday and escaped the scene. According to details, the incident took place in Dhank area of district Turbat where unknown gunmen sprayed bullets at two people. As a result of firing, both people were killed on the spot and assailants fled the scene of crime.



ABBOTTABAD: DIG Hazara, Tahir Ayub Khan and other officials offering dua after funeral prayers of Shaheed Constable Amjad Hussain.

## Mayor disapproves rain compensation process

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Tehsil chairman, Landi Kotal rejected rain damage data collection process and urged the provincial government to declare Landi Kotal a disastrous one.

Addressing to a press conference in Landi Kotal press club last day City Mayor Haji Shah Khalid flanked by number of village and neighborhood councils chairman said that Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) have introduced an APP for rain affectees to file their damaged on line that will verify a team of expertise that so far haven't visit to the area.

He expressed his dissatisfaction over the downpour damages data collection method, formulated by the PDMA and said majority of the rain affected persons



would have failed to fulfill the criteria of PDMA. It was ironic that 36 village and neighborhood council's chairmen and secretaries had been ignored in the rain damages data collection process, he added and said that due to complication in the procedure rain affected persons would be deprived of government financial assistance.

He came hard on Deputy Commissioner, Khyber and said the responsible official even did not pay visit to the

disastrous areas and the local administration comprised only two teams to collect rain affectees data, contrary to the PDMA Standard Operation Procedure (SoP) equivalent to ridicule of rain affectees and deprive them of compensation. He demanded of the provincial government, PDMA and district administration officials to ease data collection process and forthwith dispatched teams to assemble damages records before deadline.

## Drug dealers to be dealt with iron hands: Commissioner

Fazal Haq

MARDAN: Commissioner Mardan Shaukat Ali Yousafzai has said that awareness of public problems and finding their immediate solution is included in the duties of the administration, better communication with the public is essential for good governance. He was addressing an open house in Tehsil Complex Takhtbhai, Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Fayaz Khan Sherpao, Secretary to Commissioner Sara Tahab, Assistant Commissioner Aftab Alam and all line departments and police officers were present in the Kuli Katcheri, on Tuesday.

A large number of people from Takhtbhai Shergarh, Lundkhar and adjoining areas participated in the open court. Deputy Commissioner Mardan Fayaz Sherpao while explaining the usefulness of open court said that in the current situation it is difficult for the people of remote areas to go to the government offices, so the administration has started a series of open courts to maintain contact with the people.

On this occasion, the participants explained the problems of eliminating illegal encroachments on the banks of canals and Arabs, opening bank counters in service delivery centers, taking action against peddlers, increasing gas pressure, solving traffic problems and raising public awareness in this regard, elimination of illegal load-shedding of drainage and

electricity in Lundkhar Bazar, prevention of housing societies on agricultural lands, compensation of damage to crops due to recent rains and remission of abiya to local farmers, suspects involved in street crime and peddlers.

The participants demanded actions against the sellers of meat at arbitrary prices in the tehsil, to ensure the cleaning of drainage channels and mosquito spray in Shergarh. To initiate health card treatment in Ganjai Hospital and to audit hospital accounts, to open Takht Bhai Sports Complex to public, to make Aslam Kali Sports Ground functional, to improve the condition of Takht Bhai Gate, to set up nut signals at Takht Bhai, Scarcity, there were demands for closure of wells dug by Sui Gas, regularization of land computerization, appointment of process servers in revenue courts.

Deputy Commissioner Mardan assured to resolve most of the issues raised during the open court within 10 days. He said that the survey of the damages caused to the crops due to rain is going-on similarly the damages caused to the houses will also be redressed. Commissioner Mardan Division Shaukat Ali Yousafzai said in his address to open court that the characteristic of the democratic system is that today the government machinery is in front of you. He assured that the issues raised in the open court will be resolved in a phased manner. He said

that the problem of drugs is becoming serious and the society should fully cooperate with the administration and the police to eradicate this scourge.

He said that due to polythene bags drainage and sewage system is being destroyed, so we have started a campaign to make Mardan free of polythene bags in which people should cooperate with the administration. He said that the series of open courts will be continued and necessary steps will be taken to make them fruitful.

**Woman killed in road mishap:** A 25-year-old woman wife of Saeed was crushed by a speeding tractor-trolley in Jhande Bazaar on Takhtbhai Malakand Road. As soon as the incident was reported, the medical team of Rescue 1122 reached the spot who shifted the body of the deceased woman to DHQ Mardan for postmortem. The driver managed to escape from the spot. Takhtbhai police registered a case and started investigation. Residents of the area strongly protested against the heartbreaking incident.

Malakand Road was closed for all traffic at Jhandai. As soon as the incident reported, Deputy Commissioner Mardan Fayaz Sherpao and AAC Takhtbhai Aftab Alam reached the area for negotiations with the residents. After successful negotiations and the assurance of a high-level investigation into the heartbreaking incident and the immediate arrest of the driver, they dispersed peacefully.

## Govt focuses on economic stability for country's development: MNA

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Member National Assembly (MNA), Naima Kanwal said that the government is giving top priority to the country's development through economic stability. She expressed these views while visiting the Press Information Department (PID) Dera Ismail Khan here on Tuesday.

She said the country was facing challenges on the economic front, but the

federal government was committed to meet those challenges and in this regard PPP being partner of the present set-up would play its full role in line with the vision of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. As part of a multi-pronged strategy aimed at strengthening of the country, she said the federal government was actively pursuing efforts to build trust with friendly countries and added that high-level visits of Saudi Arabia, China, and Iran within a month and a half were

practical examples in this regard.

She highlighted such as the Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor as milestones which she said were achieved during the previous tenures of President Asif Ali Zardari. She said that Prime Minister Shabaz Sharif and President Asif Ali Zardari were effectively pursuing policies to address the problems the country was facing at the international level.

## Transporters continue strike against SOPs

F.P. Report

QUETTA: All Quetta Taftan Coaches Transport Union Rakhshan Division on Tuesday said that the strike of public transport on Taftan-Rakhshan route of Balochistan province would continue until the acceptance of its all demands.

In a statement, the union spokesman said the strike was being continued for the last five days against Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) introduced for public transport of Taftan-Rakhshan routes. The union spokesman said that dozens of check posts of security forces set inside N-40 Quetta-Taftan highway were creating hardships not only to the transporters but also to the people instead of providing relief to them. "All Quetta Taftan Coaches Transport Union Rakhshan Division is not against checking rather it has observations over the procedure of checking at check posts of security forces and SOP."

The union spokesman said patrolling of security forces on Quetta-Taftan route be increased to maintain law and order situation. He said that the source of income of the people of Balochistan was associated with border business and

transport, but the check posts of security forces had made transporters unemployed.

**Protest outside DC office Kohlu to continue, says ex-minister:** Former Minister and leader of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Mir Naseebullah Marri on Tuesday said that the protest sit-in outside the office of Deputy Commissioner Kohlu would continue until the orders regarding posting of partial staff for conducting re-pol in provincial assembly of Balochistan constituency No.PB-09 Kohlu was withdrawn.

These views were expressed by him while talking to PPI in the protest sit-in camp staged against the posting of partial staff for conducting re-pol in provincial assembly of Balochistan constituency No.PB-09 Kohlu.

He said, "It is my fault that I have always raised the slogan 'long live Pakistan', adding that despite intimidation and threats of outlawed organizations, he took part in political activities and election process. He said that his several family members had rendered sacrifices for maintaining law and order situation in Kohlu, adding that no one would be allowed to vitiate election process in Kohlu. He said

that a conspiracy had been hatched to disrupt re-pol in provincial assembly of Balochistan constituency No.PB-09 Kohlu was withdrawn.

**PML-N leader calls for allocating portfolio to Lehari:** President, Pakistan Muslim League-N, Naseerabad Division, Mian Muhammad Hussain Gola on Tuesday called on the central and provincial leadership of PML-N to allocate portfolio to MPA Haji Mir Muhammad Khan Lehari in the provincial cabinet of Balochistan.

In a statement, he said that Haji Mir Muhammad Khan Lehari had rendered great services to organising Pakistan Muslim League-N in Balochistan and particularly in Naseerabad Division, adding that owing to his contribution, people of PB-14 Tamboo Naseerabad elected him as MPA. He added that it was not known as to why any Ministry in the provincial cabinet was not allocated to him.

He called on President, Pakistan Muslim League-N, Balochistan to allocate portfolio in the provincial cabinet of Balochistan government to MPA Haji Mir Muhammad Khan Lehari, so that the prevailing unrest amongst party workers, supporters and voters could be removed.

## Jirga ends 33 years old enmity among tribesmen

F.P. Report

WANA: The 33-year-old enmity between Mir Abbas known as Mirkai, between

Qasim Khan Shamsi khel turned into friendship in the presence of large number of tribal elders and Ulema in Wana, on Tuesday.

Besides, other people were present in large numbers in this large gathering of Ahmadzai Wazir. Key elders of Kaka khel, Malik Azizullah and Malik Alauddin, said that those who have forgiven their enemies before this event in lower Waziristan, we as tribal elders, are grateful to them and those who have initiated such forgiveness

here process, may Almighty Allah reward them on the Day of Judgment.

They said that we (Kaka khel) forgive Shamsi khel tribesmen in the name of Allah. This act of the entire kaka khel tribe was highly appreciated by all elders of Ahmadzai Wazir. Haji Booz Gul, the leader of Shamsi Khel tribe, on behalf of the whole tribe expressed his happiness on behalf of his tribe thanked all the people and elders and said that according to the tribal traditions, the elders of Kaka Khel did such a great job; that price of such noble act cannot be paid by human being in mortal

world.

The tribal elders appreciated the efforts of businessman, Inayatullah and thanked him for his sincerity to patch up efforts for bringing both foes on one table. In the end, both sides hugged each other in the presence of the tribesmen.

Later, Ulema and elders prayed collectively for maintaining such a brotherly atmosphere in Waziristan, and at the same time, the scholars and national elders appealed to all Ahmadzai wazir 9 tribes to change the old enmity into friendship, so that Almighty Allah will bless you in the life after here.



QUETTA: Activists of Joint Action Committee holding a banner during a protest for acceptance of their demands.

## Awareness walk for enrolment in govt schools held

F.P. Report

CHITRAL: An awareness walk held regarding enrolment in Govt schools at Lower Chitral. In connection with the admission campaign in the government schools, walk was started from hospital road and passing through various bazar which ended at Govt Primary school Chitral.

After that event was also held in the School, Chitral. The walk was led by Assistant Commissioner Chitral Dr. Atif Jalib, while the head teacher of the school and staff of the Education Department were also present on the occasion. This walk and event was organized in collaboration with Helvetas to drive school admissions and attract people to them. Officials of Education Department, children and teachers were also participated in this walk.

The walk passed through Chitral Bazar and ended at the Government Primary

School. After that, a function was also organized in the same school. Education department officials, teachers and district administration officers also expressed their views regarding importance of education in the event.

Speaking at the event, Education Officer Shahid Hussain said that government schools are now trying hard to ensure that students reading here get quality education. AC Chitral Dr. Atif Jalib said that the government school is now not less than anyone in quality education. He said that I am assure you that the children studying in government educational institutions are not behind the children studying in private schools.

AC Chitral urged the parents to enroll their children in government schools and at least visit the school every two weeks to inquire about their performance. He said that the provincial government is making every effort to improve the quality of these government schools.

People should must to fully utilize of it and enroll their children in these schools. He said that the provincial government's slogan that education is for every one that we should send every child to school so that no child is deprived from education.

The admission campaign in government schools started from March 1 and will be continue till April 30. During this time Pakistani children as well as children of Afghan refugees are also enrolled in these schools so that they can grow up to be highly educated and do not engage in any negative activities or criminal engagement without being deprived of education.

Education department officials said that the enrolment target for Lower Chitral this year is 5,416, in which 2,700 children enrolled in these schools. He further said that among them 1300 students have enrolled in government schools after coming from private educational institutions.





# Ukraine launches military charm offensive as conscription flags

DNIPRO, Ukraine (Reuters): Far from the trenches, at orderly new centres across Ukraine, civilian recruiters armed with laptops and info packs offer patriotic volunteers opportunities to join the war. As Ukraine's efforts to conscript enough men to fight Russia are stymied by public scepticism, defence officials and military units are embarking on a multi-pronged charm offensive to recruit a citizens' army to resist the invasion.

This softer call-up is being conducted on job-search sites and outreach centres, as well as billboards and social media, and offers a wartime novelty: an element of choice. Candidates can select their precise unit and roles suiting their skills, for instance, as well as how long they will serve.

On city streets, billboards of Ukrainian soldiers implore citizens to join up and defend their homeland, offering QR codes for convenience. Online, the 93rd Mechanised Brigade assures countrymen that "Everyone can do it!" in a glossy video campaign showing civilians, such as a chef and tractor driver, switching to analogous army roles as battlefield cook and tank driver. Natalia Kalmykova, a deputy defence minister, said military planners recognised that in a democratic country, giving people some choice could be key in attracting them to the military. "The people who come to defend our country now are not those who chose the military as their career: it's civilians," she said during an interview in Kyiv. "And civilians are used to being able to choose."

Kyiv is desperate to replenish its drained and depleted forces, which are vastly outnumbered and out-gunned by Russia along a 1,000-km



front as the war enters a third grinding year. The initial patriotic flood of volunteers who flocked to the army following the invasion of February 2022 has dried up. The government has acknowledged its conscription drive has run into difficulties, with thousands of people evading the draft and some seeking to flee abroad rather than risk the trenches. A mobilisation law that comes into force next month obliges men to update their draft data with authorities, although it was stripped of tough punishments for draft evaders after a public outcry. Reuters is the first news outlet to detail the extent of the defence ministry's outreach plan, designed to combat public distrust about enlistment and plug a gaping hole in the military by offering recruits a greater sense of control over their fate.

Thirteen of the new recruitment centres have been opened since mid-February and the government plans to expand the number to 30 by the mid-

dle of the year, said Oleksiy Bezhevet, a ministry adviser who is overseeing the drive. At the first centre, in Lviv, about 300 people visited in the first month, Bezhevet said, without specifying if any signed up. The defence ministry is also working with four private recruitment companies to fill military vacancies, he added. He conceded the plans were no "magic pill" for the military, though he said the range of roles needing to be filled was so broad that it didn't matter so much what people chose.

"The main goal is to give people the opportunity to conquer their fears and enter into the military sphere," said Bezhevet. He was among more than a half-dozen people involved in the new drive for voluntary recruits who were interviewed for this article, also including recruiters and service members. Michael Kofman, a military specialist at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

think-tank, said the recruitment drive was positive for the army but would not be a decisive solution to a severe shortfall of troops that could only be fully addressed by mobilisation.

"It likely needs hundreds of thousands of men to sustain the fight - in particular infantry, which few are likely to volunteer for, because it's the most likely combat arm to suffer casualties," he added. Ukraine's conscription effort, launched in the wake of the invasion, has been hampered by local media reports of corruption, official abuse and administrative incompetence. Social media has been flooded with clips of officers corraling men off the street or barging into homes. Common concerns about military service include inadequate training, poor commanders and the fact that there is no cap on the length of service, according to a February poll by Kyiv-based research agency Ifo Sapiens for media outlet Texty.org. In the survey of 400 army-eligible men, only 35% said they were prepared to serve if called up.

"Somewhere, at some stage, trust was lost," said Bezhevet, the defence ministry adviser. "Right now, our task is to renew it." Ukraine does not release figures on conscripts or voluntary recruits, which it deems sensitive information. President Volodymyr Zelenskiy nonetheless acknowledged shortcomings in mobilisation when he fired the heads of regional draft offices last August citing reports of corruption and official abuse. Bezhevet said the goal of the defence ministry's recruiting campaign was to triple the number of volunteers who join up. In the longer term, he added, at least a third of Ukraine's armed forces should be staffed through voluntary recruit-

ment. As part of the hunt, the defence ministry has begun working with four leading job-search sites over the past six months, said Bezhevet, adding that so far around 100,000 applicants in total had replied to more than 10,000 vacancies advertised.

Lobby X, one of the sites, offers a user-friendly platform that allows jobseekers to search through military branches, from the marines to military intelligence, and categories of jobs, from artillery gunner to cook or press officer. Like any ordinary job postings, the vacancies list responsibilities, requirements and benefits including monthly pay, which ranges from around \$500 to \$3,000. And voluntary contracts can be signed for specific terms starting from three years, or until the end of martial law. The goal, said Lobby X CEO Vladyslav Greziev, is to allow people to choose the exact unit they want to serve with and maximise the use of their skills. "Getting good weapons is great, but it's all used by people," he said.

In March, Kyiv's top general said the military would need to mobilise fewer people than the initial target of up to 500,000 more Ukrainians, in part because of volunteers. "We expect that we will have enough people capable of defending their motherland," Commander-in-chief Oleksandr Syrskiy told the Ukrinform news agency. "I am talking not only about the mobilized but also about volunteer fighters." The official recruitment push has been matched on the ground by military units reaching out directly to civilians.

A handful of brigades and smaller units are launching or stepping up their own public relations drives, with more billboards promoting individual

units springing up across towns and cities. Among the most prominent is the elite Third Separate Assault Brigade, which has honed its recruiting tactics over the course of a war in which it has excelled on the battlefield. The all-volunteer outfit has become renowned for its sleek social media presence, which includes gripping first-person videos from the front and frequent speaking appearances by larger-than-life fighters with colourful stories to tell. Reuters accompanied some members on a leg of a multi-region tour of Ukraine last month aimed at promoting the brigade, educating civilians on military service and recruiting members.

At a social services centre in the central Ukrainian city of Kropyvnytskyi, brigade soldiers took turns fielding questions from passers-by and prospective recruits, and offered them spots on a free training course to test their mettle. In two days in Kropyvnytskyi, about 20 people agreed to attend the week-long course, according to one of the soldiers who goes by the call sign "Loft", a heavily tattooed fighter who carries camouflage business cards with his personal number. At a high school across town, two other burly fighters regaled the young teenage crowd with comedy, but also warned of war's grim realities and emphasized the importance of discipline and preparation. One of them, who introduced himself by his call sign Bull, said the brigade's distinct nationalist ideology means its success in attracting recruits may not be easily replicable. But frequent and honest outreach would be key to making military service a desirable path for more Ukrainians as the war drags on, he added. "We're playing a long game."

## Rishi's Rwanda bill to become law after late-night showdown

LONDON (BBC): Rishi Sunak's Rwanda bill will finally become law after a parliamentary showdown ended late in the night. Plans to send some asylum seekers to Africa have met with fierce criticism, but the bill passed when the Lords dropped their opposition. Mr Sunak said in a statement "nothing will stand in our way" now of getting flights off the ground.

But the scheme could still be held up by challenges in the courts. Ahead of the bill passing, the prime minister said flights to Rwanda would take off within 10 to 12 weeks, missing his original spring target. In a statement on Tuesday, he called the passing of the Rwanda Bill "not just a step forward but a fundamental change in the global equation on migration". He said: "We introduced the Rwanda Bill to deter vulnerable migrants from making perilous crossings and break the business model of the criminal gangs who exploit them. "The passing of this legislation will allow us to do that and make it very clear that if you come here illegally, you will not be able to stay. "Our focus is to now get flights off the ground, and I am clear that nothing will stand in our way of doing that and saving lives." But shadow home secretary Yvette Cooper called the Rwanda plan an "extortionately expensive gimmick". Charities have also hit out at the scheme, with leading human rights groups describing it as a "breach of international law". The government plans have been stymied since November, when the UK Supreme Court ruled unanimously that the Rwanda scheme was unlawful.

The prime minister said flights were booked to take off as soon the legislation was passed and 500 staff

were ready to escort migrants "all the way to Rwanda". "Plans are in place. And these flights will go, come what may," he said, adding he wanted to create "a drumbeat of multiple flights a month... because that's how you build a systematic deterrent and that's how you'll stop the boats". A grueling parliamentary back-and-forth between the Commons and House of Lords saw the bill sent back to MPs five times before coming to an end. After so many setbacks, the passing of the bill was a political win for the prime minister. But his pledge to stop small boats crossing the channel now hinges on this being the deterrent he has promised. With a general election close, the prime minister does not have long to prove his plan will work. Peers were debating two amendments to the bill, the first was for an independent monitoring committee be set up to consider if Rwanda was safe and a second for exemptions for Afghans who had assisted the British military.

On the bill, Lord Carlile said: "This is something which is ill judged, badly drafted, inappropriate, illegal in current UK and international law, and the House of Lords is absolutely right to say that we want to maintain our legal standards in this country, and there are better ways of dealing with this problem anyway." Lord Browne of Ladyton, who put forward the amendment to exempt Afghan veterans who had assisted the British military from deportation, said there had now been a concession by the government on this. The government pledged that Afghan veterans with a "credible link" to the Afghan special forces would have their claims reassessed by an independent body and said those with ver-

ified claims would not be deported. Lord Browne said this was "extremely important" concession" and dropped his amendment.

Back in the Commons, shadow immigration minister Stephen Kinnock praised the "tenacity" of his colleagues in the Lords for holding out for what he also called "a significant concession". But the government held firm on its rejection of the final amendment for a monitoring committee - put forward by crossbench peer Lord Anderson. He said the purpose of the back-and-forth between the chambers was to persuade the government to agree a compromise but it had "refused pointedly to do so". The time had come to acknowledge the "primacy of the elected house and to withdraw from the fray", he added.

Defending the bill, Home Office minister Lord Sharpe of Epsom said it complied with international law and that it was "profoundly moral and patriotic to defend the integrity of our borders". Royal Assent is expected to be given by King Charles in the next few days, officially passing the bill into law. It is not just opposition parties who have objected to the government's Rwanda plan, with human rights groups saying the plan poses a "significant threat to the rule of law" by undermining what protects people from an abuse of power by the state. The charity Freedom from Torture, alongside Amnesty International and Liberty said in a statement: "We all deserve the chance to live a safe life, and to seek protection when we need it most. "This shameful bill trashes the constitution and international law whilst putting torture survivors and other refugees at risk of an unsafe future in Rwanda."

## In Brazil, hopes to use AI to save wildlife from roadkill fate

BRASILIA (AFP): In Brazil, where about 16 wild animals become roadkill every second, a computer scientist has come up with a futuristic solution to this everyday problem: using AI to alert drivers to their presence. Direct strikes on the vast South American country's extensive road network are the top threat to numerous species, forced to live in ever-closer proximity with humans.

According to the Brazilian Center for Road Ecology (CBEE), some 475 million vertebrate animals die on the road every year -- mostly smaller species such as capybaras, armadillos and possums. "It is the biggest direct impact on wildlife today in Brazil," CBEE coordinator Alex Bager told AFP. Shocked by the carnage in the world's most biodiverse country, computer science student Gabriel Souto Ferrante sprung into action. The 25-year-old started by identifying the five medium- and large-sized species most likely to fall victim to traffic accidents: the puma, the giant anteater, the tapir, the maned wolf and the jaguarundi, a type of wild cat.

Souto, who is pursuing a master's degree at the University of Sao Paulo (USP), then created a database with thousands of images of these animals, and trained an AI model to recognize them in real time. Numerous tests followed, and were successful, according to the results of his efforts recently published in the journal Scientific Reports. Souto collaborated with the USP Institute of Mathematical and Computer Sciences. For the project to become a reality, Souto said scientists would need "support from the companies that manage the roads," including access to traffic cameras and "edge computing" devices - hardware that can relay a real-time warning to drivers like some navigation apps do.

There would also need to be input from the road concession companies, "to remove the animal or capture it," he told AFP. It is hoped the technology, by reducing wildlife strikes, will also save human lives. - "More roads, more vehicles" - Bager said a variety of other strategies to stop the bloodshed on Brazilian roads have failed.

Signage warning drivers to be on the lookout for crossing animals have little influence, he told AFP, leading to a mere three-percent reduction in speed on average. There are also so-called fauna bridges and tunnels meant to get animals safely from one side of the road to the other, and fences to keep them in -- all insufficient to deal with the scope of the problem, according to Bager.

## Residents challenge plans to demolish housing towers

MELBOURNE: The residents of dozens of public housing towers in the southern Australian city of Melbourne heard the state government was planning to demolish their homes on the news. "Everyone found out from the TV, from the news, with the rest of Victoria," Sara\*, a resident of the first group of towers to be knocked down, told Al Jazeera.

Sara's home, among a cluster of 14-storey towers in the inner-city suburbs of Flemington, North Melbourne and Carlton, will be one of the first to go after the Victorian government last year announced its plan to demolish all 44 of the state's remaining public housing towers. Built under public housing schemes in the 1960s, the blocks are located in parts of the city closely eyed by property developers as Melbourne's house prices continue to soar. The Victorian government has described the plan, announced as part of a wider Housing Statement in September 2023, as "Australia's biggest ever urban renewal project". In total, about 10,000 people are facing relocation as a result of the demolition scheme.

But for residents of the first towers to face the wrecking ball, the project has offered little reassurance. "They're not telling us what they're going to do, what their plan is," Sara

told Al Jazeera. It's been "very unclear, and not very transparent". The lack of information has left residents unsure where they will end up and concerned they will be separated from the communities they have built with their neighbours. "I grew up in this area, so it's a special place for me," said Sara, adding that there is a "huge sense of community" among the people who live in her building. "Raising my family here and being around the community - it means a lot. And to think about the demolition and what that means in the long term, it's really heartbreaking to think about." Residents in the flats have launched a class action suit against the government's plan. The lead plaintiff in the suit lodged by the Inner Melbourne Community Legal (IMCL) is Barry Berih, who is also from the first group of towers slated for demolition. "We are still being kept in the dark," Berih said in a statement when the case was launched. "I don't know where I am going to be living or where I might end up, and the government isn't giving us the information we need to make decisions."

The state government has applied to throw the suit out, and the Supreme Court is set to hear the case on Tuesday. The IMCL says it is another attempt by the government to avoid accountability over its decision. "The public housing estates aren't just bricks and mortar that belong to the state government," IMCL's managing lawyer, Louisa Bassini, said in a statement. "The towers are home to 10,000 Victorians and their rights matter. Their homes, families and communities are important. The Victorian Government should not prefer expedited and secretive decision-making ahead of proper consideration of peoples' rights." The demolition plan is not the first time residents of the public housing towers have had their lives turned upside down by an abrupt state government announcement. Late in the afternoon on July 4, 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic raged, then-Premier Daniel Andrews announced the public housing towers in Flemington and North Melbourne would be locked down with immediate effect.

Unlike people living in private homes across the street, the 3,000 public housing tenants were given no notice of the lockdown and were not permitted to go outside to buy essential items at the supermarket or pharmacy. Instead, police were sent to the buildings and stationed in the lifts and lobbies. A government ombudsman later found the "immediate detention" violated the residents' human rights and "was not based on direct health advice". — Aljazeera

## South Africa election: Jacob Zuma leads 3-0 in court battles

JOHANNESBURG (BBC): South Africa's battle-scarred former President Jacob Zuma is proving he still has a winning streak - recently scoring a hat-trick in the courtroom. For the third time in the last month the 82-year-old has thwarted attempts to stop him, or his new party, from contesting the general election at the end of May.

His latest victory in the Durban High Court, where the governing African National Congress (ANC) tried to force his party, uMkhonto weSizwe (MK), to drop its name and logo. This is because it is named after the now disbanded armed wing of the ANC, which fought against white-minority rule that ended with the election of anti-apartheid hero Nelson Mandela in 1994. The ANC argued that trademark law had been breached and that the use of the name, which translates as Spear of the Nation, would lead to voter confusion in the upcoming May polls. The judge disagreed.

"It's a big victory for MK politically and financially. They would've had to start all over again if they lost. It would've crippled them completely financially," Paddy Harper, the South African Mail & Guardian newspaper's KwaZulu-

Natal correspondent, told the BBC. "They launched the manifesto essentially online this last weekend," he says, adding the two-page document which is big on headlines and thin on detail. "This tells you that they don't have the money, so starting the campaign with a different logo would've set them back massively." The high court ruling is campaign gold for MK, allowing activists to crow about their victory, even if the governing party says it will appeal against the ruling.

But the ruling also shows how much MK relies on the charismatic appeal of Mr Zuma, a former ANC stalwart who once served in its armed wing. The allegations of corruption he faces, but denies, have not affected his huge popularity in his home province of KwaZulu-Natal. High court judge Mahendra Chetty mainly dismissed the application on the grounds that the ANC had left the legal action too late and should have approached the electoral court, not the high court. MK was registered as a party in September, but it was only when Mr Zuma came out in support of it in December that the ANC woke up to the threat, said Harper.

"The ANC failed the urgency test with their high

court application, they created the urgency for themselves," he said. "The judge said this was an electoral matter, not one of trademark and it should have been dealt with by the electoral court." This is the second loss for the ANC against MK. At the end of March the electoral court rejected the ANC's argument that the party had not met the official registration criteria. "The ANC's attempts to delegitimise them using the courts have failed completely," said Harper. The electoral court has also overturned the electoral commission's ban on Mr Zuma's candidacy for a parliamentary seat. The constitution bars people from holding public office if convicted of a crime and sentenced to more than 12 months in prison.

The electoral commission had argued that as Mr Zuma was sentenced to 15 months in jail in 2021 for failing to testify in a corruption investigation he did not qualify. The court has not yet given reasons for its decision, though as Mr Zuma only served three months on health grounds and was given a remission of sentence by the president, his lawyers argue it means his sentence was "cancelled". Mr Zuma has a chequered record when it comes to courtrooms - so the recent rulings are a boon for him. The judiciary seems to want to avoid interfering, and leave the electorate to decide on the fate of the former president and his party. The ruling will also ease political tensions. When Mr Zuma was arrested in 2021 for contempt of court, it sparked deadly riots - mainly in KwaZulu-Natal.

"The law and God is on the side of the MK party. ANC your days are numbered, you've attacked the MK party for too long," MK's Visvin Reddy said outside court. This prediction may be far-fetched, though the ANC could lose its outright majority in the national parliament - currently 57% - for the first time in 30 years, as well as in the KwaZulu-Natal legislature. But for those disillusioned with the ANC's performance, there are plenty of parties to choose from in this election - the ballot paper will be long. MK may poach some votes from other political parties, not just the ANC - in particular from the Zulu nationalist Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), which took 3.38% of the vote nationally in 2019, and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), which has a young support base and won 10.8% in the last election.

## Iraqi father in legal first against BP over son's death

BAGHDAD (BBC): A father has started legal action against UK oil giant BP over the death of his 21-year-old son. Hussein Julood alleges the burning off of gas at a BP-run oil field in Iraq - a practise known as flaring - caused his son Ali's leukaemia. A BBC investigation in 2022 found Ali's village, which lies within the field, had high levels of cancer-causing pollutants known to come from flaring.

BP said "we understand the concerns" and are supporting change. The case is believed to be the first time an individual has started legal action against a major oil firm over its flaring practices. The claim letter - which has been seen by BBC News - alleges that Ali's leukaemia and subsequent death was caused by "toxic emissions from the Rumaila oilfield", and that BP is partly responsible as the lead contractor. Mr Julood is seeking compensation for the cost of his son's medical treatment - including overseas chemotherapy and bone marrow transplants - loss of earnings, funeral costs, as well as the "moral loss" of his son. "I am just hoping for those who hear my voice, from BP, to consider

my situation. I am not representing myself alone, I am also representing those poor people living here and suffering from pollution," Hussein Julood told BBC News. Wessen Jazrawi, partner at Hausfeld & Co, which is representing Mr Julood, said: "This is an important example of environmental litigation seeking compensation for harmful emissions from a carbon major. Such companies have generally been able to carry out harmful environmental practices with impunity, particularly where these occur in the Global South." Gas flaring is the burning of gas released in oil extraction; it is dangerous for human health as the gas can contain a mixture of harmful cancer-causing chemicals such as benzene. Rumaila oil field has the highest documented levels of flaring in the world, according to BBC analysis of World Bank figures. Hussein Julood said one of the most crucial goals of his claim was that regular flaring should be stopped in Rumaila so that more families did not suffer.

Ali was just 15 when he was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia and underwent two years of treatment including multiple courses of chemotherapy, a bone marrow transplant and radiotherapy. His father said he was a keen footballer and enjoyed school, but after so many stays in hospital he was unable to return to classes. In 2021, he was confirmed to be in remission and was excited about the future - he opened a phone shop locally. A year later, he was found to be in relapse. His father tried desperately to raise funds to send him to India for experimental treatment. However, Ali passed away on 21 April last year before he could make the trip. Speaking to the BBC, Ali's father said: "It was a very sad year for the family. For me, his mother, and his brothers too. Ali was an unforgettable person, he was my backbone, I depended on him in my work, my life, and in everything in the house. All the days we live are sad."

In 2021, Ali documented his life living within the boundaries of Rumaila oil field as part of a BBC investigation into flaring. The BBC also undertook the first pollution monitoring in Rumaila and other local communities.



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Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

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Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

\*USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747

## Same old line from Blinken will not lift ties

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit to China from Wednesday to Friday comes at the right time to help ease the tensions that have quickly built up between China and the United States on South China Sea issues, the Taiwan question and trade disputes. The largest United States-Philippines joint drill in decades, dubbed Balikatan 2024, or "shoulder-to-shoulder" drill, which involves around 5,000 Philippine and 11,000 US troops and lasts 19 days in waters close to the Taiwan island in the South China Sea, kicked off on Monday.

On Saturday, the US House of Representatives passed the "Indo-Pacific" Security Supplemental Bill worth about \$8.1 billion, most of which will be spent by the Democratic Progressive Party authorities on strengthening the island's armed forces. The other bill passed by the House on the same day targets TikTok. On Wednesday last week, US President Joe Biden called on the US Trade Representative Office to consider tripling the existing Section 301 tariff rate on Chinese steel and aluminum in response to what he claimed were China's "unfair practices" and to support US steel manufacturing and shipbuilding.

Meanwhile, the Biden administration is weighing the possibility of banning Chinese-made electric vehicles in the US market, claiming the cars have "spying" potential and the Chinese government subsidizes their manufacturing. After dealing with the Biden administration for so long, Beijing will not have any illusions about the US side's "commitment" to managing disputes with China "in a responsible way" as it claims it seeks to do. During his last visit to China in June last year, Blinken underscored the importance of maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and reiterated there has been no change to the US' "one-China policy", "based on the Taiwan Relations Act, the three Joint Communiques, and the Six Assurances". He just pretended to ignore the fact the "one-China policy" Beijing urged the US side to uphold has never been and must not be based on the "Taiwan Relations Act" or the "Six Assurances", both of which are fabrications of the US to back the secessionist forces on the island.

Such conflicting assurances, which only serve to intensify the Sino-US tensions, also prevailed in his remarks on the fraught economic ties between the two countries during his last China trip. While claiming that he would address China's alleged "unfair and nonmarket economic practices and recent actions against US firms", Blinken sought to explain that the US' de-risking policies were not equivalent to decoupling and its targeted actions are necessary to protect US national security. But the world can clearly see that it is the US that is bullying, containing and coercing China. That being said, if Blinken's China visit is part of the efforts agreed by the two heads of state of China and the US during their last talks by telephone on April 2 to "strengthen dialogue and communication, avoid miscalculation and promote cooperation", the top US diplomat will have his work cut out to convince his hosts that the US is acting to that effect.

With the US flexing its military, financial and economic muscles against China in various ways, the Biden administration has left the Chinese side little space in which to misinterpret its China policy. That being said, if the top US diplomat continues to repeat the same old line, rather than actually trying to address the issues by talking on an equal footing with mutual respect, his coming visit will just prove to be another talk-for-talk's-sake chicken-and-duck dialogue.

## 19th Western Pacific Naval Symposium

THE way in which some Western media outlets have reported on the 19th Western Pacific Naval Symposium hosted by China in Qingdao, Shandong province, from Sunday to Wednesday only exposes that they have missed the point. They have tried to portray the gathering of high-level delegations from 29 countries as being merely an occasion for Beijing to attempt to defend itself against the allegations of the West, which accuses it of making "dangerous, irresponsible, bullying, provocative and coercive" moves targeting its smaller neighbors in the South and East China seas.

These reports originate from the media outlets' biased view that Beijing is the root cause of the security threats in the region. They are not only a deliberate distortion of the truth; more importantly, they fail to convey the practical significance of the forum. China has nothing to feel sorry about when it comes to defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity and core interests in the Asia-Pacific, and it has no need to defend its actions to that effect. The real value of the symposium is that it provides a rare platform for major countries related to not only the security of the Asia-Pacific, but also the rest of the world, to have face-to-face communications on core issues of global concern.

Although details of most of these exchanges between the key stakeholders remain unknown, their presence at the forum, and the forum's agenda, which reportedly has been widely welcomed by the majority of the participants, should serve to prove that the participating countries are open to talks and face-to-face communications on key issues of common concern. Instead of misportraying the Qingdao naval symposium, the Western media has enough reasons to report on it accurately. In a volatile world that has not seen such a meaningful and pragmatic solution-oriented multilateral gathering at the executive level for so long, the collective willingness displayed by the participating countries to exchange views and seek common ground to ease regional tensions and explore ways to resolve some hotspot issues is a positive and welcome sign. China deserves credit for inviting, hosting and encouraging these otherwise non-talking-with-each-other guests to engage in constructive discussions about meaningful topics, avoiding the event from becoming another bickering shop between different blocs. That is why the symposium is being keenly followed by countries far beyond the Asia-Pacific, despite the efforts of some Western media to belittle it.

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## Palestinian cause must be freed from Iran-Israel trap

Dr. Mohammed Al-Sulami

IRAN'S recent military strike on Israel sparked much debate over its implications. While some argue that Iran achieved symbolic victories and potentially reshaped its relations with Israel and the US, others suggest that the primary focus should be on the impact of the attack on the Palestinian cause, particularly during this critical juncture. However, beyond the controversy, it appears that the missile and drone strikes had little utility and actually harmed the Palestinian plight.

The strikes, planned by Tehran, aimed to secure symbolic gains without provoking significant responses from Israel or the US. But the Palestinians were not factored into Iran's strategic calculations. Consequently, the attack failed to serve the Palestinian cause. Furthermore, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu capitalized on the strikes to divert international attention away from the Palestinian issue. By leveraging the situation, he sought to evade pressure to cease the war in Gaza and to reposition himself both domestically and internationally.

The aftermath of the strikes has significantly complicated the situation for Palestinians. Prior to the Iranian attack, the Palestinian issue was firmly in the spotlight among international and regional powers. Netanyahu and his government were also under mounting internal pressure due to the security failures leading up to Oct. 7. Subsequently, they faced isolation and increasing American and Western pressure. This pressure escalated to the point where there were calls to replace Netanyahu and his hard-line allies with leaders who would be more inclined toward constructive approaches to political settlements and resolving the long-standing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

In addition, there was a regional insistence on Israel ending its military campaign in the Gaza Strip. And there were urgent appeals to alleviate the humanitarian crisis and provide essential aid to civilians. Most crucially, there was a concerted effort

to pursue a fair resolution to the enduring Palestinian issue. Israel's global image had suffered a severe blow, reaching its lowest ebb, while the legitimate rights of Palestinians garnered unprecedented support. The plight of Gaza had elicited widespread sympathy on an international scale.

The Iranian attack on Israel dramatically altered the dynamics surrounding the Palestinian conflict, granting Netanyahu his desired outcome. Israel, previously isolated both regionally and internationally, found itself at the center of a coalition rallying to defend its territory. Formerly marginalized Israeli leaders began receiving support from world leaders, transforming Israel's international standing from accused to defender.

Israel wasted no time in

critical juncture for the Palestinian issue. However, the strikes were executed without consideration for the challenges facing the Palestinian cause or the dire situation in Gaza. They also disregarded the presence of Iran's allies in Gaza, which are actively engaged in the Palestinian resistance and are being targeted by Israel.

From Iran's perspective, the strikes represented a victory, providing protection for its leaders in the face of Israeli aggression and restoring a sense of dignity. Additionally, they served to maintain Iran's reputation and domestic credibility amid the ongoing conflict.

Iran's recent actions not only deviated from its vocal support for Palestine, but also had a detrimental effect on the Palestinian cause, diverting global attention away from it at a

*This pressure escalated to the point where there were calls to replace Netanyahu and his hard-line allies with leaders who would be more inclined toward constructive approaches to political settlements and resolving the long-standing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.*

leveraging the strikes to refurbish its image, portraying itself as a victim facing an existential threat in a hostile environment - a narrative it has cultivated for decades. The discord between Washington and Tel Aviv gave way to a profound understanding, which Netanyahu capitalized on to navigate the internal pressures that preceded the attack. With the successful repulsion of the Iranian strikes, Netanyahu gained the legitimacy to bolster his authority, empowering him to pursue hard-line policies toward the Palestinians and disregard international calls for negotiations to resolve the conflict.

The recent attack could have held significance for the Palestinians and their cause had Iran integrated it into its rhetoric of supporting and defending Palestine, especially at this

crucial moment. This diversion hindered international efforts aimed at halting the ongoing conflict, alleviating the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and pressuring Israel to cease its military operations against civilians.

Instead of bolstering support for Palestinians, Iran's attack provided Netanyahu and hard-line elements within his government the justification to disregard both internal and external pressures. This emboldened them to intensify military operations in Gaza, as evidenced by the subsequent developments on the ground. Additionally, it allowed them to consider implementing previously postponed aggressive policies, such as storming Rafah, potentially escalating the conflict further.

And by diverting international attention, Iran inadvertently facilitated

Israel's ability to prolong the conflict, allowing it to exploit the distraction to advance its military objectives while the world's focus was elsewhere. This has prolonged the suffering of civilians and exacerbated the humanitarian crisis, which has been raging incessantly for more than six months.

In addition, while the international community is preoccupied with the Iranian strikes on Israel and Friday's apparent Israeli counterattack, on the Ukrainian front, it has been reported that Russian troops have made advances at the expense of Ukrainian forces, which are suffering from arms depletion against the backdrop of the US Congress' sluggishness in approving a new round of funding.

The danger lies in Israel's potential exploitation of the opportunity provided by Iran, which could lead to the imposition of a new reality regarding the Palestinian issue.

Netanyahu may seize upon the Iranian strikes to evade pressure and demands concerning the Palestinian problem, while the US might leverage them to advance its wider regional agenda. However, it is imperative that the international community and regional nations resist falling into this trap. They must not be swayed by the extremist policies of Iran and Israel, which could exploit regional escalation and polarization within competing security frameworks, potentially sparking a new cold war in the Middle East. Such actions could serve as a diversion from domestic political, economic and security failures.

The Palestinian cause should not be held hostage to the ambitions of Iran and Israel, nor should it be manipulated to strengthen their respective positions. It is crucial to restore regional and international momentum toward ending the conflict and achieving a just and comprehensive settlement for Palestine. Urgent efforts are needed to pressure Israel and its government to curb their extremist policies. A resolution to this issue is not only essential for the stability and security of the region, but also for fostering broader integration and cooperation initiatives.

## US exposes its hypocrisy

Daoud Kuttab

WASHINGTON'S decision to go against the world community by vetoing last week's UN Security Council resolution recommending the granting of full UN membership to Palestine exposed America's hypocrisy. American officials have, especially since the Gaza violence erupted, argued that the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel is the most important long-term solution for the Palestinian conflict. By going against 12 members of the council, including three permanent members and all EU members, the US has weakened its only argument and showed its bias.

In defending this veto, the US representative made little effort to explain the hypocrisy. Nor did he use the occasion to restate America's commitment to the Palestinians' right of self-determination. This term, which is crucial in any discussion of Palestinian statehood, was not mentioned at all and neither were the words "justice" or "freedom." Instead, the most-repeated key word used by the US representative was "normalization." The American official, whose government is in deep negotiations to convince Saudi Arabia to normalize relations with Israel, used this word five times - the same as the hugely important "peace."

In an attempt to correct the situation, the US State Department's explanation exposed a more severe problem. Spokesperson Vedant Patel repeatedly insisted that the US believes that "the most expeditious path toward statehood for the Palestinian people is through direct negotiations." Journalists attending Thursday's briefing scoffed at the use of the term "expedient," arguing correctly that it has already been more than 30 years since the Oslo I Accord was signed in Washington.

The last direct talks between Israelis and Palestinians occurred two presidents ago, in April 2014, during the Obama administration. At the time, Secretary of State John Kerry put the blame squarely on the Israeli side by saying that its decision to increase settlements and its refusal to release the last tranche of older Palestine Liberation Organization combatants, which had already been agreed to, led to the collapse of the talks.

The Gaza war has produced an even more egregious Israeli position regarding the idea of direct talks. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who in the past had been caught on a hot mic telling settlers that he has worked against the Oslo Accords, has come out publicly since Oct. 7 and said that he has also worked against the idea of Palestinian statehood.

So, we are left with a useless UN mechanism, which its own ally has refused to engage with and that aims to lead to a Palestinian state that the prime minister of Israel has boasted of working against.

Naturally, to cover its tracks, Washington has produced a weak argument against immediate statehood. The calls made by the US president for the revitalization of the Palestinian government, which has been a demand of the Palestinians

for years, has been partly adopted by President Mahmoud Abbas, who last month swore into office a new technocratic government. The Mohammed Mustafa-led administration is working on finalizing various reform plans, leading to a promise of legislative and presidential elections. Abbas has also issued a decree appointing a new Central Elections Commission. The nine-person commission (made up of two women and seven men with an average age of 74) is headed by former Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah.

Washington's excuses and justifications are aimed at camouflaging an internal American problem. Laws passed during the 1990s mean that, if Palestine is recognized by the UN as a full member state (outside of negotiations), then all US funding to the organization and its affiliates would be stopped. This unusual situation, which deprives the executive branch of its foreign policy tools, has never been challenged or amended, even by granting the possibility of a presidential waiver if it is deemed to be in the national interest.

The US under President Dwight Eisenhower was the first to recognize the nascent state of Israel in May 1948, long before it had accomplished the basic requirements of statehood, as delineated in Article IV of the UN Charter. The US recognition happened a year before the UN conditionally provided full membership to Israel. Now, America is opposed to any premature recognition of Palestine, even though it is today much more qualified for statehood than the Zionist founders of Israel were in 1948.

If the US wants to be respected as the leader of the free world, the very minimum it needs to do is recognize Palestine on the borders of June 4, 1967, and encourage elected Palestinians and Israelis to negotiate relations between themselves.

The struggle of Palestinians for statehood will continue regardless of the American veto on their inalienable right to self-determination. The 140 UN member states that have already recognized Palestine will no doubt be joined by others in the coming months, in part due to last week's vote at the UNSC. America will thus continue to be isolated and its words about supporting the two-state solution will sound hollow to all.

If the US fails to do so, it will only increase frustration, anger and hatred. Palestinian leaders have regularly called on the international community to provide Palestinians with a political horizon. The absence of a clear path to freedom adds to the anger and removes the most important ingredient for Palestinians: hope. Without hope for a better future, life becomes meaningless and the taking of one life in a resistance attack becomes much more prevalent.

That being the case, we have to admit that the absence of hope for Palestinians was the most important motivation for the Oct. 7 attack on Israel. The US recognizing Palestinian statehood is not a panacea that will solve all problems, but it would give a kernel of hope to Palestinians, which can go a long way toward bringing about peace and tranquility.

Arab News

## A maritime community for promoting peace

Jin Yongming

APRIL 23, 2024, marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Liberation Army Navy, which is dedicated to maintaining peace in the seas surrounding China. Yet the South China Sea remains turbulent, because countries such as the Philippines continue to make provocative moves and involve non-regional parties into the fray, thereby disrupting regional peace and stability, and posing a threat to peace in the Asia-Pacific.

The idea of building a maritime community with a shared future, as proposed by President Xi Jinping in April 2019, is an inclusive approach to ocean governance and committed to upholding regional peace. The approach will help address various maritime challenges by integrating natural attributes, economic interests and cultural values, and addressing ecological

concerns and security problems. From a historical and cultural perspective, the concept of a maritime community with a shared future reflects the traditional Chinese values of harmony and coexistence. Throughout history, China has viewed the oceans as a source of connectivity, trade, and cultural exchanges. The ancient concept of "harmonious oceans" embodies the idea of peaceful coexistence among coastal countries, and the concept of a maritime community with a shared future extends this concept into contemporary maritime governance, emphasizing cooperation, mutual respect and sustainable development. At its core, the concept seeks to achieve symbiosis and sustainable development between humanity and the marine ecology. It recognizes the interconnectedness of the marine ecosystem and human activities, and emphasizes the need for responsible stewardship of

marine resources. By fostering cooperation and collaboration among maritime countries, the initiative aims to address common challenges such as marine pollution, overfishing and habitat destruction.

The objectives of building a maritime community with a shared future can be categorized into several key areas. Politically, it seeks to promote inclusiveness, as opposed to hegemony, and peaceful development. On the economic front, it aims to harness the potential of the maritime economy while ensuring that countries have equitable access to marine resources. Culturally, it advocates for an open and mutually enriching exchange between maritime cultures. And ecologically, it prioritizes marine environmental protection and the sustainable management of marine ecosystems. To realize these objectives, it is essential to

integrate the principles and spirit of a maritime community with maritime laws. This integration will provide a legal framework for cooperative governance and management of the oceans. The legal basis of the maritime community can be found in international maritime laws such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. However, existing maritime laws cannot safeguard the common interests of the global community. Some traditional legal principles often prioritize individual state interests over collective well-being.

Therefore, there is a need to adopt a new approach that would prioritize ecological integrity and better safeguard common interests - perhaps the concept of a global interest space, also known as an "international public domain" can serve the purpose, because it recognizes certain areas of the oceans as

shared spaces that are not controlled by any state. To effectively manage these spaces, new legal mechanisms, such as ecosystem-based management and precautionary principles, must be adopted by states and international organizations. A maritime community with a shared future is aimed at promoting cooperative management of global marine interests, and ensuring sustainable use and development of the oceans. But while it is difficult, almost impossible, to apply the principles of a community with a shared future in areas under national jurisdiction, they can be applied in areas beyond national jurisdictions and functional regimes of the oceans - in order to better protect the marine environment, promote scientific research, facilitate navigation, launch search and rescue operations, and fight transnational crimes. But the application of a maritime community in specific areas

requires balancing competing legal principles, such as UNCLOS, the common heritage of humankind, and the principle of sovereign equality among states. But achieving this balance will require dialogue, cooperation, and compromise among maritime countries.

Building a maritime community with a shared future based on maritime laws represents a significant step toward comprehensive ocean governance. By promoting cooperation, mutual respect and sustainable development, a maritime community with a shared future can help address the maritime challenges and safeguard the health of the oceans. But collective efforts from maritime countries, international organizations and other stakeholders will be needed to realize this vision. In short, by working together, we can build a brighter future for our oceans and ensure their well-being.

The China Daily



# Did Boris really sabotage peace talks between Russia and Ukraine?

Emma Ashford

THE war in Ukraine will be a source of fascination and study for historians for decades to come. Even today, two years in, we're starting to see research into some of the big moments that characterised the early days of the conflict, and which sheds light on the confusing welter of news stories that emerged at the time. Military analysts, for example, have already been able to reconstruct some of the most critical battles of the war's early days, showing how contingent and critical Russia's failure to establish a beachhead at Hostomel airport near Kyiv was to the course of the war, when history could easily have gone down a different path.

Another study, published last week by the historian Sergey Radchenko and the political scientist Samuel Charap, focuses on the poorly understood but consequential peace negotiations that played out between Russia and Ukraine in the spring of 2022 over ending the conflict. These negotiations - held predominantly in Istanbul - have become a focus for critics of the war in the US, who often argue that the west, and particularly then British prime minister, Boris Johnson, sabotaged these negotiations and prevented a successful ceasefire. Vladimir Putin would go on to make a similar argument in his now infamous interview with Tucker Carlson.

As Charap and Radchenko show, the reality is a bit more complicated. Johnson didn't directly sabotage a ceasefire deal in spring 2022; indeed, there was no deal ready to be signed between Russia and Ukraine. The two sides hadn't agreed on territorial issues, or on levels of military armaments permitted after the war. Ukraine's position during the negotiations necessitated security guarantees that western states were hesitant to provide. And there were domestic

political questions inside Ukraine related to Russian demands about "denazification" to contend with.

At the same time, the article shows that many of the opposing narratives - that neither Ukraine nor Russia are willing to negotiate, or that Ukraine's Nato membership isn't important to Russia - are also false. The two sides were able to agree on some major concessions, mostly around the question of the postwar European security order, and they were willing to talk, even in the face of a brutal ongoing war. And although there are other reasons why the talks failed, the promise of western commitments undoubtedly did play a role in undermining the Ukrainian willingness to come to an agreement at that time. In short, the history of why these talks failed can be helpful for undermining the absolutist narratives that have come to dominate conversations about the war - and for thinking about the future of the conflict.

First, the narrative that Charap and Radchenko present highlights clearly that both Russians and Ukrainians thought the question of Ukrainian "alignment" was important. Would Ukraine be allowed to belong to Nato, or the European Union? Would Ukraine become a neutral country, and what might that mean for its ability to defend itself? Many of Ukraine's strongest supporters in Washington and in eastern Europe have repeatedly argued that Nato expansion and the issue of Ukraine's potential accession to the alliance had nothing to do with Russia's choice to invade, which they typically attribute to cultural chauvinism or imperial delusions. Yet during the earliest concrete negotiations on this topic, both sides focused not on territorial settlements, but on the big picture postwar strategic questions. Clearly, they believed

these questions were important.

Second, this history refutes the notion that neither Ukraine nor Russia is willing to negotiate, or to consider compromises in order to end this war. Some western supporters of Ukraine point to extreme statements by Russian elites to argue that there can be no negotiated end to this conflict - Russia will never be satisfied until it is victorious. Yet these early negotiations clearly disprove that point. Both sides presented their demands, and traded drafts back and forth with concessions on certain issues. Clearly, they never reached a final deal. But there were already visible concessions occurring during this process, from Russia's suggestion that Crimea's status might be open to negotiation, to the back and forth between the two sides on the size of a postwar Ukrainian army.

For those who study political science, this is common to many conflict-related negotiations. Both sides in a war will have preferences and interests, and any peace process must grapple with resolving those competing points of view. The war in Ukraine is not unique or immune to these dynamics. The early negotiations may have failed, but it shows that, in a future window of opportunity, compromise might be possible.

A third and more important point - particularly for those of us in the west - is that the history of the Istanbul negotiations does highlight the somewhat hollow nature of the "nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine" slogans so favoured by western policymakers. Bomb-throwers like Elon Musk are technically wrong when they claim that the west torpedoed a concrete peace agreement in spring 2022; they are right in a broader philosophical sense, however, that the scepticism of western leaders about Russian intentions, their commitment to aid Ukraine and

their encouragement to Kyiv to fight on all added to the decision of the government to continue to fight rather than negotiate.

Again, this is not particularly surprising to those who have followed the conflict closely. But it does suggest that western leaders should stop implying that there are no divergent interests between Ukraine and its western backers. If western policymakers can step in to persuade Ukrainian leaders to fight on in 2022, they can offer advice about entering into negotiations in 2024 or beyond. As Adam Smith, the Democrat who runs the House armed services committee, put it recently, this is at best disingenuous: "I've heard this phrase - 'nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine'. Forgive me. That is a ridiculous thing for any US diplomat or person in US policy to say. We got partners all over the world and, yes, we listen to them, but when we're footing the bill, when we are spending so much money over there, we have a say."

Charap and Radchenko's history is not without its problems. The authors themselves - perhaps fearful of overstepping the mark - pull their punches too much when analysing why the talks failed. For the authors simply to state that multiple factors contributed to the failure of the talks is unsatisfying, given the obvious implication that Ukraine - encouraged by western backing - decided to roll the dice on the future of the conflict. But the blame game ultimately matters less than what this account reveals about what all the parties think about the endgame of the Ukraine war; though it's a history of failed negotiations, it can help to disprove some of the narratives that stand in the way of future talks between Ukraine and Russia, and help us understand the areas that are open to negotiation - and the issues that will be far tougher to resolve,

The Guardian

# Another foreign intervention will not solve crisis in Haiti

Doudou Pierre Festile & Micherline Islanda Aduel

ON March 12, Haiti's Prime Minister Ariel Henry tendered his resignation amid escalating violence in the country. Ahead of his announcement, the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) met behind closed doors to craft a transition plan, which includes the creation of a presidential council and the appointment of an interim prime minister. Meanwhile, the United States backed yet another foreign intervention, promising \$100m for a United Nations force to be deployed in Haiti.

In early April, members of the presidential council were named and a political accord on the transition was finalised. That, however, has not reassured Haitians. In fact, there are mounting concerns about the credibility of the council members and their political allegiances, particularly with the Haitian Tèt Kale Party (PHTK), which is embroiled in the current crisis.

Haitians do wonder how those implicated in the turmoil can be entrusted with its resolution and how another intervention encroaching on Haitian sovereignty would not fail miserably as previous interventions did. The current crisis is of foreign making and it can only be resolved if foreign interference stops and Haitians are allowed to regain control over their country.

Throughout its history, Haiti has endured a series of external interventions that have eroded its sovereignty and directly led to the current crisis. After the Haitian revolution of 1791, which brought liberation from French rule, France managed to force the Haitian authorities into paying indemnity in exchange for recognising Haiti's independence in 1825. This massive debt along with its interest had to be paid over 120 years and undermined the economic development of the country for two centuries.

In 1915, the US invaded the country, occupying it until 1934 and laying the foundation for the sustained US policy of violently interfering in Haitian internal affairs and undermining democratisation. In the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s, interventions by the so-called UN "peace missions", as well as the implementation of structural adjustment policies by institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, further eroded Haiti's sovereignty and deepened its crisis. The most recent coup supported by Western powers saw the removal of democratically elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004. Following his ouster, a UN Security Council resolution created the Core Group, comprising representatives of Brazil, Canada, the European Union, France, Germany, Spain, the United States and the Organization of American States.

Over the past two decades, this group has exerted strong influence over Haiti's political and economic affairs. It has not only dictated who should rule the country, but has also facilitated the incursion of foreign military forces into Haiti and undermined the re-establishment of a national armed force after the army was disbanded in 1995. In doing so, the group has overseen a deepening political, social and economic crisis in Haiti, which has now led to the disintegration of state power and the takeover by various gangs.

The US, in particular, bears direct responsibility for gang proliferation and empowerment, having done little to tackle the trafficking of US arms into the country. As a result, today, Haitians struggle not only with poverty and hunger but also with what resembles a "slow genocide". Criminal gangs control the capital, Port-au-Prince, and surrounding municipalities, where they dominate over 90 percent of the territory. They operate with brazen impunity, terrorising the population through kidnappings, rapes, murders, and looting.

Between July 2021 and April 2023, 2,845 people, including 84 policemen, were murdered, according

to a 2023 report by the Haitian organisation Fondasyon Je Klere (FJKL). Many more have been killed in the past year. Some 360,000 people have been displaced, including more than 50,000 who have fled the capital in recent months. Violence has led to the closure of businesses, job loss, and economic collapse. Even before the current escalation in violence, some 58 percent of the population was already living below the poverty threshold, suffering from inflation as high as 50 percent. Schools have been shut down, depriving the youth of their right to education; health facilities have also had to close doors, depriving many of access to

advocating for genuine change and national sovereignty, is calling for the creation of a National Monitoring Committee, which is to wield control over the executive during the transition. The committee would have wider representation of the political, social and rural sectors and ensure effective action on pressing issues, such as insecurity and economic revitalisation, while laying the groundwork for fair elections within the stipulated two-year timeframe. In order to tackle violence effectively, law enforcement must undergo improved training, receive sufficient resources, and be subject to accountability, all under the direction of

***In this context, the new transition plan proposed by CARICOM, seemingly endorsed by the Core Group and involving PHTK stakeholders, is unlikely to resolve the crisis. Similar past interventions have introduced leadership and policies supposedly aimed at alleviating the crisis in Haiti, only to make it worse.***

healthcare.

Haiti is grappling with a hunger crisis as well. According to the World Food Programme, 1.4 million Haitians are on the brink of famine. The ongoing violence has severely disrupted food distribution channels. Additionally, fuel shortages, rising expenses, and exorbitant levies imposed by gangs are driving up market prices.

A major factor in food shortages is also the devastation of rural communities, which have been the backbone of Haiti's agrarian economy. They have long faced neglect by those in power, receiving little support for their agricultural activities and struggling with limited basic services - whether it is water and electricity or health and education. The practice of allocating land for free industrial zones and the cultivation of cash crops for export that benefit foreign corporations and Haiti's Western-backed corrupt political elites has further worsened food shortages.

Land grabs have worsened in recent months, as gangs have started forcibly taking over peasant lands and illegally selling them to interested parties. This has exacerbated the plight of rural communities. Haitians have thus been plunged into despair, their communities shattered and their hopes wavering in the face of relentless violence.

In this context, the new transition plan proposed by CARICOM, seemingly endorsed by the Core Group and involving PHTK stakeholders, is unlikely to resolve the crisis. Similar past interventions have introduced leadership and policies supposedly aimed at alleviating the crisis in Haiti, only to make it worse.

Former Haitian leaders like Gérard Latortue, Michel Martelly, and Ariel Henry - endorsed by the same entities now advocating for a new intervention - have permitted gang violence to flourish; some have even established close ties with these groups.

The Haitian people remember past failures and do not trust Western-backed UN-led interventions, the most recent of which brought a cholera outbreak that claimed the lives of some 10,000 people. Consequently, the Haitian population is likely to reject a new foreign intervention. Furthermore, civil society, rural communities and grassroots political movements find themselves sidelined in the current transition plan, with just one seat in the presidential council among the nine allocated to them. Thus, they will have almost no voice in constituting the transitional government. This lopsided representation poses a serious threat to the credibility of the interim administration.

In this context, the Grassroots Patriotic Front, a nexus for various Haitian social movements, including our peasant organisations and political parties

the transitional government and with vigilant oversight from the proposed National Monitoring Committee.

While the national armed forces can play a crucial role in re-establishing national security, extreme measures risk worsening chaos. Therefore, a National Security Plan devised by Haitian experts and implemented by the transitional government, offering diverse strategies to combat organised crime and the illicit trafficking of arms, is essential for ensuring a definitive solution to Haiti's security challenges.

In parallel, the transition should focus on restoring the institutions of public administration and judiciary, which are vital for achieving social peace. Social movements such as those engaged in the Grassroots Patriotic Front and similar groups should play a key role in this endeavour to ensure standards for transparency and democratic governance are observed. This transition should pave the way for the establishment of a new social contract and a redefined state committed to serving the national interest. The food shortage crisis can be tackled internally by supporting Haitian farmers and investing in Haitian agriculture. The country has the land and the resources to feed itself. Rather than making the poor dependent on aid, financial resources should go into reviving and protecting rural peasant communities and fostering a range of production activities, including agriculture, agroforestry, livestock breeding, fisheries, and crafts.

Furthermore, food distribution can be ensured by supporting small-scale vendors known as madan sara, who perform a vital role in delivering food to urban centres. Even in these dangerous times, they continue to brave unsafe routes to provide local markets with essential goods.

If the international community wants to see the Haitian crisis resolved, then it can support these local efforts. It can provide assistance in a matter determined by the Haitians themselves - be it through technical support to address rampant insecurity or humanitarian aid to combat starvation in the immediate term. Haiti will also need international solidarity and support in seeking financial reparations for unfairly imposed past indemnities and fending off further attempts to violate its sovereignty. The plight of the Haitian people cannot be ignored or trivialised. It necessitates immediate and concerted action, but the answer is not another foreign intervention. Western powers ought to honour Haitian sovereignty and endorse local solutions instead of imposing their own preferences. The will of the people who are bearing the brunt of this catastrophe must be upheld.

Aljazeera

# In the company of weak yet mighty players

Ghassan Charbel

THE most dangerous thing about the blaze engulfing the Middle East today is that the powerful players are also weak. They have the ability to launch and wage a war but lack the ability to end it with a knock-out blow or a viable settlement. The extent of the crisis demonstrates that sedatives are useless. They have been tested before and only brought fiercer wars. The real solutions demand painful and unpopular decisions that the parties seem incapable of taking. So, the region appears stuck in a dangerous trap and open conflict, regardless of how intense it is.

The people of the Middle East are watching the painful developments unfold. The US does not need to demonstrate its might. Amid the collapses in the Middle East, Russia's role appears limited and China is far away. No one is vying for America's place in the driver's seat. The US is a major force that should not be antagonized. It is a source of concern - to various degrees - for its allies and enemies alike.

In wake of the Al-Aqsa Flood operation, the US dispatched its fleet to the region to prevent the war from spilling over and harming the security and economy of the world. It succeeded, but it could not stop the accompanying wars that erupted in the Red Sea and southern Lebanon. It also could not stop the drones launched by the Popular Mobilization Units in Iraq or the "messages" delivered across the Golan.

As in the rest of the world, the American military machine cannot be ignored in the Middle East. It is alert on land, at sea and in the skies. It boasts an extraordinary ability to prevent and deter. The US may not have been able to prevent Tehran from retaliating to the Israeli attack on its consulate in Damascus, but it

managed to prevent the Iranian rockets and drones from dealing a painful blow to Israel.

Iran itself understood the American message. It announced the timing of its attack and agreed that it would be a light one. The US could not prevent the Iranian attack on Israel or persuade the latter against responding. It did, however, make the Isfahan strike a limited one in scope, if not in meaning. It prevented the two sides from dealing major blows but did not succeed in preventing them from exchanging heated messages. Russia is preoccupied with its war in Ukraine. Its military presence in Syria did not guarantee the rise of a "Russian Syria" or neutralize the Syrian scene. China has complex and long-term calculations. It has one eye set on the economy and the other on Taiwan. It is in no rush to duel with the US.

So, the people of the Middle East have found themselves confronted with one large looming shadow: America. But the mighty US is also weak when it comes to the essence of the conflict in the Middle East. Whenever it approaches the issue of a Palestinian state, wars are launched in Congress given the fact the Israeli lobby runs deep in its institutions.

Benjamin Netanyahu has never hesitated in defying previous American presidents. And he has not hesitated in defying the current one. He boasts that Israel is not an American state run by the White House and that the Israeli army, which always relies on its American arsenal, is not an American militia whose rules of engagement and red lines are imposed by Washington.

Iran is a large and powerful country in the region. It is experienced in strategic patience and infiltration. It has changed the features of some parts of the Middle East. It can mobi-

lize in four Arab countries, which it has been running and deciding their choices for years. It can approach Israel from several fronts. Its small roaming armies can engage in long, low-intensity wars. But this strong Iran does not want to slip into a full-scale direct war with Israel, in which the US would not remain on the sidelines. Harassing the US is a practice that has been adopted for decades, but waging a direct war with it is out of the question because its outcome would already be a foregone conclusion.

The strong Iran is also weak. The territories it controls are turbulent and divided. It has no solution to the problems in these areas and does not have a model it can promote there. Moreover, the parallel wars that have preoccupied Israel are costly and have not altered the fate of Gaza.

Iran is also weak when it comes to a solution that guarantees the establishment of a Palestinian state, which the West is hinging on an uncategorical recognition of Israel. The Iranian revolution cannot relinquish the most important card it has held since its victory: uprooting the cancerous tumor called Israel. Israel is a powerful country that boasts a superior military arsenal. Its army has committed a massacre that is unprecedented in the post-Second World War world. Its jets are running rampant across the skies of the Middle East. They chase proxies and bloody the Lebanese and Syrian maps. Iran came close to Israel's nuclear facilities, so it came close to the nuclear facilities in Isfahan. The West criticizes its atrocities, but it cannot abandon Israel.

Israel is weak too. The piles of bodies in Gaza have deepened the world's conviction of the need to establish an independent Palestinian state. America has been pumping

weapons, ammunition and billions of dollars into Israel's veins but it is unable to decide the conflict in its favor. The Palestinians are being killed but their cause refuses to die. Israel is evading the moment of truth but it cannot keep running away forever.

Hamas is strong. It dealt Israel an unprecedented blow on Oct. 7. It reimposed the Palestinian cause on the world's agenda. For months, Hamas has fought with extraordinary fierceness, but this has led to Israel committing a new Nakba against the people of Gaza. Hamas is strong but the price is high and the horizon is bleak. The hostages card is not enough and saving Rafah seems impossible. Moreover, the establishment of a Palestinian state hinges on the recognition of an Israeli state and providing more international guarantees to it. Yahya Sinwar did not launch the Al-Aqsa Flood to abandon the dream of eliminating Israel.

Hezbollah is strong. In the wake of the flood, it launched a war to harass Israel but it also stopped short of engaging in a full-scale conflict. It boasts an advanced arsenal that can harm Israel's army, institutions and economy. But Hezbollah is also weak. Lebanon is divided, fragmented and broke. The majority of the Lebanese people do not want an open war with Israel. A beleaguered Lebanon cannot withstand large-scale destruction in Beirut, similar to the devastation seen in Gaza. There is no point in waiting for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. The keys lie in the strong/weak America, which is deep in its long election season. Can Secretary of State Antony Blinken come up with the formula to douse the flames and pave the way to a solution? Can he weave a web where profits, losses and guarantees are distributed and the limit of roles and arsenals in the region are drawn?

solution to penetrate the most sophisticated layered air defenses. There is no reason to think the challenge is limited to the skies over Iraq and Israel; it could threaten the United States, and fast. That means US policymakers have no time to spare in generating a better blueprint for defenses against drones.

In the meantime, our initial efforts to counter low-altitude drones have turned into an unnecessarily complex problem. At least a half-dozen organizations across the Pentagon are developing and fielding counter-drone equipment, and many of these efforts overlap or are at cross-purposes. As we spend time moving in too many directions, our enemies are upgrading their drones, while our own counter-drone equipment remains ineffective. This could soon have deadly implications downrange on the battlefield or - with the state of our domestic defenses - far closer to home. It is time to break the bureaucratic logjam and build a full-scale approach to the threat of small drones. Developing these solutions will improve our ability to defend service members and civilians. The growing dangers posed by China, Russia, Iran and North Korea demand much of our defense focus. Nonetheless, we cannot forget that national security begins at home.

The Washington Post

Jack Reed & Roger Wicker

# The US - and its troops abroad - are vulnerable to low-flying drones

LAST year, Americans watched, transfixed, as a Chinese spy balloon the size of several school buses made its way across the United States before it was shot down by the Air Force off the coast of South Carolina. This highly public event turned out to be the tip of an increasingly large iceberg. Several more aerial objects have been discovered, and recent reports suggest spy balloons are but a few of thousands of aerial incursions our country has faced. Most involve small pilotless aircraft flying at very low altitude, sometimes only 100 feet off the ground.

These uncrowed aircraft systems, or UAS, pose multiple challenges: They have interfered with commercial flight paths and crossed our southern border uncontested. Many have been identified flying over military bases and nuclear facilities, such as Langley Air Force Base in Virginia, Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri and our test ranges in the western United States.

Service members deployed overseas are increasingly facing threats from these uncrowed systems, too. The three American soldiers targeted in an attack in Jordan this January lost their lives to a small Iranian UAS. These systems have become a significant security problem, for

which the US military has minimal countermeasures. Iran's attack on Israel this month only underscored the threat.

In classified briefings and open settings, our committee has examined the threat posed by high-altitude craft and low-altitude drones. We discovered a series of underlying issues complicating an effective response to them. The first problem is that our nation lacks adequate drone detection capability. We still rely on the early warning radars that served us so well during the Cold War. Today, though, they are unable to detect, identify and track small aircraft at both high and low altitudes. Inside the United States, we can hardly track anything other than commercial aircraft. Almost none of our domestic military bases have the sensors to identify small drones.

If we fixed our tracking problem, though, a second issue would arise. US agencies lack clear lines of authority about which agency is responsible for stopping these incursions. Instead, a dizzying maze of overlapping jurisdictions and inflexible bureaucracies confuses, rather than clarifies, crisis response. Government officials from an alphabet soup of agencies - Defense Department, Justice Department,

Department of Homeland Security, Federal Aviation Administration - spend hours if not days simply discussing who can take action when a UAS is identified. Too often, low-altitude incursions are treated as a law enforcement matter instead of as a national security issue.

The United States must launch a broad overhaul of its detection capabilities and streamline its ability to respond once a threat is identified. A third step would be to significantly boost our defensive capabilities against hostile UAS at our military bases overseas, nearly all of which lack counter-drone capabilities.

In Congress, we are working with military officials to give service members the detection methods, statutory authorities and counter-drone tools they need to handle the unique size and volume of small drones. Recent versions of the National Defense Authorization Act have included protocol reviews, various reforms and some procurement of new counter-drone tools. But no strategies to date have solved this problem in a comprehensive, sustainable fashion.

We need a master plan that crosses all agencies. As Iran's attack on Israel proved, our adversaries see drones as an inexpensive, deadly





MULTAN: Vendors displaying sugarcane to attract the customers at Fruit Market.

## General Motors beats quarterly results targets, raises forecast

DETROIT (Reuters): General Motors (GM.N), opens new tab on Tuesday posted quarterly results that topped Wall Street targets and raised its annual forecast, citing stable pricing and demand for its gas-engine vehicles, sending shares up 5%.

The Michigan automaker upped its adjusted pre-tax profit projection for the year to \$12.5 billion to \$14.5 billion, from its previous range of \$12 billion to \$14 billion.

"Our consumer has been remarkably resilient in this period of higher interest rates," GM Chief Financial Officer Paul Jacobson said.

He said demand held up well in the first quarter and pricing was stable in April, but GM still is planning for pricing to decline 2% to 2-1/2% for the rest of the year.

Despite the company's struggles in China and with EVs, stronger-than-expected vehicle pricing with gasoline-powered trucks pleased investors.

"There ... is the reality that the pricing is staying stronger for longer than anybody anticipated," said Tim Piechowski, portfolio manager at ACR Alpine Capital Research in St. Louis, which owns GM shares.

"The engine of the company is truck and SUV at this point," he added. "They're just generating substantial profit and free cash flow that will continue to fund the initiatives in EV. Full steam ahead." Some analysts were more cautious.

GM could lose additional market share in the near and intermediate term due to its lack of hybrid gasoline-electric vehicles and cash flow will be hampered by heavy planned spending on electric vehicles, CFRA Research analyst Garrett Nelson said in a research note.

The automaker reported that net income in the first quarter rose 24.4% over the year-ago period to \$3 billion, on a 7.6%

rise in revenue to \$43 billion. Adjusted earnings per share of \$2.62 beat the average Wall Street target of \$2.15, according to LSEG data. Revenue topped the Wall Street target of \$41.9 billion in the March quarter.

While the company started 2024 strong, CEO Mary Barra still has two large challenges ahead: turning around GM's shrinking sales in China, and salvaging Cruise, its robotaxi unit.

Cruise halted operations late last year after one of its self-driving cars dragged a woman down a San Francisco street. Company officials shared earlier this year that GM would cut spending on this unit by \$1 billion. The robotaxi business lost \$2.7 billion last year, not including \$500 million in restructuring costs incurred in the fourth quarter as the unit cut staff. GM spent \$400 million on Cruise in the first quarter, and expects full-year expenses to hit about \$1.7 billion.

Barra said the business is making progress, citing the return of its vehicles to roads in Phoenix, Arizona, earlier this month, with human drivers and no passengers. She told analysts on a conference call that GM is exploring funding operations for Cruise, including taking outside investment.

GM's business in China — previously the automaker's largest market — has also been faltering. Chinese automakers and Tesla (TSLA.O), opens new tab have gobbled up market share in the region, aided by deep price cuts and refreshed technology offerings.

GM lost \$106 million in China in the quarter, which CFO Jacobson told reporters was less than his team expected, as it worked through inventory. Jacobson said the company expects a profit in China for the second quarter and the year. Asked if GM would close or sell its business there, Barra said GM was committed long term to the

world's largest auto market.

"There's a place for GM to play and grow share," she said of China.

The carmaker and its crosstown rival Ford Motor (F.N), opens new tab are counting on profit from gas-engine trucks to ease investors' concerns as they continue to funnel cash into costly EV development. GM said it gained more than 3 points of market share in full-size pickup trucks in the quarter from rivals, which includes Ford and Stellantis.

GM has not broken out financial results for its EV business, but Jacobson stuck to previous forecasts for turning a profit. He still expects so-called variable profit, which excludes fixed costs, to be positive by the second half of 2024.

"We also continue to see sequential and year-over-year improvements in profitability as we benefit from scale, material cost and mix improvements," Barra said.

The company's joint venture with LG Energy Solution (373220.KS), opens new tab, called Ultium Cells, is ramping up production of battery cells at plants in Ohio and Tennessee, Barra said.

Questions about the market for battery-powered vehicles have increased as EV leader Tesla laid off more than 10% of its global staff earlier this month and slashed prices on its models across several markets.

Tesla will release quarterly earnings on Tuesday, and the EV maker is expected to post its first revenue drop and lowest gross margin in nearly four years, according to LSEG data. GM outlined last year a \$10 billion stock buyback on Tesla's earnings on Tuesday, and the EV maker is expected to post its first revenue drop and lowest gross margin in nearly four years, according to LSEG data. GM outlined last year a \$10 billion stock buyback on Tesla's earnings on Tuesday, and the EV maker is expected to post its first revenue drop and lowest gross margin in nearly four years, according to LSEG data. GM outlined last year a \$10 billion stock buyback on Tesla's earnings on Tuesday, and the EV maker is expected to post its first revenue drop and lowest gross margin in nearly four years, according to LSEG data.

## PPL enhances production F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) proudly announces a substantial augmentation in its production output, with the addition of 17 million standard cubic feet per day (MMscfd) of gas and 530 barrels per day (bpd) of oil/condensate to its portfolio.

This achievement underscores PPL's unwavering commitment to bolstering the nation's energy security.

This additional indigenous hydrocarbon production, achieved through cost-effective measures, is poised to significantly narrow the energy demand and supply gap while saving valuable foreign exchange reserves for the nation.

## SCCI demands soft loans F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fuad Ishaq urged the government to issue soft loans for promotion of the solar and green energy sector.

The SCCI chief said the government needs to take steps to promote the solar and green energy sector, which is the only way to fulfill the growing energy needs of the country that will not only provide a clean environment but also create employment opportunities.

Fuad Ishaq was talking to Patron in Chief of GreenWend Energy (GWE) Prof Subhan Qureshi and Chief Technical Officer Saad Rashid here during a meeting held at chamber house on Tuesday.

The meeting was attended by the chamber senior vice president Sanaullah Khan, vice president Ejaz Khan Afridi and acting secretary general Muqtasid Ahsan and others.

In the meeting, Subhan Qureshi informed that his organization is going to hold International Solar Expo 2024 (ISE 2024) on June 1 and 2 in Peshawar.

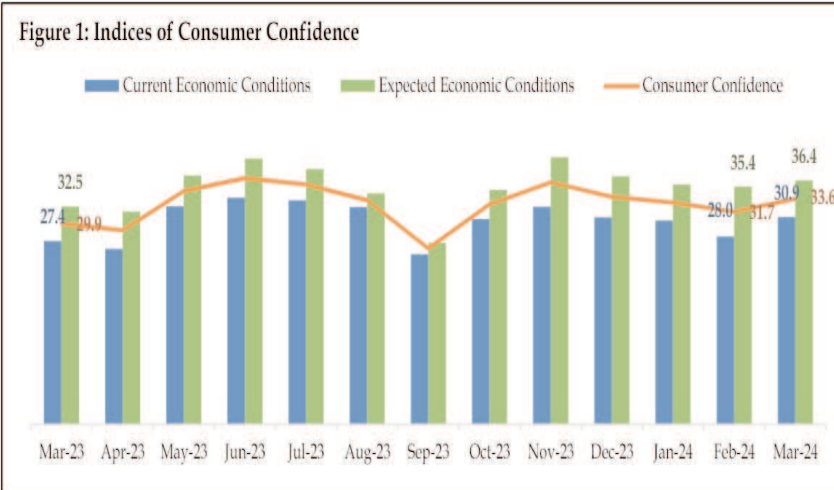
# Consumer Confidence increases by 1.9 points in March

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Consumer Confidence Index (CCI) improved by 1.9 points to 33.6 points on month-on-month basis during the month of March 2024 over the previous month (February 2024), according to consumer confidence survey report released by State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

Likewise, the Current Economic Conditions (CEC) index improved by 2.9 points to 30.9 and the Expected Economic Conditions (EEC) index by 0.9 points to 36.4 in March 2024 over the previous wave.

The CCI for urban households increased slightly by 0.1 point to 31.5 in March 2024 compared with February 2024 Consumers' Inflation Expectations increased by 0.5 points to 72.7 in March 2024 as compared to the previous wave of the survey.

The CCI of fresh households recorded an increase of 2.8 points to 34.7 in



March 2024. For rotating households, it increased slightly by 0.2 point to 31.5 in March 2024 compared with February 2024 Consumers' Inflation Expectations increased by 0.5 points to 72.7 in March 2024 as compared to the previous wave of the survey.

It is pertinent to men-

tion here that Consumer Confidence Survey (CCS) is a stratified random telephonic survey of households across Pakistan. The survey was launched in 2012 with a bi-monthly frequency while from Jan-2023, its frequency was increased to monthly.

The survey is conducted by the State Bank of

Pakistan (SBP) and the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi.

Its results are disseminated for general information only and these are opinions of households and may not be considered either as views of or as an endorsement by SBP.

## CCP conditionally okays technology transfer agreement

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has granted a time bound approval to the exemption application for the technology transfer and license agreement between the Sui Southern Gas Company Limited (SSGCL) and USA-based M/s Itron Inc. with certain conditions to be complied. The scope of agreement where exclusivity clauses have been allowed by the Commission is between SSGCL and M/s Itron to facilitate the manufacturing of gas meters in Pakistan.

CCP in its approval has directed SSGCL to achieve 100% localization of gas meters as a result of this

agreement along with maximum import substitution through adequate local production of gas meters to meet local demand, including the demand of Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL), the other gas utility company in Pakistan. The Ministry of Energy has also issued directions to SSGCL in this regard.

CCP considers and grants exemptions pursuant to Section 9 of the Competition Act, 2010, inter alia ensuring that such exemptions have the economic benefits that outweigh the anti-competitive effects of business agreements for any exemption to be awarded.

CCP in its exemption has also

directed that both parties to the agreement shall make concrete efforts to capitalize on the export potential of the gas meters and apprise annually to the CCP on the matter during the exemption period. The gas meters must be manufactured according to the specifications approved or allowed by the relevant regulator(s) and international standard.

The conditions set by CCP while awarding exemption are aimed at promoting localisation and facilitating consumer interests in the relevant market besides economic benefits of import substitution to meet the local demand of gas meters with exports potential also.

## Dubai sees a new property project launched every 18 hours

DUBAI (Khaleej Times): Both local and foreign developers are aggressively launching projects, averaging more than one launch every day in the first quarter of 2024 in Dubai.

According to preliminary numbers released by Cavendish Maxwell's Property Monitor, new off-plan project launches in March 2024 reached close to 30 projects with 10,000 units being added to the market for sale throughout the month.

"These projects now bring the total number of launches in first-quarter of 2024 to an unprecedented 34,000 units spread over 120 projects — an average of a new launch every 18 hours," said Zhann Jochinke, director of marketing and research at Cavendish Maxwell.

"This phenomenal level of activity in the off-plan market shows no signs of abating anytime soon, and will likely continue for the foreseeable future, with the pipeline of projects in the planning phase being

tracked by the Property Monitor team well exceeding 100 additional projects across existing master communities," Jochinke said in the monthly report.

Unprecedented demand for the Dubai property market has prompted developers to launch new projects.

Some of the major projects that were launched this year include Emaar Properties' Dh55 billion Heights Country Club and Dh41 billion Grand Club Resort; Danube Properties' Dh2.4 billion Diamondz and Dh3 billion Bayz101; Deyaar Development's Dh700 million tower in Jebel Ali; Swiss developer DHG Properties' tower in JVC; the Central Down Town by Aqua Properties; Dh22 billion Arabian Hills Estate and many others by local and foreign developers.

The demand is driven by the confidence of foreign

investors in the local property market as well as lower prices, which are much lower than most of the major cities around the world.

### Sales record

According to Property Monitor, sales transaction volumes also continued their seemingly unstoppable ascent, surging by an impressive 14.7 per cent in March to reach a total of 13,664 transactions. "Not only does this set a new record for March but it also registered as the second-highest monthly sales volume ever recorded. Residential transactions, encompassing apartments, townhouses, and villas, accounted for the majority of sales at 92 per cent or 12,565 transactions," it said.

In March, an impressive 7,768 off-plan Oqood transactions were recorded in Dubai, a substantial 21.7 per cent increase from the previ-

ous month and a 3.3 per cent uptick in market share to 56.9 per cent. These were the highest-ever transactions witnessed since 2009.

### Challenges for new developers

"This plentiful buffet of projects and the choice that comes with it may present an increasing challenge for developers, as competition will be fierce, buyer expectations high, and greater scrutiny given in selecting the best investment. Well-established and larger developers will be best positioned to capitalise on the mass market across the majority of price points, while niche developers that focus on the luxury and ultra-luxury segments will also be in positions of strength, with fewer projects launched and a laser focus on their target markets," Jochinke said.

## Uptake of digital services underscores growing investment appetite

ISLAMABAD (APP): Jazz is strengthening Pakistan's digital ecosystem in key areas including fintech, cloud services, and data analytics with an overall investment crossing \$10.6 billion.

As a pioneer in converged connectivity and digital services, driving digitalization virtually across all sectors of the economy and empowering people with digital lifestyles, Jazz, a VEON Group company, remains at the forefront of accelerating Pakistan's digital economy, said a news release.

The thoughts were shared by Lasha Tabidze, VEON Group's Digital Operations & Performance Officer, in his keynote at the Leaders in Islamabad business summit, highlighting the nation's vibrant youth demographic

ic and burgeoning tech talent as factors that make a compelling business case for investment in life-enhancing digital solutions in the country. VEON is a global digital operator that provides converged connectivity and digital services to nearly 160 million customers in six dynamic markets that are home to 7% of the world's population.

Tabidze emphasized Pakistan's potential for digital growth, citing the country's 64% youth population below 30 years old and its position as one of the largest players in the global freelancing industry. With a teledensity reaching approximately 80% and mobile broadband penetration at 55%, Pakistan stands as fertile ground for a purpose-driven organization like Jazz to bridge digital divides

with impactful, life-enriching solutions, he said.

The success of VEON's Digital Operator 1440 strategy in Pakistan delivered remarkable 21.8% YoY growth in multiplay customers, with users benefiting from services such as JazzCash, Pakistan's leading fintech; JazzWorld, Pakistan's largest homegrown app; Tamasha, Pakistan's leading entertainment platform; ROX; a digital lifestyle brand with connectivity; and Garaj, a growing cloud and cybersecurity solution. The growing engagement levels across all these platforms also represent growing investment appetite in Pakistan's tech sector.

He also appraised the audience about VEON's plans to bring generative AI to its customers in local

languages across its markets, which aligns with its DO1440 strategy, offering digital experiences to its customers every minute of the day.

Sharing similar views, Ali Naseer, Chief Data & Strategy Officer of Jazz, said that in an era where data is the new oil, Jazz, Pakistan's largest data lake, is pioneering a revolution, tapping into the vast reserves of information to fuel a transformative journey with AI," shared during the session titled 'The Digital Future'.

Ali also explained Jazz's approach to AI, emphasizing that for Jazz, AI is more about Augmented Intelligence than Artificial.

"Our new focus at Jazz is pioneering the use of Augmented Intelligence, ensuring that our AI-driven initiatives enhance

human capabilities rather than replace them. This philosophy holds particular significance in a diverse and expansive market like Pakistan, where technology should empower every segment of society, from urban entrepreneurs to rural farmers," he noted.

Ali elaborated on AI-ready governance and its application across customer experience and network management, as well as the potential of indigenous GenAI solutions.

He emphasized that AI-based applications are needed in key sectors of Pakistan such as agriculture, fintech, healthcare, and education. "AI-powered digital interventions in these sectors could significantly enhance the lives and livelihoods of millions of Pakistanis," he added.

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### COURT NOTICES

#### BUNER

IN the Court of Sami Ullah Khan Civil Judge VI/Alaqa Qazi Bunerat Dagar. Appeal No.68/1, Institution 19/2/2024 /4/1/2024, Date of hearing. 17/5/2024. Javed Khan VS Zafullah Khan etc. Notice to no 1.Zafullah Khan s/o Sher Zaman. 2.Mst. Sheren Jan Bibi widow Sher Zaman. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.00 am dated 17/5/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

#### MATTA SWAT

In the court of sidra jalal civil judge-III Matta Swat/Judicial Magistrate II. matta swat. Case # 178/1 institution Year 27/09/023. Next Hearing date. 02/05/2024. Muhammad Darwesh khan VS Jehanzeb etc. Notice to:-2/4) Mst: Begum. 2/5) Mst: Humat d/o Bacha meher.8/1) Mst. Jehan pass d/o sirgan r/o seen pora Tehsil Matta district Swat. In above mentioned case the respondent can't be served in the ordinary way, it is therefore proclaimed that if said respondents will not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8:30 am dated 02/05/2024. ex-parte proceeding will be held against the mentioned respondents under my hand and seal of this court.

In the court of sidra jalal civil judge-III Matta Swat/Judicial Magistrate II. matta swat. Case # 149/1. institution Year 04/09/2023. Next Hearing 06/05/2024. Jameela vs Jehanzeb. Notice to. 1/5) Akbar Hussain 2/5) Sardar Hussain 4/5) Ali. 5/5) Msts: Talehmanda.7/5) Nazoo. 8/5) Shakeela sons/daughters. sher

Alam khan.1/6) Nasir khan. 3/6) Arshad iqbal. 4/6) Muhammad Islam.7) sultan zeba.8) Misl.9) Jehana d/o kherati r/o Bar shawar tehsil matta district Swat. Whereas the above named cannot be served in ordinary manner it is therefore proclaimed or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court on 06/05/2024. at 8.30 am. Ex-parte proceeding will be initiated against you.

In the court of sidra jalal civil judge-III Matta Swat/Judicial Magistrate II. matta swat. Case # 185/1 institution Year 10/10/023. Next Hearing date.06/05/2024. Bibi jahana VS Jehanzeb etc. Notice to:- 3/2) ZafarAli khan. 3/3)DildarAhmed. 3/4) Nasir khan sons Taza kul. 3/7) Muhammad Islam s/o Taza kul r/o Bar shawar tehsil matta district Swat. In above mentioned case the respondent can't be served in the ordinary way, it is therefore proclaimed that if said respondents will not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8:30 am dated 06/05/2024. ex-parte proceeding will be held against the mentioned respondents under my hand and seal of this court.





In brief

Hockey Men’s Nations Cup from May 31

ISLAMABAD (APP): The second edition of the FIH Hockey Men’s Nations Cup, would be held in Gniezno, Poland from May 31 to June 9. Nestled in the heart of Poland, Gniezno holds the distinguished title of once being the original capital of Poland, a heritage site that offers a captivating glimpse into the country’s early history. But it is not just its historical allure that sets Gniezno apart, it was also a city pulsating with energy and excitement, especially as it gears up to welcome teams and fans from across the globe for the prestigious FIH Hockey Men’s Nations Cup. The anticipation was building as the city prepares to showcase its hospitality and passion for hockey on an international stage, said a press release. At the heart of this excitement lies the city’s hockey stadium, a world-class facility that stands as a testament to Gniezno’s dedication to the sport of hockey. Built in April 1999 and located in the Tysiaclecia District, the stadium serves as the perfect venue for the upcoming tournament, with a capacity of 1000 seats to accommodate the throngs of eager spectators.

Smith to defend title

LONDON (BBC): Chris Billam-Smith will defend his WBO cruiserweight title against Richard Riakporhe at Selhurst Park on 15 June. Billam-Smith, 33, beat Lawrence Okolie for the world title in May last year. It will be another all-British contest when Billam-Smith, also a Commonwealth and European champion, meets Riakporhe at the home ground of Crystal Palace. Riakporhe is the only fighter to beat Billam-Smith professionally, in a split-decision win in July 2019 for the WBA Intercontinental title. But Billam-Smith has remained unbeaten since, including retaining the cruiserweight crown by beating Mateusz Masternak in Bournemouth in December 2023. "Richard is a good fighter, but I've improved hugely since we last met and he's going to be in for a terrible night," Billam-Smith said. Meanwhile, Crystal Palace fan Riakporhe, 34, posted on social media platform X that fighting at Selhurst Park is "a dream come true". "I've beaten him once and I'm ready to do it again," he added. "This time it's not going to the judges." Riakporhe was British cruiserweight champion from 2019 to 2020, and is unbeaten in his professional career, his most recent victory coming against Dylan Bregon in November 2023.

Korda pulls out of LPGA event

NEW YORK (BBC): Nelly Korda has withdrawn from this week’s LPGA Tour event "to get some rest" after winning her second major title at the Chevron Championship. Victory on Sunday gave the American a fifth tour win in five starts, matching a record run achieved by Nancy Lopez in 1978 and Annika Sorenstam in 2004-05. "After grinding through the mental and physical challenges of four events in the past five weeks, I am definitely feeling exhausted," wrote the world number one on X. "With so much still to come throughout 2024, I feel I need to listen to my body and get some rest, so I can be ready for the remainder of the season."

Prime Minister Youth Talent Hunt Table Tennis League

# Mardan, Peshawar wins Girls, Boys titles

PESHAWAR (APP): Mardan and Peshawar clinched the trophy of the Girls and Boys in the Prime Minister Youth Talent Hunt Table Tennis League played here at Arena Hall of the Qayyum Sports Complex on Tuesday.

Mardan remained unbeaten in the league round by defeating Peshawar, Hazara, Swat, and Bannu took first position in the Girls League, followed by Peshawar with one lost and three win, Hazara took third position two lost and against Peshawar and Mardan and two win against Swat and Bannu, Bannu with one win and three lost took four and

Swat at fifth with all matches lost.

In the Men Peshawar with all win against Mardan, Hazara, Swat and Bannu got first position, followed by Mardan with one lost against Peshawar and three wins against Bannu, Hazara, and Swat took runners-up trophy while Swat took third position with two lost against Peshawar and Mardan and two victories against Bannu and Hazara, Bannu with one win and three lost took fourth position and Hazara with all matches lost took fifth position out of five teams.

Vice Chancellor Islamia College University

Peshawar Professor Dr. Ali Muhammad was the chief guest on this occasion along with HEC representative Muhammad Owais Mirza, Deputy President Pakistan Table Tennis Federation Kiran Musharaf, Miss Shabana (Islamabad), International Table Tennis Referee Masood Ahmad, International observer Nadeem Khan, Vice President Pakistan Table Tennis Federation Kifayat Ullah Orakzai, Organizing Secretary Ali Hoti, coaches Saira Khan, Amna Khan, Yasir Aziz, players and officials were also present.

In the league matches Bannu Region defeated Hazara by 3-1. In the first

singles Shanan of Bannu beat Azhar by 2-1, the score was 7-11, 11-9 and 13-11, in the second singles Danish of Bannu beat Hungala of Hazara by 2-0, the score was 11-8 and 11-9, in the third Shairan of Bannu beat Hunzala of Hazara by 2-0, the score was 11-9 and 11-8, in the reverse singles Younis of Bannu beat Huzaifa of Hazara by 2-1, the score was 12-14, 13-11 and 11-9.

In the second match Mardan beat Swat by 3-1. Hamza Mardan beaten Kashif of Swat by 13-15, 14-12 and 11-9, Jawaidd of Mardan beat Shayan of Swat by 2-1, the score was 11-9, 7-11 and 13-11,

Mudassir of Mardan beat Sangeen of Swat by 2-0, the score was 11-7 and 11-7 and 11-9 and in the reverse singles Jawad of Mardan beat Kashif of Swat by 2-0, the score was 11-9, 11-9.

In the Girls Team event last matches Peshawar Region beat Bannu Region by 3-0. In the first singles Safira of Peshawar beat Maryum of Bannu by 2-1, the score was 11-7, 11-9 and 11-9, in the second singles Zainab of Peshawar beat Wajeeha of Bannu by 2-0, the score was 11-9, 11-7, Sunaina of Peshawar beat Insha of Bannu by 2-0, the score was 13-11 and 11-9.

In the second match Mardan beat Hazara Region by 3-0. In the first singles Hiba of Mardan beat Kainat of Hazara by 2-0, the score was 11-8 and 11-5, Hooria of Mardan beat Beena of Hazara by 2-0, the score was 11-8 and 11-9 and Haya Noor of Mardan beat Noor Hazara by 2-0, the score was 11-8 and 11-7. Earlier, all the participating girls and boys table tennis players like other countries of the world with 226 associations of the world including Pakistan celebrated World Table Tennis Day. On this occasion, the chief guest VC Islamia College University Peshawar Professor Dr. Ali

Muhammad cut the grand cake. A traditional Circle shorts were also played on this occasion wherein all players enthusiastically participated.

At the end, the chief guest gave away the winners, runners and third position trophies and gold, silver and bronze medals to Mardan in the female League, followed by Peshawar and Hazara while Peshawar won the boys title, followed by Mardan and Swat. The winners team awarded Rs. 50,000, runners-up got Rs. 25000 and third position teams were given Rs. 15000 each in the girls and boys respectively.



LAHORE: New Zealand Cricket Team players warm up during a practice session at the Qaddafi Cricket Stadium during the Five-Match T20 series.

## Bismah, Sadia, Hani progress in ICC rankings

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani players Bismah Maroof, Sadia Iqbal and Umm-e-Hani have progressed in the ICC Women’s ODI Rankings, released Tuesday.

Former captain Bismah Maroof has moved up one place to 27th while left-arm spinner Sadia Iqbal has progressed from 23rd to 17th position after grabbing three wickets in the first two matches against the West Indies.

Umm-e-Hani of Pakistan progressed up nine places to 60th in the bowling rankings. Connell (up three places to 25th), Henry (up six places to 36th) and Kavisha Dilhari of Sri Lanka (up seven places to 48th) are others to move up the bowling rankings.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka captain Chamari

Athapaththu is back at the top of the ICC Women’s ODI Batting Rankings after a superb 195 not out in the third ODI against South Africa in Potchefstroom that helped her team level the ICC Women’s Championship Series 1-1.

Athapaththu’s ninth ODI century, which is the highest score in a successful chase in Women’s ODIs, helped her overtake England all-rounder Natalie Sciver-Brunt to the top spot. The left-hander had earlier been number one from 3 to 12 July 2023 before Beth Mooney and then Sciver-Brunt overtook her.

Another former number one batter also rose after the series, Athapaththu’s counterpart Laura Wolvaardt moving up two places to third position after scoring an unbeaten

184 that helped South Africa post a huge total of 301 for five in the third ODI.

West Indies captain Hayley Mathews completed a trio of captain-openers who moved up the rankings, her double of 140 not out and three for 17 in the first match of their ICC Women’s Championship series against Pakistan in Karachi helping her move up seven places to 11th position among batters and to second in the all-rounders’ list.

Former captain Stafanie Taylor of the West Indies (up two places to 18th) is another notable gainer in the batting rankings while Sri Lanka’s Nilakshi de Silva and the West Indies pair of Shemaine Campbell and Chinelle Henry have also moved up the rankings.

## Indian Sharma to coach Uganda

NEW DELHI (BBC): The Uganda Cricket Association has appointed Abhay Sharma as the new head coach of the men’s national team. The 54-year-old Indian has signed a three-year deal and will lead the Cricket Cranes at this year’s T20 World Cup. The East Africans will make their debut at the tournament, which is being held in the United States and West Indies.

"I am very grateful for this opportunity to work with a bunch of talented cricketers," he said.

"Having been in Uganda for just a couple of days, I already feels like my second home. The people here are lovely, and the setting is reminiscent of India."

Sharma, a wicketkeeper-batsman, was never capped by India but played first-class cricket in his homeland for Delhi and Railways.

## President’s Cup to begin from today

PESHAWAR (APP): Abbottabad and Rawalpindi will host 24 matches of the 50-over-a-side President’s Cup, in which seven leading departments of the country will participate from April 24 to May 12 May, 2024.

Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL), the winner of the four-day first-class President’s Trophy, will aim to conclude the 2023-24 season with another trophy. Apart from SNGPL, the other six teams participating in the tournament are Pakistan Television (PTV), State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA), Khan Research Laboratories (KRL), Higher Education Commission (HEC), and Ghani Glass.

The seven teams will compete in a single round-robin format, with the top four sides after 21 league

matches qualifying for the semi-finals. While Shoaib Akhtar Stadium, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium and Abbottabad Cricket Stadium will be used for the league matches, venues of the three knock-out matches will be confirmed closer to the matches.

Ahmed Shehzad will captain WAPDA, Usman Salahuddin will lead SBP, Rohail Nazir will lead KRL, Moez Ghani will captain Ghani Glass, Mohammad Huraira will lead HEC, while Shamyul Hussain and Saud Shakeel will captain PTV and SNGPL, respectively.

The tournament carries a total prize money of Rs 2.5 million, with the winning side receiving a cheque of PKR 1.5 million along with the trophy. Abdullah Khurram Niazi, Director of Domestic Cricket Operations: "Following the successful staging of the

first-class tournament, the upcoming limited overs tournament marks a positive step in the smooth return and rehabilitation of departmental cricket, which should be welcomed by everyone.

"The return of department cricket aligns with the PCB Chairman’s policy of reinvigorating domestic cricket across the country, which will lead to more opportunities for younger players and a greater likelihood of new talent emerging."

Fixtures for Wednesday: SNGPL vs Ghani Glass, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium; PTV vs SBP, Abbottabad Cricket Stadium; KRL vs WAPDA, Shoaib Akhtar Stadium.

Fixtures for Friday: WAPDA vs Ghani Glass, Shoaib Akhtar Stadium; KRL vs PTV, Abbottabad Cricket Stadium; SBP vs HEC, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium.

## Reaction to FA Cup semi win a disgrace: Ten Hag

MANCHESTER (BBC): The reaction to Manchester United’s FA Cup semi-final win over Coventry City has been "embarrassing" and "a disgrace", says manager Erik Ten Hag.

United have been widely criticised after relinquishing a 3-0 lead against the Championship side before winning on penalties.

Coventry had a late goal ruled out for a marginal offside by the video assistant referee in extra time.

"Football is about results," Ten Hag said. "We made it to the final and deserved it."

"We lost control for 20 minutes and were very lucky in the end but we made it to the final. That is a huge achievement."

Former Premier League striker Chris Sutton has been one of those to criticise the performance of 'Ten Hag's side, saying there is "no coming back" for the Dutchman.

The FA Cup final against Manchester City next month will be Ten Hag's second in two years as United manager, after they lost to their Manchester rivals in last season's Wembley showpiece.

Asked if he understood the negative reaction to their narrow win against the Sky Blues, Ten Hag said: "No. Absolutely not."

"The reaction from you [the media] was embarrassing. Twice [two FA Cup finals] in two years, it is magnificent."

"For me as manager, four cup finals in four years. The comments are a disgrace."

United winger Antony has also been criticised, external for his celebration following Rasmus Hojlund's decisive penalty in the shootout.

The Brazil forward turned and cupped his ears to the Coventry players and fans - but Ten Hag says he was provoked.

He also pointed to the reaction of Harry Maguire, who turned and shook hands with the opposition players. "He [Antony] was [provoked] and should not react like this," Ten Hag said. "You have not seen the provocation, only the reaction, but he should not do it. I also saw Harry Maguire though."

"We should acknowledge the performance of Coventry, coming back at 70 minutes when we dominated the game. The game must be closed, but the

comeback from their side was very good."

Antony took to social media to explain his actions later on Tuesday, claiming they were in response to a Coventry player.

"The way our fans were treated by their player was not nice and I, in the heat of the moment, I've reacted to the provocations in a natural defence of my club!" he wrote.

Ten Hag also criticised Nottingham Forest over their controversial social media post in response to the 2-0 defeat by Everton on Saturday.

Forest said they were "considering their options" over what they called "extremely poor" refereeing decisions.

Asked about the issue, Ten Hag highlighted the decision to award Coventry a penalty for handball against Aaron Wan-Bissaka which he disagreed with.

"You can agree, you can disagree," he said.

"The handball for Wan-Bissaka is totally wrong, a mistake, but you can't question it."

"It's not good for the game and refereeing. We should respect them - and there is no respect."

## ‘Inter close to perfect in Serie A title success’

ROME (BBC): History was made on Monday evening when, for the first time, Inter mathematically secured the Scudetto by winning the Derby della Madonnina against city rivals Milan.

It is their 20th league title and their sixth consecutive derby win. Simone Inzaghi’s squad of leaders team has dominated Serie A this season and they deserve to be celebrating this historic feat.

They have scored 79 goals in 33 games and only conceded 18. Inter have been close to perfect in the league.

The best team in Italy by a distance, they have lost only once in the league all season. The Nerazzurri has gone from strength to strength despite doubts lingering at the start of the campaign.

They may have reached the Champions League final last season but questions remained about how

much could be accomplished given the club’s limited budget.

A large loan taken out by the ownership that is scheduled to be repaid in May meant Inter had to continue selling to ensure financial stability.

Several important and high-profile names departed, including Romelu Lukaku, Andre Onana and arguably the team’s best defender Milan Skriniar.

Marcelo Brozovic and Edin Dzeko, veterans who were pivotal to success in Europe, also left. When Inter announced the arrivals of Marko Arnautovic, Alexis Sanchez and Yann Sommer, critics wondered if the lack of meaningful investment would reduce them to mediocrity.

However, Inzaghi never wavered in the belief he would guide the team to success.

Under an immense

amount of pressure last season, the Italian media all but demanded his exit.

Twelve league defeats - nearly a third of their Serie A matches - meant Inter could not challenge Napoli for the title and had seemingly lost the winning mentality introduced by his predecessor Antonio Conte.

Only Inzaghi’s results in the Champions League rescued his reputation.

It is testament to the club’s ownership and management that their patience was maintained. Steven Zhang believed in the man he hired and his management believed in the strength of Inzaghi and in their choice of players.

Each season at Inter, Inzaghi has refined his squad further, learning from past mistakes to create a fine team in his image, playing the kind of football that has thrilled his harshest critics and

entertained neutral fans.

Always speaking well, he refuses to antagonise opponents and never indulged in the mind games Juventus began. He made sure to show respect to Stefano Pioli, his opponent in the derby and the man he took over from at Lazio.

He lost the title to him in 2022 but finally won his first Scudetto this year, in the Derby di Milano of all games.

As for the new arrivals, Sommer has kept more clean sheets than any other keeper in Europe’s top-five leagues so far this season while Benjamin Pavard, Marcus Thuram and Davide Frattesi have proved central to the team’s success.

Fans soon forgot Lukaku when Thuram opened the scoring in a 4-0 drubbing of Fiorentina early in the season then scored in the derby the following week - a 5-1

win against their city rivals that saw Inter lay down a marker.

This team was aware of its strength and was targeting trophies.

Modern football suggests high-value investments must be made to win, yet Inter have reminded us excellent planning is key to success.

Taking a collaborative approach to team building, chief executive Beppe Marotta, Inzaghi and the rest of Inter’s management have showed that buying well does not necessarily mean buying expensive.

"The human element is essential, as you can have great players, but if they are not also great men, it becomes more difficult to form a team," explained Marotta, who now boasts 10 Serie A titles as a director - eight with Juventus and two with Inter.

The squad boasts the

right blend of young and old, experienced and energetic - all with the mindset and willingness to work hard and prove doubters wrong.

Most important was the atmosphere within the dressing room. Inter created a family - a group of individuals who enjoyed spending time together and working for one another.

It is of course easier to work hard for a team when you are a childhood fan, and diehard supporters Alessandro Bastoni, Nicolo Barella and Federico Dimarco fulfilled lifelong dreams by donning the black and blue to fight for their club.

Alongside them has been ex-Milan player Hakan Calhanoglu who, under the lights of Stadio Giuseppe Meazza, breathed in the success.

Taunted by his former club when they lifted the title in 2022, he has

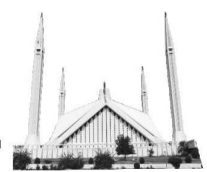
proved invaluable to Inter this season because of his intelligence, dynamism and prompting in mid-field.

Francesco Acerbi - a former Milan Ultra once in their infamous Fossa Dei Leoni association - opened the scoring against his beloved club on Monday and has proved to be the defensive leader Inter desperately needed.

The centre-back has consistently demonstrated why Inzaghi fought so hard to get him.

Their one regret remains exiting Europe at the hands of Atletico Madrid. Inter can create a mountain of chances but converting enough of them has been a problem in Europe especially.





## In brief

### IRSA releases 129,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 129,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 197,900 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1443.47 feet and was 45.47 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 35,500 cusecs and 5,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1136.85 feet, which was 86.85 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 55,600 cusecs and 18,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 75,200, 59,900, 85,800 and 52,400 cusecs respectively.

### Police arrest 8 drug dealers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi district police have arrested eight drug dealers and recovered over 11 kg charras, said a police spokesman here on Tuesday. He informed that Rattaamal police held Tariq and recovered 2400 grams charras while Rizwan, Adeel, Bilal and Aliyan were sent behind the bars for having over 5.5 kg charras. Waris Khan police rounded up Bilal Khan and Waqas and recovered 1440 and 550 grams charras respectively. Dhamial police netted an accused namely Rizwan for carrying a 1200 grams charras. Separate cases were registered against all the arrested drug dealers, the spokesman said. Senior Superintendent of Police, Operations said that arrested accused would be challaned with concrete evidence. The SSP said that the drug dealers could not escape the grip of the law.

### SP conducted Khuli Kutchery

RAWALPINDI (APP): Superintendent of Police (SP) Saddar, Muhammad Nabeel Khokhar on the directives of City Police Officer, Rawalpindi held a 'Khuli Kutchery' on Tuesday in Police Lines Headquarters to address grievances of the people. According to a police spokesman, police officers from Punjab's open door policy were holding 'Khuli Kutcheries' to provide relief to the citizens. He informed that the SP issued directives to the officers concerned to take action and submit a report on the complaint submitted by the citizens. The SP said the 'Khuli Kutcheries' were being held to provide the citizens immediate relief and address their complaints besides it also helped improve standards of policing.

### Power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Tuesday issued a power suspension programme for Wednesday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 07:00 AM to 1:00 PM, Islamabad Circle, Alipur, Islamabad Club, I. Shahzad Town / Mahfooz Shaheed, Scheme II, Filtration Plant, Bani Gala, Athal, Shahpur, Treat, T&T, Bhara Kho-I-II, NIH Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Top City, Mumtaz City, F-17/I&II, Nogzi, Kamalabad, National Market, Gulzar Quaid, Sector-IV, APHS Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Fuji Foundation, Mohera Nagyal, Mehboob Shaheed, AOWHS, Wilayat Complex.



ISLAMABAD: H.E. WADA Mitsuhiro, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan paid a courtesy call to Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar.

## Japanese envoy calls on law minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, WADA Mitsuhiro paid a courtesy call to Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar here on Tuesday. Both sides discussed issues of mutual interest, culture and traditions, said a press release. The minister stated that Japan is a very close friend of Pakistan and has assisted in times of need. He specifically lauded the

efforts of Japan during floods of 2022.

Both sides also discussed the security situation and the measures which are being taken to ensure the security of all the foreign personnel present in the country.

Azam Nazeer Tarar underscored the government's resolve and special focus on the security concerns. The govt was organizing a special protection unit on the direction of

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, he added.

He said: "We are hopeful that situation will get better in terms of economy. The Government was keen and determined for Economic revival." The ongoing work on legal reforms was also discussed between the two sides. Azam Nazeer Tarar assured the ambassador of all kinds of assistance from the Pakistan's government to facilitate the foreign dignitaries present in the country.

## 'Board adopts zero tolerance policy against cheating mafia'

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chairman, Rawalpindi Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (RBISE) Mohammad Adnan Khan has said that the board had adopted zero tolerance policy against cheating mafia and no one would be allowed to use unfair means in ongoing intermediate examinations.

During a visit to the examination centers, the chairman and controller of examinations, Professor Sajid Mahmood Farooqi checked all the arrangements finalized by the board.

According to a board spokesman, the chairman and the controller of examinations as per the vision of Chief Minister Punjab, Maryam Nawaz had launched a grand operation against the cheating mafia.

He informed that in the light of the directives of the Punjab Government, the chairman and the controller visited the exam centers set up in different schools.

He said that the board was utilizing all-available resources to ensure fair

and transparent conduct of the examinations. On violations of the standard operating procedures (SOPs), a FIR was lodged against invigilators namely Ijaz Ahmed and Kamran Abid, at Government Higher Secondary School, Basharat and they were sent behind the bars. Superintendent Examination center, Muhammad Waqas was changed immediately on negligence and poor performance while police also detained the superintendent center on suspicion.

Deputy Commissioner, Chakwal Madam Qaratul-Ain immediately took notice of the incident and ordered departmental action by suspending the three officers. Moreover, Chairman Education Board also visited Government Associate College ChaoSIDAN Shah Chakwal, Government Boys Higher Secondary School Kallar kahar, Fuji Foundation Model Higher Secondary School Kallar kahar Center (A, B) and Military Cadet College Kallar kahar.

The chairman said that strict action in accordance

with the law was being taken against booti mafia.

The spokesman informed that the controller of Examinations, Professor Sajid Mahmood Farooqi visited the centers set up in Government High School No.1 Fateh Jang, Government Boys High School No.2 Fateh Jang, Government Girls High School No.1 Fateh Jang, Government College for Women Fateh Jang, Government Pilot Secondary School (Laboratory, Marking Center), Government Girls College Attock, Government Girls High School No.1 (Laboratory, Examination Centre) and Government Boys Higher Secondary School Attock (Marking Centre).

During the visit, the controller checked the seating plan of the candidates, attendance of examination staff and arrangements. The controller of examinations said that transparency and merit would be kept in mind in the marking. Special instructions had been issued to all the examiners in this regard, he added.

## Free meal program starts in govt ICT schools

ISLAMABAD (INP): Ministry of Federal education and Professional Training has started implementation of free food program in federal government educational institutions of Islamabad Capital Territory.

According to details, in the first phase, around 40 Primary schools will be provided mid-day meal this week.

However, in the first phase out of these 40 schools, free meals will be provided to the children in 20 schools of Tarnol and Neloré sectors.

Secretary Education Mohyuddin

Ahmad Wani, had announced free meals for children along with provision of other facilities in primary schools working under the ambit of Federal Directorate of Education.

Meanwhile, Secretary Education while commenting on the meal facility, told media persons that children are being given lunch with the support of the government and Allah Waley Trust.

Meals will be started in all primary schools in the next two months, Secretary Education Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani added.

## FIA continues crackdown against electricity theft

ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), in the light of the orders of the Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi continued crackdown against elements involved in electricity theft and over-billing on Tuesday.

According to the spokesperson, the FIA Peshawar zone conducted raids and registered 13 inquiries against the elements involved in electricity theft. The raids were carried out by Anti-Corruption Circle Peshawar and Composite

Circle Mardan.

According to preliminary investigation, electricity was being stolen from shops, houses, flats and tube wells directly from the main line and by tampering with meters. Raids were conducted at Al Faisal Street, Bara Gate, Tordhar Swabi, Pandu Road Peshawar, Peshawar Center Plaza, Ring Road Peshawar.

In the operation, PESCO officials disconnected the illegal connections on the spot. Cables and other equipment used for illegal electricity supply

were also seized.

The national exchequer was losing millions of rupees due to electricity theft. While in the field of over-billing, during the inspection, over-billing was found on 2 meters.

The said meters were over-billed by 2772 units. Special raiding teams have been formed by FIA in all circles and a cordon is being tightened against the elements involved in electricity theft.

The raiding teams are conducting joint operations with the concerned authorities.

### ANF recovers 133 kg drugs in six operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting six operations across the country managed to recover 133 kg drugs and arrested six accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Tuesday. He informed that 2.4 kg Ice was recovered from two passengers going to Saudi Arabia at Islamabad Airport.

700 grams Ice was recovered from a passenger going to Doha at Peshawar Airport. In third operation, 87 kg hashish and 33.9 kg opium recovered from Nowshera while 5 kg hashish and 1 kg opium were recovered from the possession of an accused rounded up in Tandujam, Hyderabad.

2.7 kg hashish was recovered from an accused arrested in Sohrab Goth Karachi. 600 grams hashish was recovered from a drug smuggler netted near Turki Toll Plaza Jhelum.

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

### ICT admin hosts 3-day book fair to encourage reading

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Director General of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Administration, Flt.Lt. (ret'd) Asim Ayub on Tuesday kicked off a vibrant three-day book fair at the Islamabad Public Library, aiming to boost interest in reading and bring together book lovers from across the city.

The opening ceremony was featured a lively literary walk led by Muhammad Aqib Daniyal, President of The Pakistan Ideological Civilization, setting the stage for a day filled with book-related activities, said the Spokesman of Chief Commissioner Office, Nouman Nazim here.

Following the walk, DG Asim Ayub, accompanied by Muhammad Arshad, Director General of the Library Department, have visited the various book stalls, engaging with visitors and providing guidance to the library staff. During his address, DG Asim Ayub commended the Library Department's efforts to promote reading and encouraged them to continue creating a welcoming environment for library visitors.

## 'Afghan refugees' management require substantial resources'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) Engineer Amir Muqam on Tuesday urged the international community, through UNHCR leadership's, to increase funding and support to meet the growing needs of the Afghan refugees that required substantial resources.

The minister held a virtual interaction with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Filippo Grandi over zoom to discuss issues of Afghan refugees, a news release said.

He said the Government of Pakistan remains committed to the solutions and strategy for Afghan refugees.

Amir Muqam said: "We are immensely grateful for UNHCR's ongoing support and partnership in managing the Afghan Refugees' situation. "We look forward to continuing our collaboration to ensure the safety and dignity of refugees within our borders." He said: "We emphasize our dedication to facilitating voluntary, safe and dignified repatriation. We seem UNHCR's support in ensuring these

processes are well supported and that returnees have viable prospects upon their return." He said that addressing the needs of Afghan refugees requires substantial resources. We urge the international community, through UNHCR leadership's, to increase funding and support to meet the growing needs of this protracted crisis.

"Our goal is not only the repatriation but also the successful integration of returnees into Afghan society. We are keen to discuss how UNHCR can assist in integrating returnees into national development plans of Afghanistan," he added.

He said that in light of the Afghanistan's political landscape it's crucial we discuss how these new challenges affect the refugees and our response strategies.

"We look forward to participating in upcoming international forums and meetings to further to our joint efforts. Ensuring these meetings result in actionable commitments will be crucial. In this regard, I am looking forward to Your Excellency in your expected visit in July, 2024," he added.

## Authorities directed to start de-silting project of all nullahs immediately

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Engineer Aamir Khattak here on Tuesday directed the authorities concerned to start cleanliness and de-silting project of all the nullahs immediately.

He said that the de-silting project should be completed before monsoon so that the vulnerable points particularly low-lying areas could be protected from flooding during heavy rains.

Chairing a meeting of Anjuman-e-Tajaran Rawalpindi, the

Commissioner appreciated the suggestions from the businessmen to establish law and order in the city and improve the business environment. The meeting was attended by the President Central Anjuman-e-Tajran, Shahid Ghafoor Paracha, Sheikh Siddique, President of Small Industries, Tahir Jadoon, and representatives of City and Cantt traders.

The business community has to work with the administration to provide relief to the citizens, the Commissioner added.

During the master planning of Rawalpindi, the suggestions of the traders should be taken into special consideration, he directed the authorities concerned.

In the master planning, grain market, vegetable and fruit market, bus stand, truck stand and wholesale market would be shifted outside the city, he informed.

The Commissioner instructed the officers that places should be identified for setting up public washrooms in the main markets of the city.

The public washrooms within the limits of Municipal Corporation (MC) should be constructed by MC while at private places the facility could be arranged with the help of the traders, he added.

All the markets should identify their temporary garbage collection points to improve the sanitation situation, he said adding, after collecting the market garbage from the temporary collection points, it would be shifted out of city using big vehicles.

The Commissioner taking notice of the delay in approval of commercial maps submitted by the businessmen directed the MC authorities to submit all details of the applications immediately.

The administration could provide relief to the citizens with the help of the traders, Aamir Khattak said adding, the prices of essential items could be brought down increasing supply of the goods in the open market.

The traders should monitor the overcharging in their markets in such a way that the magistrates do not need to act there, he said.

## 12.5 million used Saudi Arabia's airports via 86,000 flights in Ramazan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Around 12.5 million passengers travelled through Saudi Arabia's airports in Ramadan and the ensuing Eid Al Fitr holiday, marking an increase of over 18 per cent in terms of travellers and flights compared to the corresponding period last year, the kingdom's civil aviation authorities have said.

The lunar month of Ramazan, which began this year on March 11, usually marks the peak of Umrah or minor pilgrimage at the Grand Mosque, Islam's holiest place in the Saudi city of Makkah, Gulf News reported.

The cited number of passengers, during this year's Ramazan until the 9th of the following month of Shawwal, were transported aboard more than 86,000 scheduled domestic and international as well as charter flights operated by 100 carriers to and from the

Saudi airports, the General Authority for Civil Aviation (GACA) said.

The King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah, a hub for Umrah pilgrims, got the lion's share of passenger traffic during that period with around 5.3 million travellers, followed by the King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh with 3.2 million and the Prince Mohammed bin Abdulaziz International Airport in Madinah with 1.04 million.

Saudi Arabia experienced record air traffic last year with an increase of 16% in the total number of flights from 701,290 to 814,995 and an increase in the number of passengers from 88 million to 112 million, GACA recently revealed. Saudi Arabia aims to increase the number of air travellers to reach 330 million annually by 2030, a senior aviation official said in January.

General Manager of GACA Excellence and Development Department Hussain Al Assaf said the national aviation strategy is designed to triple the current number of air passengers to reach 330 million per year by 2030.

To this end, the kingdom focuses on a set of principal fields, including expanding infrastructures by building new airports, expanding the existing ones, boosting their operation efficiency and improving travellers' experiences.

Saudi Arabia has recently unveiled a "passenger without a bag" service at all its airports as the kingdom seeks to nurture its tourism industry and attract more holidaymakers. The service allows the passengers to finalise all travel procedures from their residency and ship the luggage ahead of the flight, whether domestic or international.



ISLAMABAD: Syrian Ambassador to Pakistan Ramiz Al-Rai called on Federal Minister for Education Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui.



4,000 COVID-19 cases registered

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Ministry of Public Health reports that since the beginning of 2024, more than 4,000 cases of COVID-19 have been registered across the country. The spokesperson for the Ministry says that the number of people infected with the coronavirus has decreased compared to the year 2023. "Since the beginning of 2024 until now, 4016 positive cases of coronavirus have been recorded across the country, which is a decrease in cases compared to the first quarter of 2023," said Sharafat Zaman Amarkhil.

Return & rebuild homeland

KABUL (Pajhwok): Acting Defence Minister Mullah Mohammad Yaqoob Mujahid has promised all existing problems will be addressed and asked Afghans living abroad to return to the country and take part in its reconstruction. He issued the call at a meeting with a delegation of Afghan scholars and culturalists living in European countries, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) said. The ministry said the visiting delegation shared suggestions regarding good governance.

## Deputy PM Kabir called ties with China important



KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Abdul Kabir Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs held a meeting with Ambassador of Afghanistan in China, considered the relations between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and that country important and beneficial to both countries. According to a statement from Arg, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, met separately with Mawlawi Bilal Karimi, the Ambassador of

Afghanistan to China, and Mawlawi Sayed Barat Shah Nadim Agha, the General Head of the Etra (Telecommunications Authority), at the Sepidar Palace. Mawlawi Bilal Karimi, provided information regarding the achievements of the Afghan Embassy in China, to Deputy Prime Minister and stated that Afghan diplomats have good official relations with the government and authorities of China. Karimi added that Chinese officials commend the efforts of the Islamic

Emirate of Afghanistan in suppressing ISIS, eliminating corruption, combating drugs, and activities in the economic sector. The Ambassador of Afghanistan in China mentioned that security, transparency, and stability are factors that have attracted the interest of Chinese investors to invest in Afghanistan, and according to him, a large number of Chinese investors are in contact with the Afghan embassy regarding this matter. Mr. Kabir also consid-

ered the relations between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and China important and beneficial to both countries, referring to China's role in the region and the world.

The Deputy Prime Minister emphasized the efforts of the Afghan Embassy in that country to improve trade between Afghanistan and China and said that the Islamic Emirate has provided the necessary facilities to traders on both sides.

Still, the Deputy Prime Minister met with Mawlawi Sayed Barat Shah Nadim Agha, the General Head of Etra, and in this meeting, Mawlawi Sayed Barat Shah Nadim Agha shared his plans to strengthen the telecommunications sector, quality services, and extensive telecommunications to Deputy Prime Minister.

The General Head of Etra stated that, according to their assessment, the department is currently in a good state in terms of providing professional and better services than in the past.

Mawlawi Abdul Kabir also stated that Etisalat should prioritize providing telecommunications services to remote areas and continue to implement further reforms in the telecommunications sector.

## US State Dept releases report on extensive Human Rights violations in Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): The U.S. State Department has published its annual human rights report for 2023, which highlighted a notable decline in women's rights. It pointed to new regulations limiting women's access to education and jobs, leading to a situation where women became increasingly limited to domestic responsibilities.

The report highlighted a range of human rights issues, including killings, abuse, harsh prison conditions, unjust detentions, media and internet restrictions, and limits on political participation, corruption, and child recruitment.

The department emphasized that they do not recognize the Taliban as legitimate. "This year's report also captures human rights abuses against members of vulnerable communities. In Afghanistan, the Taliban have limited work opportunities for women, shuttered institutions found educating girls, and increasing floggings for women and men accused of, quote, 'immoral behavior,' end quote," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken stated. In the report, the State Department criticized the Taliban's authoritarianism, stating that they have declared a "so-called interim government consisting largely of Taliban fighters, mullahs, and close associ-



ates of the group, predominantly belonging to the Pashtun ethnicity."

Secretary of State Antony Blinken stated in a statement on Tuesday regarding this report that the Taliban has "effectively removed Afghan women from the public sphere" with its directives.

According to the report, the ban on education and employment for women has worsened their situation, and they are now confined to the four walls of their homes. The U.S. State Department said that the Taliban has shown no flexibility in its policies and that the group's orders are in contradiction with Afghanistan's commitments and international conventions. The State

Department's report mentions political imprisonments, poor prison conditions, killings, torture, arbitrary detentions, and the lack of judicial independence. The report states that the Taliban has used children in armed conflicts.

The U.S. State Department has given a negative assessment of the media situation in Afghanistan. The report states that the Taliban imposes increasing restrictions on freedom of speech every day. Additionally, journalists face Taliban violence and arbitrary detentions.

Meanwhile, the Taliban has obstructed peaceful gatherings and imposed restrictions on internet usage. The U.S. State Department has stated that

religious freedoms in Afghanistan are limited, and violence against ethnic and religious minorities has occurred. The annual report also highlights the Taliban's widespread disregard for the rule of law and the impunity of human rights violators, as the group has failed to reduce domestic violence, sexual violence, early and forced marriages.

Zabihullah Mujahid, the Taliban's spokesperson, responded to the report by emphasizing that Afghan people's rights are defined by Islamic laws. He stated that cultural and human rights norms in the West differ from those in Afghanistan, cautioning against imposing Western values on other nations.

## Acting Public Health Minister meets with UNHCR officials

KABUL (NNA): Dr. Qalander Ebad, Acting Minister of Public Health, met with Leonard Zulu, the representative responsible for the Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) at his office.

According to a statement from Public Health Ministry, during the meeting, the Acting Minister of Public Health stated that the ministry is fully prepared for the health of migrants and returnees and requested cooperation from this organization in this regard.

He thanked the continued collaboration of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in the field of migrant returns and called for the establishment of further facilities

in the health sector. Officials from the Office of the United Nations High

Commissioner for Refugees, in addition to ensuring cooperation in the field of migrant

return, discussed the issue of health care and the establishment of new medical centers.



## Acting Minister of Defense meets some citizens residing in Europe

KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Mohammad Yaqoob Mujahid, the Acting of the Ministry of National Defense, in a meeting with some compatriots residing in Europe and some other countries, said that nothing is more important than security, which has been achieved in the country today, and with this opportunity, we should contribute to the welfare and progress of our homeland.

The National Defense

Ministry in a statement said today that Mawlawi Mohammad Yaqub Mujahid, Acting Minister of National Defense met with some compatriots residing in Europe and some other countries who had returned to the country for the first time after the establishment of the Islamic Emirate, at his office.

These compatriots, our guests, in their meeting with the Acting Minister of National Defense, pre-

sented their proposals for a prosperous and progressive country regarding good governance, contrary to Western propaganda about achieving comprehensive security, the flow of infrastructure projects, strengthening stability, and other expressions of hope observed closely during this trip to the country.

The Acting of the Ministry of Defense after hearing the heartfelt words and suggestions of

compatriots, referred Afghanistan as the common home of all Afghans, saying, the problems that exist in some areas will soon be resolved, but nothing is more important than security, which today has come down with divine victory and the sacrifices of our people in this land. Let us be grateful for it and let us take advantage of this opportunity to contribute to the welfare and progress of our homeland.



## US State Dept: 90% of prisoners in Afghanistan are political

KABUL (Khaama Press): The US State Department, in its annual report on human rights, has stated that despite declaring a "general amnesty," the Taliban has continued to detain citizens, especially those affiliated with the former Afghan government.

The US State Department recently released a report on the human rights situation in several countries, including Afghanistan, in 2023.

The report stated that 90% of Taliban prisoners are political.

The report added that the Taliban often detain Afghan citizens arbitrarily, without legal basis, and in the absence of legal support mechanisms for them.

According to the report, the Taliban last year detained individuals without any judicial process and kept them in long-term detention without organizing their right to have a



lawyer.

According to the US State Department, almost all cases of Taliban detentions have been conducted in an "unfair" manner, as these arrests have no clear legal basis, and the

detainees have not been informed about the reasons for their detention and the charges they face.

Following the regime change in Afghanistan, many former officials sought refuge in neigh-

boring countries to evade arbitrary detention, reprisals, and security threats. Despite the declaration of amnesty, the Taliban continues to detain former police officers and officials.

## Afghan man with 46 children from three wives seeks fourth marriage

HERAT (Khaama Press): Ahmad Agha, a 52-year-old resident of Rabat-e-Sangi district in Herat, the western province of Afghanistan, has 46 children. He lives with all his children under one roof, he said. Known as Ahmad Agha Nanawa (Baker), he has gained widespread fame in Rabat-e-Sangi district for having such a large family over the years.

Having this number of children has enhanced Ahmad's reputation among the traders in this district's market. Ahmad, who has three wives, stated: "All my children work with me. They respect and honour me. We don't have a father-son relationship; instead, we are friends. I love them, and now I plan to marry again soon, so having four [wives]."

Meanwhile, he emphasized that his wives agreed to his subsequent marriage.

On the other hand, Parviz, one of Ahmad's sons, adds that his father behaves like a friend to everyone, but he also wishes to have as many children as his father.

Ahmad's neighbors also speak highly of him, considering him a good role model among those

who have formed large families. Ahmad and his children are busy working in the bakery inherited from his father, providing for his family's needs.

He emphasizes that during the recent Eid celebration, he spent significantly on purchasing clothes for his children. Ahmad says, "This Eid, I bought almost 50,000 Afghanis worth of clothes and shoes for all my children, both daughters and sons. According to him, having this many children has made him renowned

among the traders and residents of this district.

In Afghan communities, social structures permit multiple marriages, reflecting cultural norms deeply rooted in tradition and religion.

Polygamy is accepted within the framework of Islamic law, which allows men to marry up to four wives under certain conditions. This practice is often influenced by economic factors, as it can signify status and wealth in some regions while also providing social sup-

port networks within extended families.

However, the acceptance of multiple marriages varies across different ethnic and socio-economic groups within Afghanistan. While some view it as a customary practice, others may challenge its legitimacy or its impact on gender equality and women's rights. Despite these variations, the tradition of multiple marriages remains a significant aspect of Afghan social life, shaping family dynamics and community structures.







ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Pakistan National Heart Association, led by its President, Major General (Retd) Masud-ur-Rehman called on President Asif Ali Zardari at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

# President for comprehensive efforts to prevent heart diseases

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Tuesday underscored the need to create awareness and undertake comprehensive efforts to prevent cardiovascular diseases in Pakistan. He urged the need to educate people about adopting healthier lifestyles to prevent heart diseases in the country.

The president expressed these views during a meeting with a delegation of the Pakistan National Heart Association (PANA), led by its President Major General (ret) Masud-ur-Rehman, who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release.

Speaking on the occasion, the president expressed concern over the rise in cardiovascular diseases and emphasised the need for a comprehensive Heart and Non-Communicable Diseases prevention programme. He said that steps should

be taken to enforce the display of health advisories about the quantity of sugar in carbonated and sugary beverages.

The head of the delegation briefed the President about the role of PANA in disseminating information about the spread of heart diseases and its risk factors among the general public. He apprised that PANA had been making efforts to prevent, minimize and control fatalities due to angina, heart failure and heart attack.

He informed that Association aimed to educate the people and impart training regarding the recognition of cardiac arrest and providing Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) to save lives. He further apprised that PANA had also helped the victims of natural disasters, besides treating poor patients and children. The president appreciated PANA's role in promoting cardiac health and advocating for healthier lifestyles and assured them of his full

support in this regard.

President highlights significance of enhanced aerial connectivity: President Asif Ali Zardari underlined significance of enhancing aerial connectivity with different countries and said that with increase in people to people contacts, potential of Pakistan's tourism sector could be adequately tapped.

The president expressed these views during a meeting with a delegation of Air Asia Aviation Group (AAAG) that called on him at the Aiwan-i-Sadr, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release. The president further observed that Pakistan had a significant place owing to vast tourism prospects, particularly in the religious tourism. Pakistan Stock Market possessed ideal investment opportunities and urged the investors to fully explore its potential, he added. The delegation apprised the president of the AAAG and its flight operations.

## PTI says not holding secret talks' with govt

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A day after Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) stalwart Rana Sanaullah extended a "reconciliation offer", Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan clarified on Tuesday that they did not receive any message for dialogues nor holding any secret dialogues.

Incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan has confirmed that he did not receive any message for dialogues, Barrister Gohar said while speaking to reporters outside Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail today. "We will publicly confirm if we receive any invitation for talks." The politico categorically rejected holding dialogues with the incumbent government and said that his party would not hold any "secret talks".

Regarding the hearing of the cipher case against the former premier at the Rawalpindi jail, Gohar said that the prosecutor presented 21 witnesses who recorded their testimonies today. He complained that Khan's lawyers were "not given a chance to present evidence in the 14-hour hearing". About cases against Khan's wife Bushra Bibi, Gohar said that the former first lady has no connection with the Toshakhana case but cases were lodged against her to pressurise the PTI founder.

Raising questions over the legitimacy of Sunday's by-elections, Gohar said

### Khan to be out of jail by end of month: Asad Qaiser

F.P. Report

SWABI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Asad Qaiser has asserted that Prime Minister Imran Khan will not compromise on any deal and will be out of jail by the end of this month. He also stated that the founders of PTI will not bow down to any pressure.

Addressing a press conference, Asad Qaiser further said that during the interim elections, they were not allowed to hold rallies, and their workers were harassed. "We are not afraid of their high-handedness and stand firmly with PTI's founder, Imran Khan," he added. Qaiser emphasized that no government can run by opposing them, as they have no vision to manage the economy or understand national economic matters.

"We will never accept a government established through rigging. The way our mandate was stolen in the elections is unprecedented. First, our mandate was stolen, and then attempts were made to usurp our designated seats overnight," he said, expressing complete disappointment with the Election Commission's performance. Highlighting the government's involvement in rigging during the interim elections, Asad Qaiser said that they will not engage in negotiations with those who stole their mandate. "We hope that the higher judiciary will deliver justice, and our stolen seats will be returned to us," he added. As part of their movement against the rigged elections, Qaiser mentioned that they will collaborate with other parties. Consultations with other parties, including Maulana Fazlur Rehman's faction, are ongoing to launch a movement against the rigged elections.

that the PTI founder also expressed concerns over the recent electoral event in 21 national and provincial constituencies. He alleged that "ballot boxes were already filled" before the polling process, and the results of Punjab seats were "pre-planned". He also alleged that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) neither provided level playing field to the former ruling party nor took returning officers

(ROs) from the judiciary.

Barrister Gohar said that the ECP failed to conduct fair and free elections, once again. He announced that his party will hold peaceful protests on Friday against the by-election "rigging". He also demanded the Supreme Court (SC) to hear PTI's petitions regarding the Form 45 issue. He added that his party was neither resisting nor rejecting reconciliation but it was fighting for its rights.

### Iranian Umrah pilgrims arrive in S Arabia after 9 years

MADINAH (INP): Saudi Arabia welcomed the first batch of Iranian Umrah pilgrims at Prince Muhammad bin Abdulaziz International Airport in Madinah, after a hiatus of nine years. Iranian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Ali Reza Enayati and several Saudi and Iranian officials and diplomats were there at the airport to receive the pilgrims.

They are the first Iranians to make the pilgrimage since Tehran and Riyadh agreed in a China-brokered deal last year to restore ties and reopen their respective embassies after more than nine years.

Iranians have already been allowed back to the hajj pilgrimage last year, but the Umrah had remained off-limits for them until now. Saudi Arabia and Iran severed ties in 2016 after Saudi diplomatic missions in Iran were attacked during protests over Riyadh's execution of Shiite cleric Nimr al-Nimr.

Iranian state media has said in recent months that pilgrims would be able to head to the Saudi holy city of Mecca for Umrah, but blamed technical difficulties for repeated delays. IRNA said a total of 5,720 Iranian Umrah pilgrims were planned to head to Saudi Arabia this year.

The Saudi ambassador to Tehran, Abdullah bin Saud al-Anazi, was present at the airport along with several Iranian officials to send off the first group of pilgrims Monday. Muslims can make the Umrah pilgrimage to Mecca at any time of the year, in contrast to the hajj, one of the five pillars of Islam which takes place on specific dates according to the lunar calendar.

### Sh Rasheed slams govt

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: The head of Awami Muslim League Sheikh Rasheed Ahmad has criticized the government, declaring it a complete failure. He stated that the people are suffering due to a flood of false cases and demanded the withdrawal of all such cases.

Speaking to the media outside the Anti-Terrorism Court on Tuesday, Sheikh Rashid expressed his concerns over the mounting number of cases against the public. He said, "Every day, we have to appear in courts due to these fabricated cases. The situation has become so absurd that even individuals who weren't present

in Pakistan during certain events are being implicated." The former Interior Minister further added, "Our lawyers have to attend court almost daily because of these false cases. But the government will have to take back all these cases. Many people have been falsely implicated in thousands of cases. If the government wants to provide relief to the people, it must end these baseless cases. We will fight within the boundaries of law and constitution, and we will win these cases."

Earlier, the Anti-Terrorism Court in Rawalpindi conducted hearings against Sheikh Rashid Ahmad in three cases related to events on May 9. Sheikh Rashid, accompanied by his nephew Sheikh Rashid Shafique, appeared in court where Sardar Abdul Razzaq Khan and Sardar Shahbaz Khan acted as their legal representatives. On this occasion, Sheikh Rashid's lawyers filed a plea to dismiss the cases related to May 9. The court issued a notice on the dismissal request, postponing the hearings of all three cases until May 14.

## Mass graves: Israeli military rejects allegations

GENEVA (Reuters): Israeli military on Tuesday rejected allegations that its forces buried Palestinians in mass graves at a Gaza hospital, after the United Nations called for international investigation into the deaths during Israeli sieges, saying war crimes may have been committed.

In a statement, the military said corpses already buried at Nasser hospital were examined as part of search for hostages. The UN rights office said it was "horrified" by the destruction of Gaza's biggest hospital, Al-Shifa in Gaza City, and its second largest, the Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Yunis.

It called for an international investigation into reports of mass graves at the two Gaza hospitals destroyed in Israeli sieges. On Monday, the Palestinian territory's Civil Defense agency said health workers had uncovered more than 200 bodies of people killed and buried at Nasser hospital, which was besieged by Israeli troops last month. In early April the World Health Organization said Al-Shifa had been destroyed by an Israeli siege, leaving an "empty shell" containing many bodies.

The UN rights office on Tuesday demanded "independent, effective and

transparent investigations into the deaths." "Given the prevailing climate of impunity, this should include international investigators," UN rights chief Volker Turk said in a statement. Hospitals, which are protected under international law, have repeatedly come under Israeli bombardment over more than six months of war in Gaza.

Israel has accused Palestinian militant group Hamas of using Gazan medical facilities as command centers and to hold hostages abducted during its attack inside Israel on October 7. Hamas has denied those claims. "Hospitals are entitled to very special protection under international humanitarian law," Turk pointed out. "And the intentional killing of civilians, detainees and others who are hors de combat is a war crime."

The UN rights office said it did not have access to independent information as to what had transpired at the two hospitals. But spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani said efforts were under way to corroborate reports and details given by Gaza authorities. The latter say 283 bodies were recovered from Nasser hospital, including 42 that had been identified. "Victims had reportedly

been buried deep in the ground and covered with waste," she told reporters in Geneva. Older people, women and wounded were reportedly among the dead, she said. Others were allegedly "found with their hands tied and stripped of their clothes." As for Al-Shifa, the Israeli army has said around 200 Palestinians were killed during its military operation at the hospital.

Shamdasani pointed to reports indicating that this toll "may be an underestimate." Around 30 bodies were reported found buried in two graves in the courtyard of Al-Shifa hospital. "And there are reports that the hands of some of these bodies were also tied," Shamdasani said. So far, she said, the UN "can't corroborate the exact figures" of people killed at the two hospitals, underlining: "This is why we are stressing the need for international investigations."

"Clearly there have been multiple bodies discovered," she said. The reports that some had their hands tied indicated "serious violations" of international law, she added. "These need to be subjected to further investigation... They can't just be more reports in this horrific war that just pass under the radar."

## 10 killed in mid-air copter crash in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR (BBC): As many as 10 people have died in a mid-air crash between two Malaysian Navy helicopters at the Lumut naval base, Perak on Tuesday. The incident occurred at around 9:30am while navy helicopters were rehearsing for the Navy Day parade, Al Jazeera reported.

Malaysian Navy has confirmed the death of all the 10 crew members saying that the bodies have been shifted to the Lumut naval base military hospital for identification. A video circulating on local media showed several helicopters flying in formation, when one of the choppers' rotor clipped another before both aircraft crashed into the ground. Meanwhile, local police has also confirmed the authenticity of the footage.

The navy said it would

carry out an investigation into the cause of the accident. Defence Minister Mohamed Khaled Nordin said the aircraft — a maritime operations helicopter and a Fennec military chopper — were rehearsing for a parade celebrating the 90th anniversary of the Royal Malaysian Navy, due to be held on Saturday. Speaking to reporters, the minister said that efforts were underway to verify the identities of the crew members killed, all of whom were below the age of 40.

According to the BBC, one of the helicopters carrying seven people crashed onto a running track, whereas the other with three people on board crashed into a swimming pool. Reacting to the incident, Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, in a post on X, conveyed condolences to the bereaved

families saying that the country "mourns the heart-wrenching tragedy".

The incident comes as two crew members were rescued last month after a Malaysian coast guard helicopter crashed into the sea off Malaysia's Angsa Island last month. The country has a history of helicopter crashes as two people were killed when two helicopters, in a similar incident, crashed into each other in 2020.

Before that, six people died, including the-then Deputy Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities Noriah Kasnon in a helicopter crash in 2016. The incident occurred a year after the then Malaysia's ambassador to the United States Jamaluddin Jarjis was killed along with four others after their helicopter crashed into a forest.

## Chairman Senate calls for united action to address key challenges

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani called for concerted efforts and policy interventions to address the security concerns, economic challenges, environmental issues, social welfare and population growth, the pressing challenges Pakistan has been currently faced with.

Addressing the 7th edition of Leaders in Islamabad Business Summit as chief guest, Chairman Gillani expressed gratitude to the organizers for the invitation and emphasized the importance of forums like the summit in fostering dialogue and collaboration among business leaders. He commended

the summit for its role as a constructive forum for addressing key challenges and formulating strategies for economic growth.

Regarding security challenges, Chairman Senate noted the resurgence of terrorism and emphasized the importance of regional stability. He underlined the need for global attention to end conflicts that pose threats to national security. On the economic front, Yousuf Raza Gillani said that there is need for a shift in policy paradigms to stimulate economic revival and growth, emphasizing collaboration between the government and business leaders.

He also addressed environmental challenges, advocating for sustainable

practices and public awareness to mitigate climate change impacts. He highlighted the significance of social welfare programs like the Benazir Income Support Program and stressed the need for efficient resource utilization in social safety-net initiatives. Chairman Senate of Pakistan also emphasized the urgency of addressing population growth to ensure social stability and well-being. He called for prioritizing population welfare and promoting family planning initiatives. Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani praised the organizers for their efforts in convening the summit and facilitating meaningful discussions on critical issues affecting the nation.

## Khan alleges pre-planned Punjab polls

RAWALPINDI (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder, Imran Khan asserted that the elections in Punjab were pre-planned and had already been rigged prior to the interim polls.

Khan during a media interaction at Adiala Jail, criticized the prevailing governance in Punjab, accusing the police of meddling in the elections. He contrasted this with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where he claimed the elections were free from any police interference or rigging. He lamented the state of democracy in the country, alleging that elections from October to February were orchestrated solely to weaken PTI. Khan further expressed disappointment with the Supreme Court for not addressing PTI's petitions which were waiting for PTI's turn to be targeted.

Highlighting PTI's challenges, Khan said that every tactic was employed to obliterate PTI's presence. He emphasized that PTI had anticipated and prepared for the Punjab elections in advance. Khan further commented on the current state of affairs in Pakistan, mentioning that the country's present setup was detrimental to its future. He revealed that no offers or messages regarding any deals were extended to him.

Questioning the timing of discussions, he wondered what could be negotiated when public sentiment was clearly against him. He posed the question, "Can anyone win when the public stands united against them?" Touching upon the judiciary, Khan noted the trust of people over judiciary being decreased and lamented the deprivation of their fundamental right to choose their representatives. He cited personal hardships, mentioning his wife being imprisoned despite having no political affiliations, and cases being filed against his three sisters, who have no political involvement. On international relations, Khan mentioned that Pakistan had good ties with Saudi Arabia, which was why an OIC Foreign Ministers' Conference was held during his tenure.

## Pak, S Arabia, Uzbekistan ink pact

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In a significant development, Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Saudi Arabia have signed a landmark partnership agreement aimed at promoting investment and trade between the three countries.

The agreement is expected to boost economic cooperation and create new opportunities for businesses and investors in the region. Under the agreement, Uzbekistan's K-Trade Securities and Ansher Capital, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan will establish a strategic partnership to support cross-border investment.

Ansher Capital, Uzbekistan's largest investment bank, will work closely with KASB Securities Limited (KASB), a leading stock and commodity brokerage firm in Pakistan, to provide financial advisory and corporate finance services to investors.