



# Sessions judge kidnapped by armed men near Tank

that people send their cattle to reach courts and "you people say that there is a strike". To improve the working and create better environment within judiciary, the senior judge also called for inducting more women in judiciary from the district level to the top and establishing commercial courts in the country.





LAHORE: Visitors explore the majestic beauty of the iconic Mughal-era Badshahi Masjid in the Provincial Capital. —APP Photo

## Man killed, 9 hurt as elder jump in clash

LAHORE (INP): A man was killed and nine others including women were injured when elders jumped into the children's clash here in the provincial capital, police said.

According to details, two groups of children clashed in Factory Area police station jurisdiction in Lahore after which their parents started exchanging hot words. The verbal clash turned into armed clash and in exchange of fire one person identified as Dilawar was killed while nine others including two women were injured.

Heavy contingent of police reached the scene and brought the situation under control. The body and injured including Umar, Imran, Hanif, Gulzari Bibi and others were shifted to hospital.

## Attempt to smuggle drugs foiled



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: On Saturday, an information was received from Worthy Chief Collector-KP, Mr. Saeed Akram regarding attempt of narcotics smuggling, Collector Customs Appraisal Mr. Amjad-ur-Rahman constituted Special Team under the supervision of Additional Collector Mr. M. Rizwan & headed by Deputy Collector Mr. Huseeb Ahmed Bajwa.

The team, as per instructions and information, intercepted the Empty Import Vehicle (E 3835) and recovered 18 kgs Heroine, 14 kgs Crystal Methamphetamine (Crystal Ice) approx value 66 Millions tactfully concealed in the Cabin of the Vehicle.

Driver of the vehicle has been arrested and criminal proceedings have been initiated. Attempts are underway to trace accomplices involved in this heinous crime. Few photos are appended for ready reference.

# Construction industry backbone of country's economy

KARACHI (APP): Governor Sindh Mohammad Kamran Khan Tessori has said that the construction industry was the backbone of country's economy.

He stated this while addressing an Eid Milan party organized by the Association of Builders and Developers (ABAD), a Governor House communique said on Saturday.

The Governor said that ABAD occupied a prominent place and the construction industry was backbone of the country's economy.

He said we all have to make successful the slogan of Green Pakistan.

**Governor listens to problems, resolves on spot:** The Sindh Governor Mohammad Kamran Khan Tessori listened to problems

of the people, who came to the bell of hope and resolved them on the spot.

The people expressed their gratitude to the Governor of Sindh. The Governor Kamran Tessori gave cash help of one lakh rupees to a Hyderabad family, who was facing financial problems and gave a plot to a woman, who was evicted by an owner of a house.

## Punjab's Speedo Bus Service faces shutdown

LAHORE (INP): In a troubling development for commuters in Lahore, the Speedo Bus Service, initiated by the Punjab Government to provide quality public transport, is on the verge of collapse.

Despite its aim to offer economical transportation solutions, the service is grappling with a severe financial crisis, exacerbated by soaring petroleum prices, inflation, and dwindling revenue.

The Department of Transport, responsible for the service's operations, has come under scrutiny for its lack of action to address the mounting

challenges.

Reports indicate that no concrete action plan has been adopted to keep the Speedo Bus Service operational, with no application made for funds to purchase buses in the upcoming fiscal year.

Contractors involved in running the service have expressed their reluctance to continue operations beyond March 2025, citing unsustainable financial pressures.

Of particular concern is the Speedo Bus Service operating on Metro Bus feeder routes, which is teetering on the brink of bankruptcy.

Although the agreement for Speedo Buses on feeder routes remains valid until June 2029, the current financial situation casts doubts on its continuity.

Should the Speedo Bus Service be suspended, it would impose a significant burden on the government treasury, necessitating substantial subsidies to alleviate the impact on commuters.

Reports suggest that the government would be obligated to pay a staggering amount of 12 billion 960 million 8.6 million in subsidies if the service ceases to operate until 2029.

## Baligh stresses starting education programs

LAHORE (INP): Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman has said that Pakistan attaches great importance to its long-standing relations with Britain stressing the need of starting education programs between the two countries.

He was talking to a delegation of UK Higher Education leaders led by Sir Steve Smith which called on him at Governor House Lahore on Saturday.

Punjab Education Minister, Rana Sikandar Hayat Khan, was also present on the occasion.

The delegation comprised Dr Wendy Alexander, Scotland's

Education Champion, notable delegates from UK universities and British Council Pakistan representatives.

Muhammad Balighur Rehman welcomed the participants of the delegation.

Talking to delegation, he said that the exchange of such educational delegations would help promote cooperation in higher education and research between Pakistan and the UK.

The Governor Punjab further stated that the government was taking steps to advance higher education and social welfare through research commercialization, innovation and collaboration. He said that

he wants the academia associated with the UK universities to strengthen the educational exchange with the universities of Punjab.

He said that he would like to express his sincere gratitude to the UK Government, British Council, Universities in the UK and HEC representatives for their collaborative endeavors aimed at internationalizing higher education through the promotion of principles such as quality, equity and transparency.

Balighur Rehman expressed the hope that this continued cooperation will have a positive impact on the future of higher education.

# CM Maryam orders setting up integrated health system

LAHORE (INP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif paid a visit to Samli Syed Muhammad Hussain Government TB Sanatorium Hospital in a torrential rain on Saturday.

The CM ordered to establish an integrated health system in the whole area including Murree, Galiyat, said a handout issued here.

She directed to set up a helipad and an airstrip to shift patients from the hilly areas in case of an emergency. While directing to fully functionalize the mother and child block immediately, she underlined the need to undertake prompt measures for the appointment of doctors, staff along with establishing their residences.

Maryam Nawaz Sharif ordered to establish general wards in the Samli

Hospital and directed to set up the latest cardiac block. An Oncology Unit will also be established for the cancer treatment in Syed Muhammad Hussain Government TB Sanatorium Hospital. Medicine, Surgery, Urology, Ortho, Eye and ENT wards will be established.

The chief minister directed to run transport immediately in order to shift the patients to Tehsil Headquarter Hospital and Samli Hospital in Murree. She inspected OPD, wards, other sections and inquired from the lady doctor about the hospital and the treatment of patients.

Maryam Nawaz Sharif directed to undertake prompt measures for the treatment of a brother of a woman in the OPD and said that even if a helicopter is required to shift the patient

will be provided. She also visited the TB ward and inquired after each and every patient. She inquired from the patients about their treatment and prayed for their early recovery.

A TB patient, Raja Israr, while talking to the CM said, "Our daughter has come to inquire after us and I am very happy." The CM advised the son of Raja Israr that parents are a great source of support, blessing and he should make an all-out effort to serve them. She inquired from the patients about the provision of medicines and treatment facilities in the hospital.

She expressed her satisfaction over the arrangements and treatment facilities in Syed Muhammad Hussain Government TB Sanatorium Hospital. She also inspected the store room in the Samli Sanatorium Hospital.

## Police officer gets international award

LAHORE (PPI): A Punjab police woman officer has made the country proud on the global stage.

The International Association of Women Police (IAWP) has selected SSP Riffat Bukhari for the 'Excellence in Performance Award'. SSP Riffat Bukhari is currently serving in the Punjab Safe Cities Authority (PSCA).

President of IAWP Deborah Friedl congratulated lady officer Riffat and commended her efforts in a special letter, saying "your selection was recognition of your services on a global level".

It is pertinent to note that every year this award is given to a woman police officer to acknowledge her outstanding services to society.

SSP Riffat Bukhari was selected for this award for women protection, arrest of criminals with the assistance of artificial intelligence, intelligent traffic management system, and development of road safety mechanisms.

## International market outreach efforts reviewed



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister, Mr. Ishaq Dar chaired an online meeting with Heads of the Missions to inter-alia review the progress made on market sounding efforts being made through Pakistan's Missions Abroad for out-sourcing of Airports.

The Secretary Aviation / DGCAA presented the progress review and informed the Chair that concerted efforts by Heads of the Missions in Tukey, Malaysia, UAE, Qatar, Paris, Spain, Germany, Kuwait, UK and Switzerland have reinvigo-

rated interests of well-known Airport operators, who have shown positive interests in bidding of Islamabad International Airport.

The renewed interest of foreign Airport Operators testifies economic stability and confidence of investors in the political stability in Pakistan. The Chair emphasized on the need of enhancing economic diplomacy and efforts to bolster trade & investment ties with the foreign countries.

The session was followed by 9th Meeting of Steering Committee on Outsourcing of Airports, which was inter-alia attend-

ed by Secretary Aviation / DGCAA, Secretary Law & Justice, Additional Secretary MoFA ME, Additional Secretary BOI, DG ASF, DG ANF, Additional DGCAA, Additional DG FIA (Immigration), senior officer of Pakistan Customs and IFC Team. The IFC presented progress review report and highlighted that foreign investors are showing keen interest in the bidding process of Islamabad Int'l Airport and a healthy competition is expected.

The fora also reviewed Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) and service delivery benchmarks worked out by international consultants to improve quality of services at airports. It was assured by the heads of government agencies that all out efforts shall be made for observance and adherence to service delivery benchmarks to ensure seamless passenger experience at Airports.

The Chair stressed on IFC to expedite and complete the required tasks within stipulated time frame for outsourcing of Lahore and Karachi Airport.

## Young maid burnt to death

LAHORE (APP): A 10-year-old maid was fatally burnt under mysterious circumstances in the Millat Park area here on Saturday.

Police said Zainab, who belonged to Pattoki and worked at the house of Suleman, was burnt but had been not shifted to hospital for nine hours. They said that her father, Ramazan, was informed that she had suffered burns but he found her dead in hospital.

Police have arrested the house owner who claimed that the girl had died after suffering burns in a cylinder explosion. Suleman said the girl was administered first aid at home and was taken to General Hospital when her condition deteriorated. The doctors said the girl had been brought dead.

Police said the girl had been tortured to death and her body was torched to conceal the crime. Police have registered a case against the employer and started an investigation.

## It's an uphill task for administration to implement govt rates, says Azma

LAHORE (PPI): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari today announced a significant reduction in the prices of vegetables and fruits across the province.

She attributed this reduction to the diligent efforts of the district administrations. Provincial minister emphasized that enforcing the government's rate list posed a considerable challenge for the administration.

According to her, the prices of key vegetables such as onions, potatoes, and tomatoes have notably decreased by Rs. 29, Rs. 22, and Rs. 24, respectively, over the past week. The prices of other vegetables have seen reductions ranging from Rs. 15 to Rs. 20.

The Provincial Information Minister credited the reduction in prices to the effective performance of the provincial

administration.

Azma Bukhari revealed that price control magistrates and teams were actively working in the province under the directives of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz.

Instructing all Assistant Commissioners (ACs), Deputy Commissioners (DCs), and Commissioners to visit markets daily for the implementation of government rates.

Information minister emphasized the importance of ensuring affordable prices for basic necessities like bread, butter, and vegetables.

She stressed that it was CM Maryam Nawaz's mission to make these essentials accessible to the common man, as they were fundamental needs for the poor.

Information Minister Azma Bukhari reiterated that CM Maryam Nawaz

was dedicated to providing essential commodities at reasonable rates and described her as the voice of the common people, particularly providing relief to women and youth.

### 17 personnel, officers of traffic police suspended

KARACHI (PPI): Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Traffic Police Ahmed Nawaz suspended 17 personnel and officers involved in 'unlawful' checking and issuing challans to the citizens while cordoning off the streets in Karachi.

According to a report on Saturday, DIG Traffic took stern action against the cops who assembled in groups and used to stop motorists just for issuing challans. DIG Ahmed Nawaz suspended 17 traffic cops including SO and Record Keeper Mahmoodabad after they were found guilty of causing unnecessary trouble to the public under the pretext of conducting checks on the city's main roads.

The suspended traffic cops have been directed to report to the police lines, while departmental action has been initiated against them.

The DIG Traffic Karachi warned that traffic police officers will not be allowed to check citizens without body-worn cameras, and strict action will be taken against those who harass citizens without reason.

DIG Ahmed Nawaz also ordered an inquiry into the matter and warned that strict action will be taken against the traffic police personnel and officers found guilty of harassment."

# CM launches week-long immunization campaign in 25 districts

KARACHI (INP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that eradication of polio was a collective responsibility, therefore district administration, local bodies, civil society members and our partners must work together to save our children from the crippling disease of polio.

This he said while presiding over a meeting of the Provincial Task Force for Eradication of Polio here at CM House on Saturday. "We are launching a week-long National Immunization Campaign from Monday, 29th April in 25 districts, therefore all the deputy commissioners and SSPs must ensure its success by supporting the polio teams in administering Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV) to children below 5-years of age," he added.

The meeting was attended by Minister Health Dr Azra Pechuho, Mayor Karachi

Murtaza Wahab, Secretary to CM Raheem Shaikh, Home Secretary Iqbal Memon, IG Police Ghulam Nabi Memon, Commissioner Karachi Hassan Naqvi, Secretary School Education Zahid Abbasi, Adl IG Karachi Imran Yakoob, Secretary Health Rehan Baloch, EOC Coordinator Irshad Sodhar, DG Health Dr Waqar, Chairman Rotary Aziz Memon, Ms Melissa of Unicef, Dr Zain of WHO and other concerned.

The Divisional Commissioner, DIGs of Hyderabad, Mirpurkhas, Shaheed Benazirabad, Sukkur and Larkana participated in the meeting through video link.

Murad Ali Shah said that polio had been eradicated from the entire region, except for Afghanistan and Pakistan, both of which have two cases each. He explained that due to frequent inter-provincial pop-

ulation movements and even from Afghanistan, the country was struggling to eradicate the polio virus.

Minister Health Dr. Azra Pechuho, informed the CM that two cases of polio had been detected in Balochistan's Dera Bugti and Chaman districts.

The CM was told that the environmental samples (ES) collected from all the districts showed that 43 areas of 11 districts were infected with polioviruses. They include 13 areas of Karachi East, three each of Central, Malir and Korangi, Hyderabad and Sukkur, Six each of South and Keamari, and one each in Jamshoro Jacobabad and Badin.

The chief minister directed the district administration, local bodies and solid waste management authorities to ensure proper cleanliness in the districts where poliovirus has been detected. The Health

Department would share the list of the poliovirus-infected UCs with local bodies and towns and even with the district administration to ensure proper cleanliness, efficient disposal of wastewater and provision clean drinking water in the areas so that its impact could be control," he said and added that the Health Department would take necessary measures to purge such areas from the virus.

It was pointed out that in February 2024 national immunization Days were observed in which 38743 cases of refusal were reported. At this, the CM said that no parent would be allowed to refuse to administer polio drops to his or her children. "If you find any refusal case inform the district administration and they will take strict action," he said.

The CM appreciated polio workers for reaching door to

door to ensure giving polio vaccine to children under five. He also directed the polio teams to administer polio drops to 126,553 children who were not available at their homes during the campaign of February 2024.

Dr Azra told the CM that over 9.04 million children under five had been given polio vaccine at transit points during the last 15 months (Jan 2023 to March 2024). She said that 275 transit posts, with 1003 teams across Sindh were assigned the task.

The CM was told that the Polio Ambassador Unitive Project has been launched in Karachi and is now being expanded across the province with 407 schools participating and 901 new Polio Ambassadors inducted this month. The Polio Ambassadors are advocating for the cause of vaccination in their homes, communities and schools. During campaigns,

Polio Ambassadors make speeches in favour of vaccination during their respective schools' morning assemblies, Immunization Campaign.

The CM was told that the Sindh government was going to start the National Immunization Campaign on Monday, 29th April in 25 districts of the province. He directed IG Police to provide 3,833 policemen for security. He also directed him [IGP] to provide similar security to other teams to work in rural areas of the province.

During the campaign, eight million children of below 5 years of age will receive Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV). More than 600,000 frontline workers (FLWs) will participate in the drive. The anti-polio drive would be carried out in 201 union councils of the city in which 24656 polio workers would perform their duties.

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# Governor chaired 17th Senate meeting of KMU

PESHAWAR (APP): The meeting of the 17th Senate of Khyber Medical University under the Chairmanship of Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali was held at the Governor House here on Saturday.

Provincial Health Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah, Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Ziaul Haq, Principal Secretary to Governor Mazhar Irshad, officers of Higher Education Department, Finance Department and other members of the Senate participated in the meeting.

In the meeting, the current Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zia-ul-Haq was unanimously approved for promotion to Grade 22 as Meritorious Professor. The meeting also approved the plan to switch the university to solar energy and change the name of the director of sports in the university to director of sports and youth affairs.

In the meeting, the agenda of the proposed amendments in the statutes of the university was handed over to the Standing Committee of the Senate. The Senate handed over the matter to the Syndicate meeting on the authorization of the University Syndicate for the agenda of recovery from the PhD scholar of the University.

The Senate also approved the University to implement the Higher Education Commission Institutional Affiliation Policy. In the meeting, the agenda of the School of Medicine and School of Dentistry under the joint venture project between the University and Peshawar General Hospital was handed over to the Standing Committee of the Senate for legal and financial review.

The overall academic, financial and administrative performance of Khyber Medical University is commendable, Haji Ghulam Ali said. Provision of education should be ensured to the youth associated with the medical field according to the requirements of the modern era, Haji Ghulam Ali added.

## Education promotion among top priorities of govt

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali Saturday said that promotion of education is among topmost priorities of government and steps have been taken to educate each and every child of the province.

He was the Chief Guest in annual prize distribution of Inspires International School System. The governor appreciated the role of private education institution to promote education and said that children are our future and teachers and parents should realize their responsibilities to groom children.

He said that basic education is the right of each and every child and the collective efforts of private and public sector institution would materialize the dream of hundred percent educated societies.

KP Governor said children should also be informed about significance of our moral and ethical values and taught skills that are needed to lead a happy and successful life. He said that teachers should educate children following the golden principles of Islam that are core foundation of an Islamic society.

Later, he visited various stalls and distributed prizes among outstanding students of the school.



PESHAWAR: Accountant General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Naseeruddin Sarwar meeting with Chief Minister KP Sardar Ali Akin Gandapur.

# Allegations of political vendetta surround suspension of KP Health Director General

**Syed Adnan**

PESHAWAR: In a shocking development, the Secretary of Health, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa last night issued a Suspension Order for Dr. Shaukat Ali, the highly regarded Director General of Health Services in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the alleged reason of taking bribe in the transfer Grade-12 Technician. This abrupt decision has sent shockwaves through the healthcare community and raised serious questions about the motives behind Dr. Shaukat's suspension.

When contacted by Frontier Post, Dr. Shaukat clarified that the transfer of Irum Nareen, a female technician was conducted through standard procedures, with all necessary approvals obtained. He emphasized that he had no personal involvement in the matter and that the transfer was based on recommendations from the relevant section.

However, allegations surfaced that someone from DI Khan had facilitated the transfer process and later claimed to have paid a bribe to someone in the DG Office. Dr. Shaukat reiterated his innocence, stating that the transfer was conducted in accordance with established guidelines.

Following Dr. Shaukat's suspension, a local MPA from Dir Lower, celebrated the suspension of DG Health on his Facebook pages, suggesting a potential political motive behind the move.

The suspension has stirred unrest among the medical community, with doctors expressing concern that such actions could deter individuals from pursuing management positions in the future, potentially impacting the department's efficiency and creating a leadership vacuum.

Moreover, it has come to light that the suspension order of a BS 20 officer like Dr. Ali should have been authorized by the Chief Secretary, not the Secretary of Health, raising questions about the legality of the suspension process. It's alleged that the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa may have been misled by distorted facts and misrepresentations.

As calls for transparency and accountability mount, stakeholders are demanding a thorough investigation into the circumstances surrounding Dr. Shaukat's suspension and the alleged political interference in the healthcare sector. The outcome of this investigation will not only affect Dr. Shaukat's future but also have implications for the integrity of government institutions in the region.

Amidst widespread condemnation from the healthcare community across the province, demands for the reinstatement of Dr. Shaukat Ali are growing louder. Health professionals, spanning various districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, have rallied behind Dr. Shaukat, citing his invaluable contributions to the health sector as grounds for his immediate reinstatement.

Shaukat's tenure as Director General of Health Services has been marked by significant strides in improving healthcare delivery and infrastructure across the province. His initiatives and reforms have positively impacted the lives of countless individuals, earning him widespread respect and admiration within the healthcare community.

The outcry against his suspension underscores the deep-seated support and appreciation for Dr. Shaukat's leadership and dedication to the betterment of public health in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Calls for his reinstatement resonate not only within the medical fraternity but also among the general public who have benefited from his visionary approach to healthcare governance.

As pressure mounts on authorities to reconsider their decision, the overwhelming consensus among healthcare professionals is clear: Dr. Shaukat Ali must be reinstated to continue his invaluable work in advancing the health agenda of the province.

The resounding support for Shaukat Ali underscores the significant impact he has made and the pivotal role he continues to play in shaping the future of healthcare in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

# AUP and Pak-Beijing Research Center sign MoU

PESHAWAR (APP): A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Agriculture University Peshawar and Pakistan-Beijing Engineering Research Center for the Hybrid Wheat, China in a ceremony held here on Saturday.

The signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Directorate of Farm, University of Agriculture, Peshawar, Pakistan and the Beijing Engineering Research Center for Hybrid Wheat, China with Vice Chancellor of Agricultural University Peshawar, Pakistan Prof. Dr. Jahan Bakht and Director of Beijing Engineering Research Center for Hybrid Wheat, China Prof. Dr. Zhang Shengquan signed the agreement.

Director Farm, University of Agriculture Peshawar, Pakistan Professor Dr. Muhammad Arif was also present on this occasion. The purpose of the MoU is to promote mutual cooperation between the two institutions for future partnership for academic and research agreements.

The agreement between Pakistan and China includes development of low water-use wheat hybrids, provision of facilities for wheat seeds and testing, exchange of faculty, students, research materials and information, support through availability of related technologies, research equipment, joint international research efforts into research projects.

The agreement will specifically focus on the following areas including Management of human resources in all relevant areas of mutual interest in hybrid wheat and related sciences, diffusion of innovative and adaptive techniques and technologies, provision of training facilities for staff, development of new laboratory equipment, instruments for educational and research purposes, support and provision of facilities in distribution and supply, support in development of institutional infrastructure, provision of facilities for graduate and post-graduate studies and post-doctoral research programs, facilities for short-term technical training programs for technical staff and other employees of universities. Provision of joint and collaborative research projects and implementation will be initiated.

Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr. Jahan Bakht while explaining about the ongoing curricular and co-curricular activities in the university said that the students who graduated from the University of Agriculture Peshawar are serving in agriculture and livestock and other important fields at national and international level and agriculture and are playing their role in the development of livestock and it is hoped that this agreement will lead the University of Agriculture Peshawar, Pakistan and the Beijing Engineering Research Center for Hybrid Wheat, China on the path of development.

Dean Faculty of Crop Production Sciences Prof. Dr. Iftikhar Hussain Khalil, Dean Faculty of Nutrition Sciences Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ayub, Dean Faculty of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Sciences Prof. Dr. Abdul Rehman, Chairman Department of Agriculture Prof. Dr. Habib Akbar, Heads of Departments and Administrative Officers. Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Jahan Bakht, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Arif and Prof. Dr. Zhang Shengquan congratulated for signing the successful agreement.

## Series of blessings on bureaucracy continued

PESHAWAR (APP): The series of blessings on the bureaucracy of the province, which is suffering from a financial crisis, continues.

The goddess of fortune has been kind to the Grade 16 officer of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Municipality Department. Anwarul Hussain, a progress officer of the department, was referred to 8 important posts simultaneously in Peshawar and Charsadda.

Progress Officer of Grade 16 has been given the post of Assistant Director, Senior Municipalities, Peshawar City. Charge reference of Assistant Director Tehsil Shabqadar Charsadda, Assistant Director Tehsil Tangi, Charsadda. Also, having the charge of Progress Officer of Tehsil Shah Alam, Tehsil Mathura, Tehsil Chamkani, Tehsil Pishtakhara, Tehsil Hasan Khel was also given.

It is worth mentioning that the Secretary to government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Local Government Election and Rural Development Department has issued a notification in this connection.

The notification said that one Anwarul Hussain, Progress Officer (BPS)-16 has posted as Assistant Director (Senior) LG&RDD Tehsil Headquarter Peshawar City with additional charges of Progress Officer in Tesil Shah Alam, Mathra, Chamkani, Pishtakhara and Hussan Khel District Peshawar as Assistant Director LG&RDD Tehsil Shabqadar District Charsadda in his own pay and scale with additional charge of AS LG&RDD Tehsil Tangi District Charsadda with immediate effect in best public interest, through a notification no. Director (LG) 3-4/posting and transfer-2023-24 dated April 24.

# KP desires to seek gems' sector accreditation

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Special Assistant to Chief Minister (SACM) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Abdul Karim Tordhair has expressed desire for getting accreditation from the Gems Technology Institute of Thailand to achieve the global standards in gems technology.

He expressed these views while speaking as a chief guest during a training workshop organized under the aegis of the National Productivity Organization (NPO) at Gems and Jewelry Centre established under the auspices of Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) at Hayatabad here Saturday.

He indicated that Gems Centres would be established in other areas of the province as well. The Special Assistant said that if Thai experts want, they could be provided a place for gyms business in the Small Industries Development Board (SIDB)'s exhibition centre in Islamabad.

He said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was an important stakeholder in the development of the regional economy and there were very vast and useful opportunities for foreign investors in various sectors, which could be utilized by the regional investors.

He said that mutual contacts and holding joint forums were essential for finding the possibilities of investment at local level as bilateral cooperation was important platform for promotion of investment at local level.

Abdul Karim Tordhair said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was a very attractive place for foreign investment and trade in terms of gems beside vestment in other sectors, saying they were moving towards providing a favorable environment with facilities to investors to attract foreign investors to take benefits of the incentives of gems sector.

He said that 80 percent gem resources are found in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and a modern gem processing centre was being established in Peshawar where a one-window operation and all the required facilities would be available at one place. So, he said, they are inviting foreign investors to take benefit of them.

The experts trained the teachers and students of the Gems Centre on various software as per international standards and try to equip them with modern technology.

# CM's aide grieved over martyrdom in Mansehra

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Adviser to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism and Culture Zahid Chanzab on Saturday expressed grief and sorrow over martyrdom of three of a family due to lightning strike in Mansehra's Kundaw Ogi area. In a message issued here, he expressed condolence and solidarity with the affected family.

He said that although this was a natural disaster, but Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province had become a province severely affected by climate change after the terrorism.

He said the incidents of lightning strike, storms, floods and other natural calamities had constantly increased, adding that in such circumstances, the federal government should extend support to the province.

The Adviser suggested that it was better that the Federation should provide financial support to KP people and government affected by terrorism and climate change.

He further said that due representation should be given to the province in the national policy on climate change and carbon plus, apart from giving legitimate share of KP.

He said that more than forty percent of the forests of the country were located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which were protected by the provincial government and the people within their limited resources.

He said that the support of federal government to KP would directly benefit the federation besides protecting the natural resources and strengthening the national unity.

## CM expresses grief over demise of journalist

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur on Saturday expressed grief and sorrow over the demise of local Journalist and Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) Chitral correspondent Gul Hamad Farooqi.

In a condolence message, the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur prayed Almighty Allah to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to bereaved family members to bear this irreparable loss with fortitude.

Gul Hamad Farooqi passed away due cardiac arrest.

The Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur was associated with APP for more than 15 years.

His funeral prayer offered at his village Shabqader Charsadda and was laid to rest at his ancestral graveyard.



PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to Chief Minister Abdul Karim Tordhair visiting Gems and Jewelry Centre.

# Three-day Training workshop organized

PESHAWAR (APP): A three-day training workshop was organized at the Directorate of Professional Development for the first time in the history of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province.

66 male and female teachers of middle schools of Peshawar under the title "Hum Saath Hayin" under Life Skills Teacher Training and Youth Empowerment Program participated.

The speakers lauded the Senator Mohsin Aziz and Deputy Secretary Education Department Shazia Atta participated as special guests in the closing ceremony of the workshop.

During the training, the duties of the master trainer were performed by Lubna Ghani Hayauddin, Tasneem Akhtar Mir, Jahanzeb Zaheer and senior instructors of the Directorate of Professional Development.

# Rescue 1122 issues rain alert in province

PESHAWAR (APP): Rescue 1122 alerted to deal with any emergency during the recent rains, Dr Muhammad Ayaz Khan Director General Rescue 1122 told media men here on Saturday.

The leave of Rescue 1122 personnel is cancelled, Dr. Muhammad Ayaz Khan said.

Additional life jackets, boats and necessary instructions have been provided in various districts, said Dr Muhammad Ayaz Khan.

All the heavy machinery of Rescue 1122 is being used in rescue operations, said Dr. Muhammad Ayaz Khan. Special teams of Rescue 1122 are constantly monitoring the water flow of other rivers including Kabul River, said Dr. Muhammad Ayaz Khan.

All district control rooms of Rescue 1122 are fully operational, Dr Muhammad Ayaz Khan, adding, Public should call 1122 during any emergency.

## Saif condoles over death of journalist

PESHAWAR (APP): Advisor to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister on Information, Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif has expressed grief over the death of Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) correspondent in Chitral, Gul Hamad Farooqi.

In a condolence message issued here Saturday, he praised Gul Hamad for his professionalism and contributions towards freedom of press.

Barrister Saif also prayed to rest the departed soul in eternal abode with peace and granting courage to bereaved family members to bear the loss with courage and equanimity.





## In brief

### BISEM conducts online exam Anees Takar

MARDAN: The Mardan Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education has successfully conducted the first-ever online examination for 9th grade Computer Science students. This pilot project marks a significant step towards a paperless examination system. According to Chairman Fared Ahmed Khan, the Mardan Board has introduced several reforms, including SLO-based papers and e-marking for Physics and English subjects. The online examination project is another feather in the board's cap, making it a pioneer in the country's educational history. The online exam was held at two prominent educational institutions, Colonel Sher Khan Cadet College Swabi and The Fazal Haq College Mardan, which were equipped with the necessary facilities. A specialized software was used to conduct the exam, allowing students to appear for the paper online. Chairman Fared Ahmed Khan termed this achievement a major success for the board, calling it a significant step towards a paperless examination system. He emphasized that this system will not only speed up the examination process but also eliminate errors. This innovative approach is expected to pave the way for a more efficient and technology-driven education system in the country.

### Urs of Pir Baba kicks off F.P. Report

BUNER: The two-day celebrations of the 454th Urs Mubarak of the Emperor of Khorasan, Hazrat Syed Ali Tirmizi, known as Pir Baba, began on Saturday. According to the details, the two-day celebrations of the 454th Urs Mubarak of the famous Sufi saint Hazrat Pir Baba started on Saturday after the Asr prayer, which will be concluded before the Zuhr prayer on Sunday. In the two-days celebrations, a large number of pilgrims and devotees from different parts of the country have started arriving at the shrine of Pir Baba from Friday. After Saturday, the Asr prayer ceremony will begin and end with the recitation of the Holy Quran. While on Sunday scholars will shed light on the services and roles of the elders for the promotion and exaltation of the religion of Islam. Flowers will be placed on the shrine and collective prayers will be offered for the elevation of Pir Baba's rank and the peace progress and prosperity of the mother land, told organizer of the Urs celebration Makhdom Sajada Nashen Syed Husain Shah.

### Free textbooks demanded F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Teachers' organizations and parents from the Lower Dir district on Friday demanded the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and high ups of the elementary and secondary education department to immediately start distribution of free textbooks among the public sector schools. In their separate statements, the Insaaf Teachers' Association (ITA) district president Tahir Altaf Sarhadi and Wahdat e Asateza district general secretary Shahid Mahmood have complained that government schools' children were yet to get free textbooks despite the commencement of the new academic session. They said that some of the students of the high schools had been provided with old books while most of the primary schools' students were bookless as the old books were either damaged or poor.



ABBOTTABAD: Locals gathered near the destroyed house after fire eruption, due to short circuit.

## PTI's decline in Bajaur

Habibul Hassan Yad

**THE recent bye-election in Bajaur has not only altered the political landscape but also provided insights into the internal dynamics and challenges faced by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in the region. This analysis delves into various facets contributing to PTI's decline and the broader implications for political discourse and party dynamics.**

**Internal struggles and leadership crisis:** PTI's defeat in both MNA and MPA seats signifies deeper internal struggles and a crisis in leadership. The denial of tickets to dedicated activists like Rehan Zeb Khan, who later contested independently and met a tragic fate, reflects discord within the party's decision-making processes and a disconnect with grassroots sentiments.

**Financial influences on ticket distribution:** Allegations of favoritism and monetary influences in PTI's ticket distribution process have surfaced, indicating a departure from merit-based selection criteria. This trend raises concerns about the party's commitment to democratic values and ethical conduct, eroding trust among party workers and supporters.

**Impact of tragic events on political dynamics:** The assassination of Rehan Zeb Khan during the election campaign not only highlighted security risks for political candidates but also left a void in PTI's local leadership. The subsequent calls for his brother's candidacy as a tribute underscored sentiments of loyalty and solidarity within the party but also

revealed dissatisfaction with central leadership decisions.

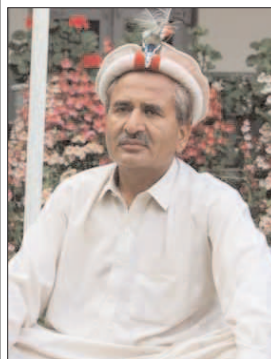
**Resilience of independent candidates and grassroots support:** Despite challenges and controversies surrounding PTI's internal affairs, independent candidates like Mubarak Zeb Khan managed to secure victories, emphasizing the resilience of grassroots support and the electorate's desire for change and representation.

**Party image and accountability:** PTI's declining standing in Bajaur reflects broader concerns about the party's image and accountability. The perceived disconnect between party leadership and workers, coupled with allegations of double standards, has tarnished PTI's reputation and raised questions about its commitment to principled politics.

**Implications for future political strategies:** The bye-election outcomes and subsequent developments in Bajaur necessitate a reevaluation of PTI's political strategies, focusing on inclusivity, transparency, and meritocracy. Addressing internal rifts, restoring trust among party members, and prioritizing public service over personal gains are critical steps towards revitalizing PTI's position in the region.

In conclusion, PTI's decline in Bajaur reflects a multifaceted narrative encompassing internal discord, ethical concerns, and the evolving dynamics of political representation. This analysis underscores the complexities of contemporary political landscapes and the imperative for parties like PTI to navigate challenges with integrity and strategic foresight.

## Senior Journalist passed away in Chitral



F.P. Report

CHITRAL: Renowned journalist Gul Hamad Farooqi died suddenly last night due to cardiac arrest. He was rushed to DHQ Hospital Chitral after complaining of chest pain, but unfortunately, he could not be saved. His body will be cremated in his native village Charsadda.

Gul Hamad Farooqi was a respected figure in the journalism community, known for his fearless reporting and in-depth coverage of various issues. His sudden demise has sent shockwaves through the media industry, with colleagues and friends mourning the loss of a talented and dedicated professional.

Chitral Journalist Forum mourns the loss of Gul Hamad Farooqi President Nadir Khawaja describes him as a "professional journalist. His death is a significant loss to the media industry. Colleagues and friends remember him for his fearless reporting and dedication to journalism. Khawaja said: "Gul Hamad Farooqi was a dedicated and seasoned journalist who will be deeply missed. His contributions to the field of journalism are invaluable, and his death is a huge loss for all of us. May Allah raise his rank."

Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur on Saturday expressed grief and sorrow over the demise of local Journalist and Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) Chitral correspondent Gul Hamad Farooqi.

In a condolence message, the Chief Minister prayed Almighty Allah to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to bereaved family members to bear this irreparable loss with fortitude.

## Chief Engineer CNW visits Kohat Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Chief Engineer CNW Roads and Buildings Qudratullah Marwat and Engineer Ameer Jan Marwat visited Kohat on an emergency basis to inspect roads and buildings. Chief Engineer Qudratullah Marwat and Engineer Ameer Jan Marwat along with Exn CNW Highway Division Safatullah Khan Marwat from Kot Road to Marchongi and Institute of Medical to review the ongoing work on new roads and construction of buildings in Kohat. Visited the sciences and reviewed the work.

On this occasion, he said that the money spent on projects is the trust of the nation. Make dedication and hard work your motto. On this occasion SDO Highway One Zahidullah, SDO 2 Imdad Bangash was also with him.

# Cheap bread became a dream in Mardan

Fazal Haq

MARDAN: The peddlers made the life of the common man miserable, cheap bread became a dream; the dream of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Ameen Gandapur's sale of "cheap bread" was shattered. In the inner city and nearby streets the bakers turned the simple people into footballs.

According to the government rate, repeated incidents also started happening among customers and bakers demanding naan and weight as per the government rate. On the other hand, crackdowns, fines and detentions carried out by Deputy Commissioner Mardan and Price Control Committees are also ongoing. According to the survey, the high-end bakers in Mardan and its surroundings were arbitrarily defying the government's fixed price of 120 grams of bread at 20 rupees, while the new price of 100 grams of bread was 15 rupees but 108 grams of bread is being sold for 30 rupees and instead of 100 grams, 80 to 90 grams of bread is being sold for 16 rupees and sometimes 20 rupees.

Roghni naan is being sold for 70 rupees in big hotels. According to the

survey, bread is being sold at low weight in the city and surrounding areas. In the city and adjacent areas, bread is not being sold according to the official price list and according to the official weight. According to buyers, if they ask oven owners for cheap bread and full weight, they show the next hotel or try to make fun of them.

According to hotel owners, a bag of 20 kg of flour costs 2100 rupees, which makes 100 bread, the labor of a dough kneader is 1100 rupees, the daily wage of a bread maker and his helper is 3000 rupees and the garbage in which the bread is wrapped to the customer is 280 rupees per kilo, and the shopping bag is 500 rupees per kilo and the customer is given bread. Now traders are suffering due to increase in prices of food items including expensive gas, expensive electricity for baking bread.

It cannot be done only by providing cheap flour from the government. Millions of rupees are being collected through raids by the administration wherever the common man goes, there is already a storm of inflation and every month petrol bombs are also dropped by the govern-

ment. The government is fooling the people by increasing the prices like thieves every month.

The GPT has been increased by 1% in electricity prices, but the government has not spoken. According to the buyers, the current government is forgetting that the same flour was being bought at cheap prices during the previous regime. The double price was done by the newcomers after the regime change.

That inflation is swallowing the poor people day by day due to arbitrary increase in the prices of pulses, meat, onions and vegetables, the daily wage earners have already died if the government has announced the supply of cheap flour and cheap bread so why is it not possible to supply of bread according to the new price and weight by the hotel owners? The buyers have demanded from Chief Minister Khyber Pukhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur that a record of peddlers should be made and the shopkeepers who are fined five times should be legally punished so that such peddlers can become an example and provide the poor with two meals of bread and other food items at official rates.

# Food Minister visits wheat godown in Nowshera

Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Food Zahir Shah Toru conducted a visit to the Azakhel wheat godown in Nowshera. The minister was accompanied by Secretary Food Zarif ul Muani along with other officials, concerned.

The minister was briefed about the process of procurement of wheat and the measures taken for its safe storage in the warehouse. During the visit, Zahir Shah Toru stated that the provincial cabinet has decided to purchase local wheat, aiming not only to procure

quality wheat but also yielding significant financial benefits to the province.

He revealed that the provincial cabinet has approved the purchase of 600,000 metric tons of wheat for the year, setting the rate at 3,900 rupees per 40 kilograms, aligned with federal, Punjab, and Balochistan government rates. Regarding the welfare of local growers, Shah assured that their interests would be safeguarded at all costs.

The minister emphasized the government's commitment toward transparency, highlighting

ongoing efforts to digitize the administrative affairs of the food department to ensure accountability. Zahir Shah Toru extended that five-member committee has also been constituted, comprising officials from the agriculture department, administration, and NAB to oversee the procurement, transportation, quality control, and prevention of malpractice during the whole procurement process. Reiterating the government's zero-tolerance policy against corruption, Toru pledged exemplary punishment for anyone found involved in malpractice.



FAISALABAD: A worker preparing the 'Sattu' grain in the Ghalla Mandi.

# Awareness campaign for removal of tinted glasses launced

F.P. Report

WANA: Local political leaders in lower South Waziristan are committed to launching a public awareness campaign of removal of tinted glasses from vehicles. Political leaders of the parties have signaled to launch a public awareness campaign to get vehicles' tinted glasses removed voluntarily by May 2, 2024.

The leaders unanimously passed a resolution pledging to remove tinted glasses from vehicles as a sign of their commitment to maintaining peace in lower Waziristan. They in a statement issued to media, urged upon local peace loving and law-abiding citizens to voluntarily scratch out tinted glasses from their vehicles to promote a safer and viable environment in lower Waziristan.

Moreover, political leaders appealed to civil and military authorities to ensure their vehicles are also cleaned from tinted glasses as part of the initiative. Leaders of political parties have announced that next steps for the campaign will be taken through consultation after the expiry May 2 deadline. "A collective effort underlines the importance of a united struggle against tinted glasses, which has been identified as a critical problem to be addressed on war footing to have a secured environment in lower Waziristan."

The statement says. They further stated in the statement that politicians, ulamas and other stakeholders should be on the same page to initiate measures comparatively suited to the needs of the hour for creating an atmosphere of

lasting peace.

As the May 2 deadline approaches, individuals and government agencies are encouraged to actively participate in the initiative to promote the culture of safety for the people of Wana, lower Waziristan.

The resolution passed by the local political leaders, serves as a call to action for all residents of lower Waziristan to participate in proactive measures to work together toward this common goal; the community can make meaningful strides toward improving the overall quality of life and fostering a culture of responsibility and cooperation by taking such initiatives in the area. The success of this public awareness campaign depends on the collective efforts of individuals, institutions and authorities in lower south Waziristan.

# Federal govt has no legal or moral status: Minister

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Like other parts of the country, the PTI has also arranged a huge protest rally in Kohat led by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Law & Parliamentary Affairs Aftab Alam Afridi Advocate alongwith KP Assembly Members Shafi Jan and Daud Khan Afridi, Tehsil Chairman Gumbat Sajid Iqbal, Tehsil Chairman Lachi Ehsan Khan, former District Nazim Naseem Afridi, party leaders and a large number of workers for release of the founding chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Imran

Khan, Bushra Bibi, party leaders and workers from illegal imprisonment and get rid of the illegally imposed Form 47 fake Federal government.

The protest rally was held in Kohat from Pindi Highway Bridge to Kachhari Chowk which on culmination converted into a huge protest gathering.

Addressing on the occasion, the Law Minister said that party's founding chairman alongwith his wife Bushra Bibi and hundreds of PTI Leaders and Workers have been arrested in fake cases. He said that our peaceful struggle will continue until the dignified

release of all the party workers including the founding chairman.

Aftab Alam Afridi said that the illegal imposed Form 47 mandate thief fake federal government has no legal or moral status but it is an insult to the public mandate. The law minister said that the fake government will have to answer for the violation of the constitution and law and lawlessness. The only solution to get the country out of then economic and political quagmire is the end of the mandate stealing fake government, which will InshaaAllah happen soon, he concluded.

# Drama festival inaugurated

F.P. Report

LARKANA: Drama Festival which was inaugurated by Arts Council of Pakistan Larkana. Inauguration ceremony by SSP Rohal Khan Khoso, Anwar Ali Lohar, Mayor Larkana, Riaz Ahmad Soomro, Ghulam Asghar Khichi, Tufail Ahmed Sheikh, rituals were performed by the Assistant Commissioner, the initial drama Sindhi Reformed Stage Natak Barf Case was presented.

This play is written by Sikandar Abbasi. The director is Riyaz Maheer. By Arts Council of Pakistan Larkana. Drama Festival which was inaugurated. The initial drama Sindhi improvisational stage play Snow Case was presented. Drama Festival inaugurated by SSP Ruhul Khan Koso. Anwar Ali Lohar, Mayor of Larkana. Rabin cut. Riyaz Ahmad Soomro, former DIG. Ghulam Asghar Kutch. Deputy Attorney. Tufail Ahmed Sheikh Assistant Commissioner. were also present. Arts Council of Pakistan, Larkana, Secretary

Muhammad Hanif Shahag. Vice President Engineer Javed Ahmed Sheikh. Treasurer Abdul Nabi Sario. Blessings. Moderator Chandio. Sikandar Abbasi. Amjadgul Somero. Shams lover.

Welcomed the guests. Secretary Muhammad Hanif Shahag said. We tried to make a better program, this time we tried to give drama to these directors. Those who have been neglected by the body. He further said that it is easy. The SSP will say that the law and order situation is bad. Review them. Abdul Nabi Sario said that God willing, we will give all the best programs for the residents of Larkana. Ghulam Asghar Katchi said that the environment is going like this at present. It has become difficult to pass the time. I am watching. Idnes has come a long way. Riyaz Ahmad Soomro said that it is a good thing that the Arts Council of Pakistan is staging a stage play in Larkana.

This present body is a great achievement. President Muhammad Ismail Jatoti's entire team.

SSP Rohal Khan Koso said that after the Arts Council came to Larkana, it was proved that our culture is alive. These living nations are proof. Writers and poets. Artists, actors and story-tellers need a clash. Bandit culture. eliminate the Education. Lawyer. Focus on the best officers. There are roles in our society. He further said that the people of Larkana should cooperate with the police. Like drugs. And crime can be controlled. People are worried right now. inflation. Misery.

They spend time due to poverty. Show them such programs. Give peace. Mayor Anwar Ali Lohar said that the existing body of Arts Council Larkana is doing good work. Here, when the B program is done, we remember us. Our Municipal Corporation will continue to help you every day. Finally, Vice President Engineer Javed Ahmed Sheikh said that in ancient times, stage plays used to be used in many places. Higher Arts Council of Pakistan Larkana stage plays with messages.





## South Africa’s celebrations are set against growing discontent

PRETORIA (AP): South Africa marked 30 years since the end of apartheid and the birth of its democracy with a ceremony in the capital that included a 21-gun salute and the waving of the nation's multicolored flag. But any sense of celebration on the momentous anniversary was set against a growing discontent with the current government.

President Cyril Ramaphosa presided over the gathering in a huge white tent in the gardens of the government buildings in Pretoria as head of state. He also spoke as the leader of the African National Congress party, which was widely credited with liberating South Africa's Black majority from the racist system of oppression that made the country a pariah for nearly a half-century.

The ANC has been in power ever since the first democratic, all-race election of April 27, 1994, the vote that officially ended apartheid. But this Freedom Day holiday marking that day fell amid a poignant backdrop: Analysts and polls predict that the waning popularity of the party once led by Nelson Mandela is likely to see it lose its parliamentary majority for the first time as a new generation of South Africans make their voices heard in what might be the most important election since 1994 next month.

"Few days in the life of our nation can compare to that day, when freedom was born," Ramaphosa said in a speech centered on the nostalgia of 1994, when Black people were allowed to vote for the first time, the once-banned ANC swept to power, and Mandela became the country's first Black president. "South Africa changed forever. It signaled a new chapter in the history of our nation, a moment that resonated across Africa and across the world." "On that day, the dignity of all the people of South Africa was restored," Ramaphosa said.

The president, who stood in front of a banner emblazoned with the word "Freedom," also recognized the major problems South Africa still has three decades later with vast poverty and inequality, issues that will be central yet again when millions vote on May 29. Ramaphosa conceded there had been "setbacks." The 1994 elec-



tion changed South Africa from a country where Black and other non-white people were denied most basic freedoms, not just the right to vote. Laws controlled where they lived, where they were allowed to go on any given day, and what jobs they could have. After apartheid fell, a constitution was adopted guaranteeing the rights of all South Africans no matter their race, religion, gender or sexual-

ity. But that hasn't significantly improved the lives of millions, with South Africa's Black majority that make up more than 80% of the population of 62 million still overwhelmingly affected by severe poverty. The official unemployment rate is 32%, the highest in the world, and more than 60% for young people between the ages of 15 and 24. More than 16 million South Africans — 25% of the country — rely on monthly welfare grants for survival.

South Africa is still the most unequal country in the world in terms of wealth distribution, according to the World Bank, with race a key factor. While the damage of apartheid remains difficult to undo, the ANC is increasingly being blamed for South Africa's current problems.

In the week leading up to the anniversary, countless South Africans were asked what 30 years of freedom

from apartheid meant to them. The dominant response was that while 1994 was a landmark moment, it's now overshadowed by the joblessness, violent crime, corruption and near-collapse of basic services like electricity and water that plagues South Africa in 2024. It's also poignant that many South Africans who never experienced apartheid and are referred to as "Born Frees" are now old enough to vote.

Outside the tent where Ramaphosa spoke in front of mostly dignitaries and politicians, a group of young Black South Africans born after 1994 and who support a new political party called Rise Mzansi wore T-shirts with the words "2024 is our 1994" on them. Their message was that they were looking beyond the ANC and for another change for their future in next month's election. "They don't know what happened before 1994. They don't know," said Seth Mazibuko, an older supporter of Rise Mzansi and a well-known anti-apartheid activist in the 1970s. "Let us agree that we messed up," Mazibuko said of the last 30 years, which have left the youngsters standing behind him directly impacted by the second-worst youth unemployment rate in the world behind Djibouti. He added: "There's a new chance in elections next month."

## Power restored to Sierra Leone as minister quits

FREE TOWN (BBC): Electricity supplies have been restored to Sierra Leone following weeks of power cuts, after it paid off part of the \$48m (£38m) bill it owed to a Turkish company. The \$18m payment came as the country's energy minister resigned, saying he took full responsibility for the crisis. Most electricity supplies to the capital, Freetown, come from a Turkish ship anchored off the country's coast.

Last week, Karpowership said it had severely cut supplies to the city - from 60 megawatts to 6 megawatts - because of the unpaid bills, but the disruption has been going on for far longer. Residents of the country's main cities have been going for days on end without any power and hospitals have also been affected.

The Reuters news agency quotes a doctor as saying that at least one infant has died because of a lack of power, while medics have been using mobile phones to provide light as they carry out procedures. Before supplies were restored, Fatmata Gassim, a second-year engineering student in Freetown, told the BBC's What in the World podcast of her frustration at the lack of power.

"How do you iron your clothes, how do you make your food, how do you go to sleep? We pay our electricity bills so I don't see why we should be forced to live like this," she said. Following the resignation of Kanja Sesay, the office of President Julius Maada Bio said the energy ministry would now fall under the direct supervision of the president. Karpowership previously cut supplies to Sierra Leone in September over unpaid bills.

## Fire at Brazil leaves at least 10 dead

SAO PAULO (Reuters): At least 10 people died and 11 were injured in a major fire at a guesthouse in Brazil's southern city of Porto Alegre, said the Rio Grande do Sul state fire department, which is still searching for the missing.

The firefighters said they were called at around 2 a.m. (0500 GMT) and extinguished the fire within two hours, according to the fire service. "Forensics are already on the scene and have already removed the bodies. The building has been cordoned off and forensics are in charge," Lieutenant Colonel Lucio Nunes da Silva said in an interview with CNN Brasil.

Junes da Silva said there is still no information on the possible causes of the fire. The facility did not have a license to operate as a guesthouse, nor did they have a fire-fighting plan, according to the fire department. In the building where the guesthouse operated, the rooms were very close together, making it easy for the flames to spread and difficult for the guests to escape, the fire department said.

## Two British men charged with helping Russian intelligence

LONDON (BBC): Two British men have been charged with helping Russian intelligence services after a suspected arson attack on a Ukraine-linked business in London. Dylan Earl, 20, from Elmesthorpe in Leicestershire, and Jake Reeves, 22, from Croydon, were investigated following a fire at a warehouse in east London in March.

Three other suspects linked to the fire have been held on other charges. The investigation is being led by Met Police counter-terror officers. Mr Earl is accused of planning to target the business, as well as attempting to recruit individuals to materially assist a foreign intelligence service, undertaking fraudulent activity and arson.

Mr Reeves is accused of accepting money knowing that it was from a foreign intelligence service. The investigation is related to a large fire which broke out on an industrial estate on Staffa Road in Leyton in March, which the prosecution said was started using an accelerant such as petrol. The charges do not specify who owns the businesses that were targeted, but Companies House records show they are two parcel delivery services: Oddissey and Meest UK.

They are owned by Mykhaylo Prykhodko, also known as Mikhail Boikov, and his wife Jelena Boikova, who both live in London. Nick Price, head of the CPS Special Crime and Counter Terrorism Division, said of Mr Earl: "Included in the alleged activity was involvement in the planning of an arson attack on a Ukrainian-linked commercial property in March 2024."

He said Mr Earl is "alleged to have engaged in conduct targeting businesses which were linked to Ukraine in order to benefit the Russian state". The Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has summoned the Russian ambassador Andrey Kelin following the

allegations. An FCDO spokesperson said the UK remains "deeply concerned by allegations of Russian-orchestrated malign activity on UK soil".

"We will continue to work with our allies to deter and defend against the full spectrum of threats that emanate from Russia," they added. Mr Earl and Mr Reeves are the first people to be charged under a new law designed to update and modernise the offences of espionage, sabotage and foreign interference. At the time it was passed, the government said it was designed to strengthen the UK's defences against hostile activity by states "targeting the UK's democracy, economy, and values."

The full charges Mr Earl faces are: Preparing an act that endangered the life of a person or created a serious risk to the safety of the public contrary to Section 18 of the National Security Act 2023 Assisting a foreign intelligence service contrary to Section 3 of the National Security Act 2023 Aggravated arson The full charges Mr Reeves faces are: Obtaining a material benefit from a foreign intelligence service, contrary to section 17 of the National Security Act 2023 Aggravated arson Mr Earl appeared at Westminster Magistrates' Court last week, but for legal reasons BBC News has not been able to report this until today. The pair are accused of taking part in the plan along with three other men. The three others were arrested as part of the investigation but have not been charged under the national security law. Dmitrijus Paulauska, 22, was charged having information about terrorist acts, an offence under the Terrorism Act 2000 Nii Mensah, 21, from Thornton Heath in South London, has been charged with aggravated arson Paul English, 60, from Roehampton in South West London, has been charged with aggravated arson All five are due to appear at the Old Bailey on 10 May.

## Head of Vietnam’s parliament resigns

HANOI (AP): The head of Vietnam's parliament has resigned, according to state media, making him the latest senior member of government to leave office amid an ongoing anti-corruption campaign that's shaken the country's political and business elites.

The resignation of National Assembly Chair Vuong Dinh Hue adds to growing instability in the country. President Vo Van Thuong resigned in March — just over a year after the previous president, Nguyen Xuan Phuc, resigned to take political responsibility for corruption scandals during the pandemic. "It also highlights the extreme uncertainty in a political environment that's often boasted of its stability, as three top leaders have been axed in just a year," said Nguyen Khac Giang, an analyst at Singapore's ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

Hue's resignation came days after his assistant Pham Thai Ha was arrested on charges of abusing his position and power for personal gain on April 21, according to state media outlet VN Express. Initial reports did not say that Hue was implicated in corruption, but noted that investigators found that the parliamentary leader had "violated Party regulations, and his violations have affected the reputation of the Party, the State and himself." Vietnam's Communist Party accepted what it called a voluntary resignation from Hue, according to VN Express.

Hue, 67, had been the chair of Vietnam's national assembly for over three years. That made him the fourth most important politician in Vietnam, along with the President, the Prime Minister and the head of the Communist Party. Political instability could threaten Vietnam's economic ambitions as it vies to become an alternative to China in the region's supply chain. On a visit to Vietnam earlier in the month, Apple CEO Tim Cook said he wants to further increase investment in the country.

Ha's arrest resulted from an expansion of the ongoing investigation into the Thuan An Group, said Vietnam News Agency, citing Ministry of Public Security spokesperson Lt. Gen. To An Xo. Company chair Nguyen Duy Hung and several others were arrested earlier in April. The Blazing Furnace campaign has singled businesses, and led to an unprecedented death sentence for real estate tycoon Truong My Lan in Vietnam's largest-ever fraud case.

Giang, the analyst, said Hue was previously seen as a likely successor to Trong. "His downfall will only intensify Vietnam's succession crisis," he said. Vietnam's leaders are next due to convene a Communist Party congress in early 2026. Meanwhile, experts say, rivals are jostling to position themselves as a successor to Trong, who was elected to an unprecedented third term as party chief in 2021. Given his age, experts say that it is unlikely that he will continue for another term.

## 20 Cambodian soldiers killed

CAMBODIA: Twenty soldiers have been killed in an ammunition explosion at a base in the west of Cambodia, according to Prime Minister Hun Manet. The blast, which also wounded several soldiers, occurred at an army base in Kampong Speu province, Hun Manet said in a statement on Facebook, without giving more details on the incident.

Hun Manet said he was "deeply shocked" when he received the news of the explosion at the base in Kampong Speu province. It was not immediately clear what caused the explosion and Hun Manet did not comment on the issue in his post. He offered condolences to the soldiers' families and promised the government would pay for their funerals and provide compensation both to those killed and those injured. Pictures on social media showed a destroyed one-storey building wreathed in smoke, as well as injured people being treated at a hospital, with residents of a nearby village also sharing images online of broken windows.

## UN warns Sudan forces are encircling a capital, urges against attack

UNITED NATIONS (AP): Sudanese paramilitary forces are encircling the only capital they haven't captured in the western Darfur region, the United Nations said, warning that an attack would have "devastating consequences" for the city's 800,000 inhabitants.

At the same time, the UN said, the rival Sudanese Armed Forces "appear to be positioning themselves." UN Secretary-General António Guterres again called on the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces and government forces to refrain from fighting in the North Darfur area around its capital, El Fasher, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

The year-old war in Sudan between rival generals from the paramilitary and government forces who are vying for power has sparked "a crisis of epic proportions," UN political chief Rosemary DiCarlo said. It has been fueled by weapons from foreign supporters who continue to flout UN sanctions aimed at helping end the conflict, she said, stressing that "This is illegal, it is immoral, and it must stop." The UN humanitarian office said that escalating tensions and clashes around El Fasher over the last two weeks have already resulted in the displacement of 40,000 people, as well as a number of civilian casualties.

"The security situation has effectively cut off humanitarian access to El Fasher," the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs known as OCHA, said. According to humanitarian officials, El Fasher is an

important location to reach other parts of the vast Darfur region, including for aid shipments from neighboring Chad and via a northern route from Port Sudan on Sudan's northeast coast.

"Currently, more than a dozen trucks with life-saving supplies for 122,000 people are stranded in Ad Dabbah in neighboring Northern State, as they cannot move onward to El Fasher due to insecurity and lack of guarantees for safe passage," OCHA said. Dujarric said the secretary-general's personal envoy for Sudan, Ramtane Lamamra, is engaging with the rival parties to de-escalate tensions, which are reported to have dramatically escalated.

OCHA also said it's "imperative that the parties allow safe passage for civilians to leave El Fasher for safer areas." Sudan plunged into chaos in mid-April 2023, when long-simmering tensions between its military, led by Gen. Abdel Fattah Burhan, and the Rapid Support Forces paramilitary commanded by Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo broke out into street battles in the capital, Khartoum. Fighting has spread to other parts of the country, especially urban areas and the western Darfur region.

The UN's DiCarlo painted a dire picture of the war's impact — over 14,000 dead, tens of thousands wounded, looming famine with 25 million people in need of life-saving assistance, and over 8.6 million forced to flee their homes. During the war, the Arab-dominated Rapid Support Forces have carried out bru-

tal attacks in Darfur on ethnic African civilians, especially the ethnic Masalit, and have taken control of most of the vast region — with El Fasher its newest target.

## 70 people killed by flooding in Kenya

NAIROBI (AP): Flooding and heavy rains in Kenya have killed at least 70 people since mid-March, a government spokesperson said, twice as many as were reported earlier this week. The East African country has seen weeks of heavy rains and severe flooding in Kenya's capital, Nairobi, as well as in the country's western and central regions.

Kenya's government spokesperson Isaac Mwaura refuted claims that hundreds of people have died in the ongoing flooding and said the official tally now stands at 70. Five bodies were retrieved from a river in Makueni county, east of the country, after a lorry they were traveling in was swept off a submerged bridge, local station Citizen TV reported. Another 11 were rescued.

Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua said at a news briefing that the government had set aside 4 billion Kenya shillings (\$29 million) for emergency relief efforts, but did not provide further details. More than 130,000 people are currently affected with thousands of houses washed away and others flooded.

## The Abu Ghraib abuse scandal 20 years on: What redress for victims?

BAGHDAD: When the US TV news programme 60 Minutes II revealed images of Iraqi men being abused and humiliated by their American jailers at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq 20 years ago this weekend, the United States-led invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq was just 13 months old.

Toppled Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, who had been captured by US forces more than four months earlier, was awaiting trial on charges of crimes against humanity, and the Iraqi state itself was in the grip of violence and disorder. For many in the Arab world, Abu Ghraib quickly became a symbol of US imperialism and hypocrisy, shattering then-US President George W Bush's repeated claims that the US was a bastion of human rights.

Two decades later, a civil case that has been brought by Abu Ghraib victims against a US contractor that operated at the prison is under way. Many are now viewing Israel's ongoing US-backed military action in the Gaza Strip, where more than 34,000 Palestinians have been killed since October, through the prism of the Abu Ghraib scandal, which first came to light on April 28, 2004, and sent shockwaves around the world. The photographs broadcast on 60 Minutes showed US guards at Abu Ghraib subjecting Iraqi prisoners to various forms of violence, sexual assault and

humiliation. Many of the prisoners had been apprehended by US soldiers on suspicion of being part of armed groups, but according to the International Red Cross, 70 percent to 90 percent of them were innocent bystanders who had been arrested mistakenly.

One image showed naked prisoners heaped into a pyramid with their US captors standing smiling behind them. Another showed a US soldier holding a naked prisoner on a leash. However, the defining image of the scandal proved to be the haunting depiction of a hooded Iraqi man holding electrical wires and standing on a box.

Then-US General Mark Kimmitt, who was deputy director of coalition operations in Iraq and was interviewed for the April 2004 CBS News story, said: "Frankly, I think all of us are disappointed at the actions of the few. You know, every day we love our soldiers, ... but frankly, some days we're not always proud of our soldiers." Subsequent revelations by CBS News disclosed that the US army report on which the US broadcaster had based its original story on Abu Ghraib had in fact detailed "numerous incidents of sadistic, blatant, and wanton criminal abuses" of Iraqis by US soldiers at the prison.

Soon after the photographs of US soldiers humiliating and mistreating

Iraq men were released on CBS News, the International Committee of the Red Cross published its own report on abuse at the prison. The report detailed incidents of abuse witnessed by Red Cross observers from March to November 2003 and carried out "during arrest, internment and interrogation", particularly of "persons arrested in connection with suspected security offences or deemed to have an 'intelligence' value". The Red Cross said it had uncovered numerous examples of violations of the Geneva Conventions by US military personnel. For example, the report said Red Cross observers had witnessed US soldiers mistreating Abu Ghraib prisoners by keeping them naked in total darkness in empty cells.

In the executive summary for its report, the Red Cross said so-called high value detainees "were at high risk of being subjected to a variety of harsh treatments ranging from insults, threats and humiliations to both physical and psychological coercion, which in some cases was tantamount to torture, in order to force cooperation with their interrogators". The abuse was, "in some cases, tantamount to torture", the Red Cross report said.

Private Lynndie England, the soldier pictured holding a leash attached to a naked Iraqi man lying on the

ground at Abu Ghraib prison, which had been a notorious place of torture during the presidency of Saddam Hussein himself, appeared in several prisoner abuse images. In 2005, England was found guilty of six counts of abuse by a US military court and sentenced to three years in prison. She was released in March 2007. Charles Graner Jr, a US army prison guard convicted by a military court of leading the abuse of detainees at Abu Ghraib, was handed a 10-year prison term in 2005 after being convicted of five counts of assault, maltreatment and conspiracy. Graner was freed in August 2011.

Of the 11 soldiers court-martialled by the US military for mistreating Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib, nine were given jail time. But it soon became apparent that American abuse of Iraqi inmates was not confined to Abu Ghraib. Indeed, after CBS revealed the Abu Ghraib scandal, the news corporation started to learn of the existence of army investigator interviews that also brought to light the abuse of prisoners at other detention centres in Iraq, such as al-Mahmudiya prison, a temporary holding facility, for which other US military personnel were also jailed.

In September, Human Rights Watch said: "The US government has apparently failed to provide compensation or other redress to Iraqis who

suffered torture and other abuse by US forces at Abu Ghraib and other US-run prisons in Iraq two decades ago." The existence of the Federal Tort Claims Act, which gives the US government immunity from any lawsuits arising during war, means seeking redress is particularly difficult.

Instead, Iraqi victims of US abuse have been forced to pursue US military contractors, which Chris Bartlett, a US photographer who has been shooting portraits of Abu Ghraib's torture survivors since 2006, noted to Al Jazeera were "hired ... to create a layer of liability distance so the federal government could be shielded from responsibility". Most recently, on April 15 this year, a federal court in Virginia began hearing the case of Al Shimari et al v CACI, a private security firm hired in 2003 by the US government to interrogate Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib.

The defendants are being represented by the US-based Center for Constitutional Rights, which in 2013 won a \$5m settlement for its Iraqi clients from Titan Corp, another military firm working at Abu Ghraib. In the Virginia case, the advocacy group is seeking compensation for three Iraqi clients — Suhail Najim Abdullah Al Shimari, Salah Al-Ejaili and As'ad Al-Zuba'e — who allege that "CACI participated in a conspiracy to commit unlawful conduct including tor-

ture and war crimes at Abu Ghraib prison," where they were tortured.

The eight-person jury in the case retired to consider its verdict. Israel's deadly campaign of air strikes against the Hamas-governed Gaza Strip, which began on October 7, was soon followed by reports of Israeli soldiers beating and humiliating detained Palestinians, which many likened to US torture at Abu Ghraib.

On October 31, the pro-Palestinian advocacy group Jewish Voice for Peace wrote on X: "The footage of Israeli soldiers torturing Palestinian men in the West Bank is horrific. The Israeli military has brutally abused Palestinian prisoners for decades. As the Israeli military wages a genocidal war in Gaza, its soldiers are no longer hiding this abuse from the public." It added: "It's no surprise ... that the same government that tortured Iraqis in Abu Ghraib is funding the same tactics on Palestinians." Sarah Sanbar, an Iraq researcher at Human Rights Watch, told Al Jazeera that a former Iraqi detainee told her images of stripped Palestinians being rounded up and restrained by Israeli forces in Gaza were "very retraumatizing and triggering and took him right back to 2003 and 2004 when he was being tortured [by the Americans] at Abu Ghraib". — Aljazeera



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## A laudable decision for Afghan refugees

**I**N a commendable decision, the Pakistani government recently extended the validity of the Afghan refugees' Proof of Registration Cards (PoRs) until June 30, 2024. This decision, deliberated and passed in the federal cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, is a significant move that underscores Pakistan's continued commitment to humanitarian principles amid the complexities of managing large-scale migrations.

Afghan refugees, who have been an integral part of the Pakistani socio-economic landscape for decades, face the daunting reality of repatriation. The PoRs, which expired on April 1, 2024, serve as critical documents that enable these individuals to access essential services such as education, banking, and healthcare-facilities imperative for any dignified existence. By extending these cards, the government not only ensures these basic rights but also provides the refugees a grace period to prepare for their eventual repatriation.

This extension is particularly poignant given the backdrop of the stringent measures against illegal foreigners in Pakistan. The country has already expelled over half a million undocumented refugees in the first phase of its repatriation program. The second phase targeted Afghan Citizen Card holders, who were documented in a separate initiative by Pakistan's National Database and Regulation Authority (NADRA) in 2017. While the drive towards repatriation is clear, this interim relief provided to PoR cardholders reflects a balanced approach in handling the delicate issue of migration and displacement.

The significance of this decision extends beyond the immediate logistical benefits. It represents a deeper understanding of the socio-political ramifications of returning potentially millions to a homeland still riddled with instability and economic challenges. The extension is an acknowledgment that while the push for clearing illegal residences is necessary for national security and economic management, it must not come at the cost of human dignity and international goodwill.

Moreover, the federal cabinet's actions during the same meeting further illustrate a broader strategy to enhance state functionality and governance. The approval to establish an additional special court in the Makran Division to handle anti-narcotics cases signifies a tightening of legal enforcement against drug trafficking in Balochistan-a critical move given the province's strategic importance and vulnerabilities.

In addition, steps to upgrade facilities at major airports like Lahore and Karachi, as discussed in the cabinet meeting, are indicative of an overarching effort to improve infrastructure and service delivery in Pakistan. These developments, although separate, complement the decision to extend PoR validity by enhancing the country's overall governance and international image.

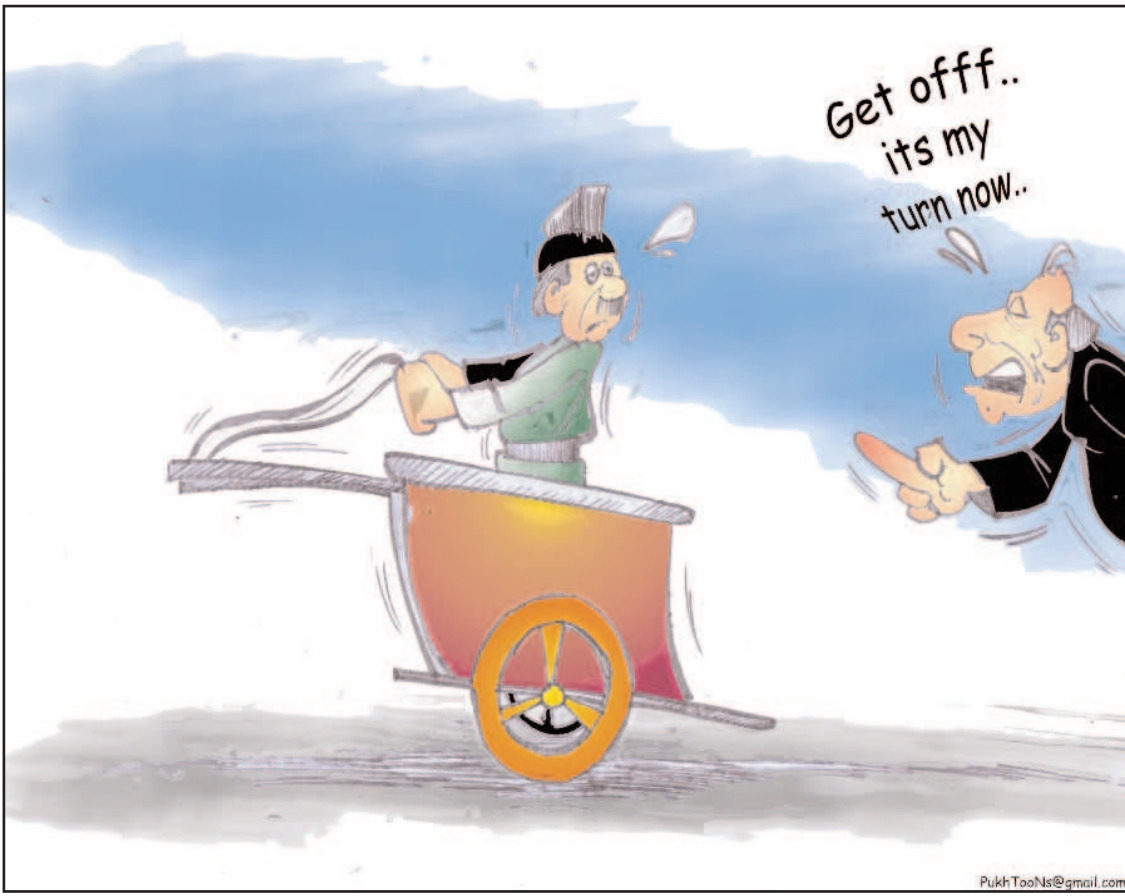
The extension decision also offers a buffer period for further diplomatic engagements with Afghanistan and international stakeholders, aiming for a more coordinated and humane approach to repatriation. It provides a window for NGOs, international aid organizations, and Afghan authorities to prepare for the social and economic reintegration of returnees, potentially mitigating the risks associated with sudden displacement.

In conclusion, the Pakistani cabinet's decision to extend the Afghan refugees' PoR cards is not just an administrative action but a gesture of profound responsibility and foresight. It balances the legal imperatives of managing foreign nationals with the humanitarian need to protect vulnerable populations. This decision should be seen as a template for how nations can navigate the complexities of global migration-asserting control over their borders while respecting international human rights standards.

This approach not only aids those in immediate need but also enhances Pakistan's standing on the global stage as a nation capable of leading with compassion and pragmatism. It is a policy decision that deserves recognition and commendation, setting a standard for others to follow in these turbulent times.

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## World missed warning of 2014 Ukraine invasion

Nikolaus von Twickel

**R**USSIA'S full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022, deserves a place in history books for being more widely anticipated in Washington than in Moscow - or even Kyiv. In the weeks before that fateful Thursday, US officials, relying on their own intelligence sources, predicted confidently that Russia was going to attack Ukraine. In contrast, senior Kremlin officials seemed taken by surprise - judging by their faces - during the Security Council meeting on Feb. 21, 2022, when Vladimir Putin tore up the Minsk agreements by recognizing the so-called Donbas People's Republics as independent, paving the way for all-out war.

Putin had apparently only shared his plans with a few trusted people like Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev. However, the US did not share details of their intelligence widely with its allies either. A fairly good proof for this is that the head of Germany's foreign intelligence service, Bruno Kahl, was in Kyiv for talks on Feb. 24. He had to be hastily evacuated by car.

Poor intelligence is one thing. What is much more serious is that both Ukraine and her friends in the West systematically failed to anticipate a large-scale war. This has much to do with the fact that such a scenario just seemed too irrational. Even in early 2022, when Russia had deployed more than 100,000 troops along the border with Ukraine, many experts argued that this force was too small to take large cities like Kyiv and Kharkiv without massive losses. On Jan. 24, one month before the invasion, a group of Ukrainian military experts argued that a full-scale invasion to capture most or all of Ukraine would be "an adventure with no chance of success."

They were proven right - the initial invasion force failed miserably. But more importantly, the Kremlin did not appear to realize they were setting themselves up for failure. Today, we can safely assume that Putin, surrounded by sycophantic yes-men, simply believed that Ukrainians would welcome his troops with flowers. Few people

guessed the level of misinformation and naivety that must have guided the Kremlin's decisions.

The other compelling argument against a fresh Russian invasion was the prospect that the West would respond with sanctions much harsher than in 2014. In the 2020 book "Beyond Frozen Conflict" (with Thomas de Waal), I argued that both sides were deterred from breaking the truce by "asymmetric mutual deterrence." While Ukraine's armed forces

and potentially costly experience of controlling the Donbas should have actually deterred Putin. Between 2014 and 2018, numerous field commanders were assassinated in the region after they had resisted the Moscow-installed administrations. For example, in 2017, Donetsk sent troops to Luhansk to help depose local strongman Igor Plotnitsky. A year later, Plotnitsky's rival in Donetsk, Alexander Zakharchenko, was killed in a bomb explosion that

tions. While it was clear that Putin was only interested in the potential they had to prevent Ukraine's integration into the West, few predicted that these little military dictatorships would be blueprints for a new, brutal Russian dictatorship that jails the opposition and stifles dissent everywhere.

Could all this have been prevented in 2014? Of course, more Western support would have made Ukraine stronger, and tougher sanctions would have made Russia weaker. Whether this could have prevented the 2022 invasion is debatable. As I argued above, there are many indicators that Moscow did not see itself on a road to war over the years. To the best knowledge, Putin is no strategist. Rather, he is a tactician who decides often hesitatingly without long-term thinking. I am quite certain that his (crazy) plan to conquer Kyiv only materialized during his Covid-induced self-isolation when he must have read too many bad history books and talked to few and too dubious people.

This is not to deny that Western policies were mostly driven by largely naive hopes. Not a single point of the Minsk agreements was ever really implemented, and the belief - popular in Germany - that closer economic ties would foster democracy in Russia was finally proven untrue. But in 2014 and 2015, it was simply more attractive to hope for a return to business-as-usual with Putin rather than declaring a turning point to contain and deter Russia's imperial ambitions.

The fact that more than two years later, Chancellor Olaf Scholz's famous Zeitenwende declaration is still far from implementation only proves how hard it is to change the complacency and ignorance-driven mindsets of Europeans, especially those in the west of the continent. Rather than debating who was right and wrong, Europe now needs to learn from its mistakes. It needs to learn quickly and forcefully because too much is at stake. Our biggest hope for Russia now hinges on the defeat of Putin's armies on the battlefields of Ukraine.

The Moscow Times

***This also holds for the costs of running occupied territories. This was another aspect that led many observers - including myself - to believe that Russia would not break up the status quo in place since 2015, when the "Package of Measures," commonly known as "Minsk 2," was signed in the Belarusian capital. The extremely messy and potentially costly experience of controlling the Donbas should have actually deterred Putin. Between 2014 and 2018, numerous field commanders were assassinated in the region after they had resisted the Moscow-installed administrations.***

were facing an adversary four times its size, Russia was facing the likelihood of much harsher sanctions.

While the sanctions did come, initial expectations that the measures would cripple or destroy the Russian economy have not come true so far. Whether this was anticipated in the Kremlin or not may seem unimportant. The risk certainly did not put Putin off. Again, the lesson here is that Putin and his cronies make different cost-benefit calculations than many Western democracies - if they make them at all. This also holds for the costs of running occupied territories. This was another aspect that led many observers - including myself - to believe that Russia would not break up the status quo in place since 2015, when the "Package of Measures," commonly known as "Minsk 2," was signed in the Belarusian capital.

The extremely messy

bore the hallmarks of an inside job.

These violent troubles made observers speculate about infighting in Moscow over the republics, leading to headlines about the Kremlin's factional infighting. However, the eight years in which the Donbas People's Republics existed as Russian-sponsored lawless black holes in Ukraine's flank, showed that Moscow was totally unwilling to let them return to Ukraine - contrary to both the spirit and the letter of the Minsk agreements. From 2014 onwards, any pro-Ukrainian sentiment inside these regions was crushed by the local State Security Ministries. Their cruel record of detaining and torturing dissenters is unrivaled anywhere in Russia, save Ramzan Kadyrov's Chechnya.

As the years passed, the People's Republics increasingly became infamous as neo-Stalinist outposts for Moscow's imperial ambi-

## Wait until Iran goes nuclear

Baria Alamuddin

**W**HILE the tit-for-tat exchange between Israel and Iran has fundamentally altered strategic calculations about regional security, it is just starting to dawn on the world how much more dangerous the situation would be if both sides possessed nuclear weapons.

Israel's strike at Isfahan, in the vicinity of several nuclear facilities, was a warning shot, while Revolutionary Guards commander Ahmad Haqtab threatened to attack Israeli nuclear sites if Iranian installations were targeted. Haqtab warned of Iran's readiness to revise its doctrine on developing its own nuclear weapons, fueling concerns that Tehran could embark on a final rush toward acquiring these capabilities.

International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors report "frenzied activity" at Iran's Fordow nuclear site, including newly installed equipment, enrichment of uranium with ever greater rapidity, and expansion projects for doubling the plant's output and scaling up uranium production just a "flip of a switch" from weapons grade. Iran's larger Natanz plant is also vigorously churning out highly enriched uranium. Iran is building additional infrastructure so deep into the Natanz mountainside that there are doubts that any kind of US or Israeli strike could touch nuclear activities there.

Experts warn that Iran requires just a few days to upgrade sufficient uranium for three bombs. Manufacture of a crude nuclear device would take about six months, while building a missile-delivered nuclear warhead may require a couple of years, assuming Tehran hasn't clandestinely developed these capabilities already. Documents stolen in a 2018 Israeli raid indicate years of extensive research into the full spectrum of capabilities necessary for engineering nuclear armageddon.

Iran's top nuclear official, Mohammad Eslami, appeared to boast in January that Iran had arrived at military breakout threshold, crowing that "deterrence has been achieved." IAEA director-general Rafael Mariano Grossi condemned this "loose talk" about possessing nuclear weapons, while warning of a domino effect as other regional states raced to acquire their own nuclear capacities.

I recall participating in the 2009 Doha Debate, arguing against those making the case that Iran could be trusted not to build a nuclear bomb. Iran's apologists, including supposed experts and academics, took the view that Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had declared nuclear weapons to be un-Islamic, while asserting a God-given right to enrich uranium. I argued the case for a region wholly free of weapons of mass destruction, although I would go further in advocating comprehensive global nuclear disarmament. Since 2022 this existential threat has been further highlighted by the casual manner in which Vladimir Putin's regime repeatedly expressed its readiness to resort to these horrific weapons whenever it came under pressure over Ukraine.

The mutual embrace between China, Iran, Russia, North Korea and

other rogue states is growing ever tighter. Despite the latest batches of sanctions imposed on Tehran, we have arguably entered an era in which Western sanctions are broadly irrelevant. This large bloc of states, containing a sizable proportion of the planet's population, is able to trade, finance itself, arm itself, and secure its energy needs, while Western leaders impotently yell and decry from the sidelines, in a world in which the dollar no longer holds universal sway. The same processes have utterly paralyzed the global infrastructure for international law and conflict resolution established after the Second World War. So the regime in Tehran feels increasingly untouchable? Damn right it does!

Over past months proxies such as Hezbollah have nervously pulled their punches to avoid disproportionate retaliation from a greatly superior Israel fighting machine. But what about a scenario in which Hezbollah and other paramilitaries fired tens of thousands of missiles at Israeli population centers, while Tehran pointed its nukes at Tel Aviv and dared Israel to respond? Given that Israel already has its own nuclear arsenal, there are numerous terrifying scenarios that could rapidly escalate into a nuclear exchange, leaving millions dead and the region destroyed.

For many years posturing world leaders declared that Iran would not be allowed to continue enriching uranium to 5 percent. Then it was 20 percent. Now the nuclear clock is ticking inexorably toward midnight. Will it be another North Korea, when rhetoric about not allowing Pyongyang to develop advanced military capacities was supplanted by language about learning to live with a nuclearized Korean Peninsula and hoping for the best?

Although Barack Obama's 2015 nuclear deal was deeply flawed, Trump's unilateral withdrawal in 2018 and the imposition of largely ineffective sanctions was disastrous, allowing Tehran to continue its progress toward a bomb. Biden administration officials have long since acknowledged that efforts to revive the 2015 deal are dead in the water, but their failure to consider other options has left a dangerous policy vacuum. Iran's rejection of key elements of IAEA inspections means the watchdog may be incapable of detecting nuclear breakout. As one US official puts it, the Iranians are "dancing right up to the edge."

The horrors of nuclear conflict are by definition unthinkable, and consequently mediocre Western leaders have consistently refused to think seriously about these increasingly imminent threats, or countenance strategic policies that could halt this menace. Twenty years of nuclear negotiations produced precisely nothing, other than marginally delaying Tehran's nuclear ambitions. The current escalatory regional situation is terrifying - but it isn't a fraction as bad as it could be once the atomic ambitions of megalomaniac ayatollahs are realized, while Israel's blood-drunk leaders continue to push threat levels above boiling point, driving the planet inexorably closer to the real risk of nuclear apocalypse.

Arab News

## Building a better world

Li Chao

geopolitical conflicts, China and Germany, as the world's second and third-largest economies, should strengthen coordination and bring more benefits to the world.

The priority is to stabilize the bilateral economic and trade ties and inject more vitality into the two countries' growth through win-win cooperation. Despite domestic political obstruction, German enterprises still attach high importance to the Chinese market. Last year, German companies' direct investment in China reached a new high of 11.9 billion euro (\$12.7 billion), a year-on-year increase of 4.3 percent. On the other hand, various affordable products from China have helped Germany maintain lower inflation and ensure the security of supply chains. The two countries, with their respective advantages, have jointly provided abundant products to the rest of the world and eased global

inflation pressure. Therefore, stable China-Germany economic relations are of immense significance for the world.

Moreover, China and Germany should jointly smooth global supply chains, reject "decoupling" and the severing of industry and supply chains, and break "small yards with high fences". The two countries also need to safeguard and improve the global financial system, uphold the rules of the World Trade Organization, enhance coordination in macroeconomic policies, support the internationalization of the renminbi and the euro, and foster more inclusive economic globalization. Order is considered to be a key element of German culture. "Ordnung muss sein", which roughly translates as "there must be order", was first introduced by Martin Luther in the 16th century. After World War II, Germany rec-

ognized the international order with the United Nations as the core, and has since been committed to solving crises and promoting peace under the framework of the UN system.

As the risk of a "new Cold War" looms large, China and Germany, as responsible countries, should oppose a "new Cold War" and bloc confrontations, uphold multilateralism and peaceful development, and safeguard the UN-centered world order. In recent years, the German political situation has encountered severe challenges such as declining support for the traditional ruling party, and the rise of far-right populism and political polarization. In addition, an economic downturn has worsened the livelihoods of ordinary people, and sparked nationwide strikes in the agriculture, transport and public service sectors, severely disrupting social order.

Germany also faces other headaches such as immigra-

tion problems. As the main destination for refugees going to Europe, Germany is grappling with a massive influx of refugees, which threatens the country's social order. Another problem is its housing shortage.

The Scholz government failed to deliver its promise of building 400,000 housing units a year, drawing sharp criticism. These governance problems threaten social stability and public welfare, which constitute the very foundation of the country's political stability, and in turn have an impact on the global situation. Under the new circumstances, both China and Germany face the challenges of promoting socioeconomic development, and creating a stable environment for growth. The two countries, with their respective wisdom and experience in governance, can share experience in areas such as social security, healthcare and education, an aging society, industrial policy and data security, thereby jointly contributing their wisdom for building a better world.



# Britain needs hard choices, not cushy ‘consensus’ of mistaken elites

Nick Timothy

**T**HERE are times in history when politics is about accommodation and consensus: the search for synthesis between political traditions. And there are times when it is about bold choices: contested decisions by leaders willing to risk unpopularity and failure to take a country towards a different and, they hope, better future.

The examples run through Britain's democratic past. The shared Victorian commitment to unilateral free trade was eventually challenged, first unsuccessfully, before giving way to tariff reform. The post-war consensus of Keynesian demand management, nationalisation and corporatism lasted for more than three decades until it was slayed by Margaret Thatcher.

Today, we have a broad consensus based on two strands of liberalism. An economic liberalism, in which the state tries to stay out of markets and eschews the option to intervene or take on a strategic role. And a cultural liberalism, fused with progressivism, in which social norms and laws that promote restraint are attacked, our common culture is undermined, and the rights and obligations of citizenship are sacrificed in the name of universalism.

There have been attempts to break out from this consensus. On the economy, we have seen several abandoned efforts to launch an industrial strategy, last-ditch interventions such as the nationalisation of train companies, and a growing critique of rentier capitalism - from leasehold reformers to the critics of privatised utilities. On the cultural front, we have seen limited fightbacks such as the Cass Review. Overall, however, the con-

sensus endures. Yet the reality is that it is failing, and we now find ourselves in an age of choices.

On security and defence, for example, the world around us has changed. Russia threatens not only Ukraine, but Nato member states on Europe's eastern border. Iran seeks nuclear weapons as it destabilises not only the Middle East but trading routes and energy exports that are vital to the world economy. China plans to dominate the Pacific, and to do so President Xi is prepared to risk confrontation and war with America.

For all these reasons defence spending will need to increase. At the same time, pensions, health and social care spending will also continue to increase as our population ages further. A faster-growing economy is obviously better placed to take on these costs, but with low growth taxes will remain high by historical standards. Yet the political debate about fiscal policy continues as though these unavoidable facts were not true.

The choices we face about fiscal policy are constrained by our indebtedness and exposure to international bond markets, but there are choices nonetheless: about the distribution of spending, the burden of taxation, the balance between day-to-day spending and investment, and more. And there are choices about reforms to get the economy growing. Many assumptions of the existing consensus - that our huge trade deficit does not matter, that we should not worry about the balance between services and manufacturing, that unilateral decarbonisation must come before industrial competitiveness - ought to

be overturned.

And the same goes for whole raft of other public policy problems. Conservatives shaking their heads and wondering why public sector organisations are woke, or complaining that immigration laws have become unenforceable, should recognise that while the reasons are many, the legal frameworks they have accepted as part of the liberal consensus are the biggest part of the explanation. While culture and political belief is undoubtedly a factor in, for instance, NHS bosses taking up trans ideology, and the sheer numbers of migrants partly behind the failure to enforce immigration laws, conservatives should understand the consequences of the Equality Act and modern interpretation of the European Convention on Human Rights - and argue for their replacement.

As Phil Tinline shows in his book, The Death of Consensus, even when a policy settlement is manifestly failing, change does not come spontaneously nor happily. Neither do new settlements come about while politicians wait for everybody to agree with them. Backed by well-developed and coherent ideas, and carefully constructed plans, change takes leadership - and a willingness to face down opposition. Breaking out of a consensus requires struggle.

But it is vital not to mistake that leadership for a blind faith in political will. As the Liz Truss experiment proved - and if elected, a Labour government would find - it is impossible to will something into existence that is not realistic, and is not well thought through and tightly planned. The size of our debt, our exposure to

the bond markets, our ageing society, creaking infrastructure, poor technical education, and an unbalanced economy are all inconvenient truths that cannot be ignored by any plan to move past the current consensus.

Neither should strong leadership be mistaken for ideological rigidity or the abandonment of pragmatism. Achieving political change is not about singular big-bang moments, but a coordinated, coherent set of policies that take the country forwards. The reductions in immigration we need, for example, require visa reductions quite obviously, but welfare reform and radical changes in our provision of post-18 education and training too. Our trade deficit, budget deficit, regional inequality, over-dependence on consumption for growth, misallocation of pensions and savings into government debt, and other problems are all interconnected, which means any programme of future changes must be carefully constructed.

And change is undoubtedly what we need. Many of our politicians - and civil servants, advisers and commentators - came to political maturity when the political consensus was unassailable. So their instinct is to stay within narrow ideological boundaries, to anticipate and accommodate the positions of their opponents and critics, to avoid taking positions that question received wisdom or disturb polite elite opinion. This is why so many of them - across all parties - remain prisoners of the consensus even as it crumbles. But we are no longer in an age of accommodation and agreement, but an age of hard choices. We need leaders to be brave enough to take them.

# I’d rather live in ‘world’s most dangerous place’ than America

Clarissa Wei

**W**HEN my parents were growing up in the 1970s, they did not consider Taiwan an idyllic place to start a family. It was under martial law and the steady drumbeat of threats from China only seemed to be getting louder with each passing year. My dad still remembers the anxiety that engulfed the island when the United States cut off diplomatic recognition of Taiwan in favor of the People's Republic of China in 1979. "We weren't sure if America would protect us if there was conflict," he told me.

And so, in their late 20s, they left everything they knew and moved to the suburbs of Los Angeles where I was born. They weren't the only ones; roughly 20% of Taiwanese college graduates went abroad for advanced study in the 1970s and 1980s. Few returned. My parents considered America a safe haven and wanted me to grow up with all its comforts. Whereas they grew up in cramped moldy buildings, I spent my childhood in a four-bedroom house with a backyard and a swimming pool. Whereas they walked to school on uneven sidewalks in a cloud of pollution, my mother drove me to school every day in a comfy SUV. My parents were raised under the shadow of martial law, where folks were jailed and killed for speaking their mind. I was raised in the land of the free, where freedom of speech is enshrined in the constitution as a human right.

And yet, decades later, I ended up doing the exact opposite of what my parents did. In 2020 at the cusp of the global pandemic, I moved to Taiwan with my husband. Last year, I gave birth to a baby boy in Taipei. Threats from China have not abated. In fact, tensions have reached such historic highs that Taiwan is often dubbed "the world's most dangerous place" by international analysts. This perception is so pervasive that every time my husband and I leave Taiwan, we are greeted with wide-eyed concern by friends and family. Are we safe in Taiwan? Do we think China will attack?

Though my perspective may be myopic (given the very real possibility of conflict and a military blockade) and comes from a place of privilege (I am a dual citizen of both Taiwan and the United States), there's currently nowhere else I'd rather be. A lot has changed over the past 30 years as Taiwan has transitioned from a dictatorship

to a vibrant democracy.

In Taiwan, power is handed over peacefully while it's no longer a certainty in the US. In Taiwan, guns are illegal. In America, guns are a leading cause of death to children. Taiwan has universal health care; I can pop into any clinic or hospital for immediate and affordable treatment. My entire medical record can be accessed instantaneously via a chip on my health card. In America, medical insurance is opaque and not guaranteed.

The contrasts are especially stark now that I am a new mother. The Taiwanese subway system has designated seating areas for pregnant women and children, and there are breastfeeding rooms at every major station. The city has free play centers for children stocked with a wide range of toys. All new parents in Taipei are eligible for monthly cash handouts, and certified daycares and at-home nannies services are subsidized by the city government. In the States, only low-income families qualify for financial aid.

Of course, comparing the United States and Taiwan this way without acknowledging the nuanced socio-political contexts can be misleading. While the American health care system is notoriously difficult to navigate, it is far more advanced and state-of-the-art than Taiwan's. While Taiwan is great for babies, it can be stressful for school-aged children; the education system emphasizes rote memorization and stifles creative freedom. My husband and I are not convinced we want to stay in Taiwan forever, but America, with its shocking lack of family-friendly policies, is on the bottom of the list of places we'd consider moving to.

"As long as the United States continues to show both symbolic and substantive support and collaboration with Taiwan, I don't think Taiwanese people actually care who the next US president is," Wei-Ting Yen, an assistant professor at Franklin & Marshall College in the US who specializes in Asian countries, told me over a video call. The biggest shift, then, has been how the people of Taiwan perceive the United States. While it remains a popular immigration destination for those who can afford it, America has lost its luster as a sanctuary. My friends in the States are convinced I'm living in a highly volatile and dangerous place. But Taiwanese

people harbor similar beliefs about the States.

Recently at a Chinese medicine shop in Taipei, the owner asked if I felt safe walking down the streets of Los Angeles. He was under the impression that all the major American cities had become wildly unsafe in the last couple of years, rampant with crime and shootings. "Aren't there guns everywhere?" he asked sincerely. "It sounds so messy." "I'm definitely more comfortable here," I responded, not wanting to get into the specifics. He nodded deeply. "Taiwan is safer," he said.

Last year when my husband and I were in the San Francisco Bay Area for a wedding, our friends instructed us not to leave anything valuable in the car. Coming from Taiwan, we didn't think much of the advice, until we were looking for parking one day and noticed all the broken car window glass on the streets. Lately, my parents and many of their friends living in the US have been planning their retirement to Taiwan. Emboldened with dual citizenship and the option of being able to leave the island in the worst-case scenario, they are no longer affected by the anxiety of their youth.

Now in his 60s, my father is convinced the Chinese threat will not materialize. While I don't agree with him, I understand his point of view. Cross-strait tensions have been strained for seven decades already and, with each passing year, the conflict feels more abstract in spite of the heightened rhetoric and airspace incursions because, eventually, you become numb to it. China's Communist Party considers Taiwan a part of its territory - despite never having controlled it. They have not ruled out force to annex Taiwan.

The possibility of war hangs over like a persistent dark cloud. If you think about it long enough, it makes you nervous and clammy. But because it's a plausibility, not an immediate reality, it's easy to ignore. If anything, political violence and upheaval in the States seems far more likely, especially since it would not be unprecedented. On a day-to-day basis, at least, Taiwan seems like the more sensible place to live. I asked my dad - a lifelong Republican - who he believed was a bigger threat this year: Chinese president Xi Jinping or former president Donald Trump. He responded without hesitation. "Trump," he said. "Because he's more unpredictable."

# Netanyahu set to pivot Israel’s focus to Hezbollah

Osama Al-Sharif

**I**RAN and Israel appear to be content with the tentative outcome of what amounted to saber-rattling rather than open war. Israel misjudged by bombing Iran's consulate in Damascus on April 1, triggering a calculated, direct and decisive retaliation by Tehran on April 13. And when Israel finally responded a week later, firing missiles against air defense systems close to sensitive nuclear facilities in Isfahan, it appeared that the threat of war had been averted. Israel came under US pressure to tone down its response, while Iran belittled the Israeli attack and declared that no reply was needed. The direct and grave showdown is, for now, over.

The two sides have decided to go back to the shadow war that has been raging for years. Iran is again relying on its proxies in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Lebanon to engage the Israelis, while Tel Aviv is satisfied to revert to targeting these proxies both openly and covertly. On Friday, the military warehouses of a pro-Iran proxy were targeted in Iraq. No one claimed responsibility, including the Americans. But while the US has managed to rein in the Israelis and stop them from venturing into a wider regional war, Israel is getting ready to ramp up its military campaign in Gaza's Rafah. Its Western allies continue to implore it not to launch a ground offensive into the heavily populated border town. However, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his military have signaled that such an operation is imminent.

And although the world's attention is back on the carnage in Gaza, following revelations of mass executions in Khan Younis and Nasser Hospital, the tensions along Israel's northern border are reaching new

heights. That front is likely to flare up precipitously in the coming days. Hezbollah decided to attack Israel soon after Tel Aviv launched its war on Gaza in the wake of the Oct. 7 Hamas assault. After nearly seven months, the two sides appear ready for a fiercer and more prolonged battle.

Tit-for-tat skirmishes have resulted in a heavy toll for both sides. More than 200,000 Israelis have been evacuated from their homes since Hezbollah started bombing northern Israel. The pro-Iran proxy has mostly abided by the so-called rules of engagement by directing its attacks within a 10-km stretch, but as Israel's reprisals went deeper into Lebanon and hit harder, Hezbollah began hitting further into northern Galilee, including the city of Safed. Israel's strikes have resulted in at least 250 Hezbollah casualties, including key field leaders. Thousands of Lebanese civilians have had to leave their homes in the south of the country. Israeli bombing has resulted in severe devastation, while Hezbollah has concentrated on attacking sensitive Israeli tracking and listening installations.

With a confrontation with Iran off the agenda, Netanyahu and his war Cabinet are now committed to neutralizing the threat from the north. Netanyahu is facing pressure from a polarized Israeli public over his failure to conclude a deal to return the hostages held by Hamas. His war on Gaza does not appear to be fulfilling any of the declared goals. On the contrary, the mission has burdened Netanyahu and his army. The world has turned against Israel and is now blasting it for creating an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. The political fallout of Gaza

has been disastrous for Israel. It now faces genocide charges at the UN's highest court and the International Criminal Court may be forced to levy charges against Netanyahu and the top army brass. A number of European countries are on the verge of recognizing the state of Palestine. The American public is turning against Israel and the Zionist grip over US politicians.

Netanyahu is once more under pressure to call for early elections, which he will undoubtedly lose to his rival Benny Gantz. He desperately needs to regroup and turn retreat into an attack. He is not alone in believing that a war on Hezbollah could turn things round. Netanyahu's government has been under pressure to resolve the fate of the thousands of Israelis who have become displaced as a result of the low-intensity war in the north. These people demand to be allowed to go home. Also, it was Hezbollah that broke a tentative truce in the north and breached a UN resolution to stay away from the common border area. The Israeli self-defense card would work much better against Hezbollah than in the beleaguered Gaza Strip. A strong retaliation against Hezbollah would not receive much objection from Israel's Western allies. It is a case of self-defense, with Israel in a position to present itself as the victim.

Added to this is the fact that Lebanon is deeply divided over Hezbollah's latest gambit. Aside from its local allies, the Maronite Christians and the Lebanese Forces are becoming openly hostile to Hezbollah holding Lebanon's hostage. On the other hand, a full-fledged war against Hezbollah would open a Pandora's box for

Israel. The pro-Iran militia is tenfold stronger than Hamas and has prepared itself for all sorts of scenarios. It can retaliate with full force against an Israeli attack and could strike cities deep into Israel. It also has access to Iranian logistical support, unlike Hamas.

In recent days, Israeli war Cabinet member Gantz has highlighted the challenges the Lebanese front presents, stating that it requires "urgent attention." "We have not yet achieved all the objectives of the war, but we have not given up on any of them," he said. Gantz also emphasized: "The decisive moment is approaching on the northern front at the border with Lebanon." He reassured residents of northern Israel that the "moment of truth" is approaching in terms of how to proceed militarily against Hezbollah.

Hezbollah has been upping the ante recently, indicating that it is not backing down, making a possible showdown even more likely. Iran's position on an open war between Hezbollah and Israel remains cryptic. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian has not mentioned Hezbollah in a few weeks, but has said that Israel needs to end its crimes against Gaza. What that means is anyone's guess. Would Iran come to Hezbollah's rescue if Israel were to wage a total war against south Lebanon? And what would that help look like? Iran is unlikely to risk an open war with Israel and will instead rely on its proxies to keep Israel engaged.

But the case for an Israeli attack on Lebanon is getting ripe. Netanyahu needs to deflect attention from Gaza and the aborted hostage deal. A war on Lebanon could provide that. It would be a calculated risk that he and his allies and rivals seem willing to take.

# What’s happening at Columbia is a disgrace

Jonathan A. Greenblatt

**O**N Sunday, I went to Columbia University just uptown from my office to see for myself what is happening there. As I approached the gates of the university, I saw a seething protest. Drums and chants rang down Amsterdam Avenue. Crowds on both sides of the fence egged each other on, repeating calls for intifada and revolution.

And yet the most sobering experience came from a listening session hosted in the Hillel by the Columbia Task Force on Antisemitism. Approximately 80 Jewish students from across the university came to tell their stories about their encounters with anti-Israel protesters, crowding into a room. Some were crying. Some were yelling in anger. They shared individual stories, each more harrowing than the previous one. Students told me of having liquids flung at them and getting screamed at for simply wearing a Jewish star.

Students illustrated the madness by showing me videos on their phones. One depicted the assault of a Jewish classmate, an Israeli flag ripped from his hand. Another showed a Jewish student being screamed at by a fully masked individual who came right up to his face, his voice shaking with fury. I saw a photo of someone standing in front of openly Jewish students; she held up a sign that read, "Al-Qasam's next targets," a reference to an armed wing of Hamas. I saw images of oversized posters planted on the Columbia quad, each lionizing men Israel viewed as terrorists. Demonstrators calling openly for

Hamas to burn Tel Aviv. Others yelling that October 7 is about to be every day.

To be fair, it is not clear that all of those harassing and assaulting Jewish students are Columbia students. It is quite clear that campus outsiders - even high-profile critics of Israel like Mohammed el-Kurd, Norman Finkelstein and Nerdeen Kiswani - are abundant on campus. But maybe the most jarring moment came when I left the Hillel building. Standing on the corner, a young woman I had seen during the listening session approached me. She introduced herself and literally broke down in tears. She sobbed and sobbed, overcome by exhaustion, and expressed what I heard throughout the afternoon: anguish, desperation, fear.

What I saw in Morningside Heights felt like a postcard from the future, a glimpse of what lies ahead if we don't get our arms around this problem without delay. That's because I have seen firsthand how this situation is unfolding at numerous campuses across the country. And I'm not talking about protests - I'm talking about sheer, unfettered rage. And we shouldn't kid ourselves. While not all of the protesters are violent, the repeated calls of "free Palestine" or "ceasefire now" are not about the legitimate claims of one group of people. They are about marginalizing a group of people, forcibly silencing and shoving them out of public spaces - not because of what they might believe, but simply because

of who they are.

Columbia is a preview of a future where persecution has been normalized. This is not some parochial concern. Virulent antisemitism clearly is a problem on its own, but it also is a harbinger of other forms of hate. In that vein, this virus will spread and other minorities will be targeted. For all of these reasons, it is time for immediate and swift action at Columbia and across the country.

First, Columbia President Minouche Shafik may be doing her best, but she should invite the NYPD back onto her campus to provide the protection that campus security has failed to deliver. And college presidents across the country need to engage with local law enforcement now to develop plans to ensure the safety of their Jewish students. No one should wait for a tragedy to happen in order to take action. Second, no university should permit full-face masking on their campus. This would not jeopardize the health of any persons - you could wear a medical mask to prevent the spread of viruses like Covid. But entire face coverings intended to disguise an individual should not be allowed on any university environment. This is not a free speech issue. It's a public safety imperative. Third, we should reinstitute deterrence: a one-strike policy for those who violate the rules or who break the law. If one student violates the code of conduct, we need the imposition of drastic sanctions, including suspen-

sion. If a non-student enters campus and engages in violative behavior, they should be arrested for trespassing, let alone other offenses as appropriate. If local police are on site, this will be easy to implement.

Finally, donors, alumni and parents need to demand action - and to take action themselves. Every single donor who cares about this issue, who treasures their campus, needs to engage. Stopping funds will get attention. Diverting funds to support nonprofit organizations like the Community Security Service that train volunteers to protect Jewish students, or to universities specifically to support the security of Jewish students on campus, could be even more effective. I anticipate that some critics, even some students, will protest. First, they will gaslight the Jewish victims and complain that it's the agitators who are suffering from political persecution. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Just because someone says the earth is flat does not make it so.

Others will contest that these guidelines would turn a campus into a police state. However, campuses cannot be lawless zones where anarchy reigns. Jewish students need to be protected. Already, agitators are threatening to replicate Columbia-style protests at other institutions, and indeed it is already happening at places such as Yale University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Before this happens, schools need to reassert some measure of authority and retake their campuses from these anti-Israel protests.

# Can Lai end deadlock in cross-Strait talks?

Qi Dongtao

**A**FTER winning the Taiwan leadership election in January with a 40 percent vote share, the second-lowest in the island's electoral history, Lai Ching-te faces the first major test: his inaugural address on May 20. The speech will be closely observed and analyzed by major global players including the Chinese mainland and the United States that are eager to know what is Lai's stance on cross-Strait relations. Democratic Progressive Party leaders, from former island leader Chen Shui-bian to outgoing leader Tsai Ing-wen, have made some friendly gestures toward the mainland in their inaugural speeches.

In his inaugural speech in 2000, for example, Chen promised to not seek "Taiwan independence", change the island's name, write "one country on each side" of the Taiwan Strait into the "constitution" or alter the status quo via a referendum. The mainland's response was to watch and wait, allowing Chen to fulfill his promises. Tsai, on the other hand, vowed in 2016 to manage cross-Strait affairs according to the "constitution" and laws and regulations such as the "act governing relations between the people of the Taiwan area and the mainland area", and avoid issuing sensitive statements such as those on "Taiwan independence" and the 1992 Consensus.

But both Chen and Tsai resorted to "Taiwan independence" to divert Taiwan

residents' attention from their failure to address the island's problems, stirring up anti-mainland sentiments to secure their reelection. The DPP claims that its initial goodwill gesture was not reciprocated by the mainland, prompting it to seek "Taiwan independence". But the fact is that the DPP never truly abandoned its "Taiwan independence" agenda. So will Lai repeat his predecessors' mistakes?

Lai has said he wants to hold cross-Strait talks in order to ease tensions with Beijing. But his election with a thin majority has diminished his status. And the mainland, drawing from talks with Kuomintang, posits that the DPP abandon its "Taiwan independence" agenda and accept the 1992 Consensus that there is only one China. But will Lai agree to these terms?

Recently, Wu Chun-chih, DPP's director of mainland affairs, said the "Taiwan independence party platform" adopted in 1991 was a product of the times and has been effectively replaced by the "resolution on Taiwan's future" in 1999, which has become the DPP's consensus. This could be seen as a response to a suggestion by three US scholars before the election on the island that Lai dismantle the "independence platform" after being elected, potentially moving toward dialogue with the mainland. But a detailed analysis of the DPP's official documents on cross-Strait ties shows the situation is different.

Three pivotal documents shape the DPP's stance toward the mainland: the 1991 "Taiwan independence party platform" advocating for the establishment of a "sovereign and independent republic of Taiwan"; the 1999 "resolution on Taiwan's future" proposed by Chen Shui-bian before 2007; and the 2007 "resolution on making Taiwan a normal country", which pushes for legal independence by changing the name of the island, making it a "United Nations member". But the fact that the DPP bases its stance on the mainland on the 1999 resolution, which asserts de facto "Taiwan independence", is unacceptable. The DPP has not formally announced the "1991 platform" has been replaced by subsequent resolutions, yet the 2007 resolution, which openly advocates for legal independence, should prompt the mainland to respond to the island's provocative moves.

Lai's past remarks, especially after he stepped down as the head of the island's "executive legislature" in January 2019, advocating for a new "constitution" tailored for Taiwan, are seen by the mainland as a step toward legal independence, exacerbating tensions. The three documents therefore are major obstacles to talks between the two sides of the Strait. Clearing these hurdles by fully embracing the one-China principle is essential for any meaningful dialogue to be held. Only by accepting these premises can cross-Strait talks progress.



# Businessmen demands reduction in interest rate

## F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Members of the business community urged the government and State Bank of Pakistan to cut interest rate to flourish industries, trade and businesses and improve the economy of the country.

The business community said prices of import items and raw materials increased exorbitantly owing to gradual increase in policy rate by the central bank, consequently cost of doing business also increasing and inflation also jacked up.

According to details, a meeting of businessmen was held under chairmanship of Industrialists Association Peshawar president Ayub Zakori in IAP office, said in a press release issued here on Saturday.

Besides, IAP former presidents, executive mem-

bers and senior members of the business community were present on the occasion.

The participants of the meeting said that the further increase in policy rate will work under the prevailing scenario.

Ayub Zakori said the previous increase in policy rate to 22 percent has struck a mortal blow to an already struggling business community. The decision has further pushed up the cost of doing business and dampen prospects for reining in cost-push inflation, he added.

“At 25-26pc interest rate, it is hard to borrow from the banks,” he said, adding that it will be hard for the government to earn revenue due to decline in large-scale manufacturing.

Participants of the meeting said it is very hard for

business and industry to survive on high interest rates at a time when the soaring power and gas tariff had already pushed up the cost of doing business, making exports uncompetitive in the world market.

Despite several rounds of negotiations between the government and the business community, no remedial measures have been proposed to spur industrialisation.

Instead, industries have been burdened with countless taxes and duties, the IAP chief added.

“I don’t know where we will end up,” he added.

“Inflation in Pakistan appears more entrenched which mainly stems from substantial exchange rate depreciation, unprecedented hike in international commodity prices, multiple rounds of hikes in energy tariffs and other measures

prescribed under the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme.”

We are going up at a critical juncture for the economy, thus making the future more challenging.

The IAP chief said every sector of trade and industry is severely affected due to stoppage of imported goods, as a result the economy is going towards a total closure and default.

Ayub Zakori said many industries are now facing shortage of raw material and are on the verge of cutting their production.

He furthermore said the current economic situation is very disturbing; SMEs and large-scale industry are suffering from slowness.

The participants said production has stopped and operational expenses are also becoming difficult to meet, which has increased the fear of unemployment.



LAHORE: Vendor preparing garlands to attract customers at roadside.

## Electric fans’ export increased

ISLAMABAD (APP): The exports of electric fans from the country witnessed an increase of 4.75 percent during the first nine months of the current financial year (2023-24) as compared to the corresponding period of the last fiscal year.

The country exported electric fans worth US \$19.760 million during July-March (2023-24) as against the exports of US \$18.864 million during July-March (2022-23), showing growth of 4.75 percent, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).

In terms of quantity, the fan export also surged by 20.48 per cent from 1,085 thousand to 1,307 thousand, the data revealed.

Meanwhile, on a year-to-year basis, the exports of electric fans also went up by 11.61 per cent during the month of March 2024 as compared to the same month of last year.

The exports of fans during March 2024 were recorded at \$3.908 million against the exports of \$3.501 million in March 2023.

On a month-on-month basis, the exports of electric fans increased by 30.70 per cent during March 2024 as compared to the exports of \$2.990 million in February 2024, the PBS data revealed.

## Gold rates decrease by Rs.600/tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs.600 and was sold at Rs.244,400 on Saturday compared to its sale at Rs.245,000 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs.541 to Rs.209,534 from Rs.210,048 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs.192,072 from Rs.192,544, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained stagnant at Rs.2,650 and Rs.2,271.94 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$6 to \$2,337 from \$2,343, the association reported.

## SECP issues license

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has granted a NBFC license to M/s Edufi Financial Services (Private) Limited, marking a significant milestone in establishing the first digital platform for Study Now, Pay Later (SNPL) initiatives in Pakistan.

To improve consumer convenience by providing tailored loan solutions, the SECP recognized various digital loan business models that offer innovative lending solutions, said a news release here on Saturday. The Circular 12 of 2023 was issued with the objective of promoting specific licensing activities within the domain of Investment Finance Services.

The introduction of SNPL category under digital lending licenses was a pivotal step towards launching digital student loans. The initiative aims to reduce funding barriers for low-income students by offering financial assistance via digital platforms, thereby reducing their reliance on costly commercial study loans.

# Rana condemns urea fertilizer price hike

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain on Saturday has condemned the unilateral price hike of Sarsabz Urea fertilizer by Fatima Fertilizer Limited.

He expressed deep concern over an increase of Rs. 561 per urea bag and urged the fertilizer company to withdraws this unilateral increase, said a news release.

The minister said that the fertilizer company must provide solid justification

for sudden increases in the price of Sarsabz Urea.

He highlighted that there has been no increase in gas prices for the fertilizer industry, adding that an increase in the price of urea fertilizer without a corresponding increase in gas prices is unacceptable and unjustified.

Rana Tanveer Hussain said that in case of failure to provide solid justification, the relevant ministry would determine prices according to the laws.

He highlighted the gov-

ernment’s commitment to protecting farmers’ interests and ensuring the stability of fertilizer prices.

Efforts are being made in collaboration with provinces to eliminate hoarding of fertilizers while mechanisms are being developed to check the availability of real-time stock of fertilizers, he added.

The minister said that fertilizer companies should provide facilities to enhance farmers’ productivity across the country.

# LCCI urges PM to halt implementation of SRO

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) appealed to Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif to intervene and halt the implementation of Statutory Regulatory Order (SRO) 350(I)/2024.

President LCCI Kashif Anwar conveyed the business community’s apprehensions regarding the potential adverse effects of SRO 350(I)/2024 dated March 7, 2024, according to the LCCI spokesman here Saturday.

The SRO 350 establishes a critical link between buyers’ tax return filing and their suppliers’ compliance. This measure has triggered a concerning chain reaction, wherein non-compliance among suppliers threatens to disrupt the entire system. Such a scenario could severely impact businesses across every tier of the supply chain, bringing operations to a stand-

still.

Furthermore, the LCCI President said, the requirement outlined in SRO 350(I)/2024 for the submission of balance sheets, which could potentially contradict previously submitted details, and for record, the balance sheet could be examined from the tax returns data, thereby complicating compliance procedures which has raised significant concerns within the business fraternity due to its perceived complexity and potential disruptions.

Kashif Anwar commended the Prime Minister’s recent announcement deferring the implementation of the SRO during an event in Karachi but emphasized the urgent need for further action to save taxpayers from penalties.

The LCCI’s appeal to the Prime Minister comes amidst mounting pressure from various sectors of the

economy grappling with the implications of the regulatory compliance.

Kashif Anwar reiterated the LCCI’s commitment to constructive engagement with the government to address these concerns and ensure a conducive environment for business growth and investment.

The business community eagerly awaits a response from the Prime Minister’s office, hoping for a swift resolution to the contentious issue to foster confidence and stability in the economic landscape, said Kashif Anwar.

## President PBF proposes economic recovery plan

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) Khawaja Mehboob ur Rehman on Saturday shared his national economic recovery plan and reiterated that the incumbent government was successfully carrying out the economic transformation process in the country. He said that the structural transformation in every sector of the economy took some time and they were making all-out efforts in this regard.

Talking to media here Saturday, the PBF President said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was committed to transforming the economy of the country and he also understands the problems of the business community.

Khawaja Mehboob ur Rehman shared the National Economic Recovery plan aimed to create income and livelihood opportunities for the people on the following points, ensuring solvency, revenue and fiscal sustainability, bending the political economy of Pakistan toward economic justice and good governance, reducing deficit through inclusive growth and effective import-export management, transitioning to green economy; ensuring social protection and social safety nets to minimize the adverse impact of structural reforms on the most vulnerable.

Similarly Khawaja Mehboob also stressed on fostering collaboration between the federal government and provinces to promote timely decision-making and avoid duplication.

Such actions will promote the concepts of “one government” and “collective government” to remove all barriers to investment and business activities.

# Turkmenistan to complete TAPI project with regional countries

ISLAMABAD (APP): Turkmenistan is committed to complete the Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India (TAPI) energy project together with the regional countries.

M u h a m m e t m y r a t Amanov, CEO of TAPI Pipeline Company Limited on Thursday said that Turkmenistan has advanced on Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India (TAPI) Gas Pipeline, an energy project with strong commitment according to the International Law, said a press release issued here.

“Turkmenistan is making significant progress on the TAPI natural gas pipeline, which aims to supply 33 billion cubic meters annually to South Asia” he said.

Speaking at the Turkmen Energy Investment Forum (TEIF 2024) currently being held in Paris, Muhammetmyrat Amanov of TAPI Pipeline Company Limited highlighted that the Turkmenistan section of the pipeline is complete and the ongoing discussions to advance the project beyond Turkmenistan are in strict alignment with international

standards.

He said the project emphasizes environmental sustainability by leveraging natural gas to reduce emissions significantly compared to coal and oil, thereby tackling indoor pollution and enhancing regional air quality.

Importantly, Turkmenistan is implementing the project in strict adherence to international law, Mr. Amanov emphasized. “In light of the ongoing Project developments, Turkmenistan remains committed to upholding international law, fulfilling its obligations, and adhering to international norms and regulations.”

This approach reaffirms Turkmenistan’s dedication to global cooperation and legal integrity in executing the TAPI project. Looking ahead, the project’s focus is shifting to the Herat Offtake Strategy in Afghanistan, which will play a critical role in environmental protection by reducing air pollution, while also contributing to maintaining public safety and further promoting the project, he said. CEO TAPI said that additionally, it will

provide early revenue streams and increase confidence amongst lenders.

He said upon completion, TAPI will significantly impact the energy landscape in South Asia, supporting energy security and promoting regional development, all while maintaining the highest standards of international legal practice.

Meanwhile, talking to APP, President FPCCI Atif Ikram Sheikh said that TAPI energy project is essential for the energy needs of Pakistan, the completion of which will fulfill the energy needs of Pakistan and the country’s industry will develop.

President FPCCI said that Turkmenistan is an important country in Central Asia which is giving an opportunity to Pakistan to fulfill its energy needs. He said that Pakistan is currently in need of energy at both domestic and industrial levels and the business community is demanding that this project be completed.

Atif said that by completing these energy sectors, the economic integration of Pakistan with

Central Asia will also be strengthened and the countries of the region will come closer to each other.

Meanwhile, talking to APP, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawri said that TAPI is an important energy project, which was supposed to be completed many years ago but now is the best time to complete this project.

He said that Pakistan is currently facing a biggest energy challenge and the TAPI agreement was signed with Turkmenistan two decades ago, which needs to be executed.

President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that such energy and trade agreements with other Central Asian countries are the need of the hour.

It is pertinent to mention that the TAPI project started on March 15, 1995 when an inaugural memorandum of understanding between the governments of Turkmenistan and Pakistan for a pipeline project was signed. This project was promoted by Argentinian company Bidas Corporation.

# Envoy urges Pakistani banks to open branches in Addis Ababa

FAISALABAD (APP): Jemal Beker Abdula, ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, has urged Pakistani banks to open their branches in Addis Ababa to handle business-related transactions.

Addressing the business community at the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), he said that the Ethiopian government would facilitate businesses and give a quantum jump to bilateral trade. He said that establishing a banking channel is a challenge for him as this instrument would prove a game changer for the promotion of bilateral trade in addition to helping Pakistani exporters to sneak into virgin African

markets.

He said that Karachi and Lahore have been linked with Addis Ababa through Ethiopian Airlines while flights from Faisalabad and Sialkot would also start very soon. He said that Ethiopia is producing 98% green energy which is also being exported to three neighboring countries. He said that the literacy rate in Ethiopia is 75-80% while women are also playing a productive role in almost all segments of life.

He said that special arrangements have been made at the university level to produce educated and skilled human resources. “For engineering, 70% of the syllabus is related to the topic while the remaining 30% covers all other subjects. A separate ministry of labor and skill was created in 2018 and 1500 vocational institutes are also operating to provide sector-specific skills to cater to the immediate needs of the

industry,” he added.

He said that the land of Ethiopia is directly linked with humans of prehistoric age while the Nile River also originates from this country. Mr. Jemal appreciated the role of the FCCI in promoting bilateral trade between Pakistan and Ethiopia and said that Ethiopia was never colonized and its economy is most resilient with a growth rate of 10%.

He said that Ethiopia has ten industrial parks where all types of industry could be established. He termed Ethiopia the mother of Africa and said that there was no discrimination between the White and Black. He said that Ethiopia is also a land of quality coffee which is consumed all over the world. He said that Ethiopia is actually a gateway to Africa as all other African countries could be easily accessed through Addis Ababa.

He also mentioned Hazrat Bilal Habshi and said that through Ethiopian Airlines any destination is just at a distance of a few hours. He said that the air flight from Pakistan to Addis Ababa takes only four hours. He particularly mentioned the trade delegation of last year and said that another delegation was in the pipeline in which Faisalabad would have maximum representation.

He said that investors from Faisalabad could establish any type of industry including textile as abundance of cotton was available there. The surplus products could be exported from Ethiopia to the EU and other countries without any duties or taxes, he added.

About the delegation, he said that its visit is scheduled from May 26-31 and during this visit the participants could not only interact with their Ethiopian

## Court Notice

In the Court of Saima Ehsan Civil Judge-II/Alaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Case No. 4/12/2, Institution 21/2/2024, date of hearing 4/5/2024. Shamsul Wahab Vs. Bakht Zaman Khan etc. Notice to No. 4 Mohamad Israr Khan s/o Dilaram Khan, 11 Dawar Khan, 15 Samer Khan sons of Dilawar Khan, 34 Dildar Khan s/o Mst. Bass Bibi, 41 Samad Khan, 42 Mansor Khan, 44 Mst. Gupta d/o Mst. Bass Bibi, 48 Afsar Badshah, 49 Shahzeb s/o Mst. Sajda resident of Bajkatta Tehsil Gagra District Buner. 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 a.m. dated 4/5/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

## Court Notice

In the Court of Jauhar Ali Safi Civil Judge-I/Alaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Suit No. 89/1, Institution 2/4/2024, date of hearing 30/4/2024. Ubaidur Rehman etc. Vs. Mst. Sheren Baha etc. Notice to No. 1 Abdullah, 2 Najebullah sons of Ubaidullah resident Torwarsak Tehsil Daggar District Buner. 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 a.m. dated 30/4/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.





## In brief

## Sports gala concludes

SARGODHA (APP): A 7-day annual sports gala organized by Niazi Medical and Dental College Sargodha come to an end here on Saturday. The sports gala aimed to increase positive trends of competition and promote healthy activities among the young generation. Hockey, football, badminton, volleyball, tug-of-war and ludo competitions were held. College Chairman Dr. Abdul Ghafoor Niazi along with faculty members distributed prizes among winning teams. He said, "We have to work together to adapt an education system to suit our future requirements and also attract the new generation towards healthy activities." Prof. Dr. Mian Farrukh Imran, Principal Pharma D. Dr. Fatima Akbar Sheikh, Principal DPT Dr. Gibran Arshad, Chairman Sports Gala Prof. Dr. Muhammad Javed Awan and Vice Chairman Prof. Dr. Shehzad Aslam addressed.

## Haliburton leads Pacers

NEW YORK (Agencies): Tyrese Haliburton converted a three-point play with 1.6 seconds left in overtime to give the Indiana Pacers a 2-1 lead over the Milwaukee Bucks in their Eastern Conference first-round play-off series. Haliburton registered 18 points, 16 assists and 10 rebounds in the 121-118 win. Khris Middleton had scored 42 points for the Bucks, who were again without the injured Giannis Antetokounmpo. The fourth game in the best-of-seven series takes place on Sunday, also in Indianapolis. Elsewhere, Luka Doncic scored 22 points and registered 10 rebounds and nine assists as the Dallas Mavericks beat the Los Angeles Clippers 101-90 at home. Kyrie Irving scored 19 points in the final 14 minutes as the Mavericks took a 2-1 series lead in their Western Conference first-round play-off series. Meanwhile, Anthony Edwards' 36 points and nine rebounds gave the Minnesota Timberwolves a 126-109 victory over the Phoenix Suns, who were at home. The Timberwolves now have a 3-0 play-off series lead in the Western Conference for the first time in the franchise's history.

## Martin wins crash-filled sprint

JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA (APP): Jorge Martin extended his lead in the MotoGP standings as he won the Spanish Grand Prix sprint in Jerez on Saturday after Marc Marquez crashed out while leading late in the race. Teenaged rookie Pedro Acosta was runner up to take second in the championship race as nine riders failed to finish. Former world champion Fabio Quartararo started in 23rd of 25 but so spread out was the crash-shattered field that he managed to cross the line third. But the Frenchman was later penalised eight seconds and relegated to fifth for low tyre pressure which cost Yamaha their first podium place of the season. Dani Pedrosa, the 38-year-old Spanish veteran racing as a wild card for KTM moved up to third place, ahead of Italian Franco Morbidelli of Ducati-Pramac in fourth. Riders repeatedly described the track, dappled with damp after morning rain, as tricky. "A difficult race, the track conditions were super hard," said Martin in his on-track interview. Marquez, with his first pole since joining Ducati Gresini, and Martin started on the front row, but South African Brad Binder shot off from the second row to grab the lead on his KTM.



LAHORE: Pakistan's batter Babar Azam plays a shot during the fifth Twenty20 International cricket match between Pakistan and New Zealand at the Qaddafi cricket stadium. —APP Photo

## Nadal gains De Minaur revenge in Madrid



MADRID (AFP): Rafael Nadal avenged his defeat to Alex de Minaur from Barcelona with a 7-6 (8/6), 6-3 victory over the Australian on Saturday to extend his stay in Madrid on his final appearance at his home tournament but admitted he still "needs time" to return to his competitive peak.

Nadal's farewell tour has pitted him against De Minaur twice in as many weeks but this time the result was reversed as the 22-time Grand Slam champion advanced to a third-round meeting with Argentina's Pedro Cachin.

In front of a capacity crowd that included the King of Spain, French football icon Zinedine Zidane, and Real Madrid winger Vinicius Junior, Nadal dug deep to dismiss the world

number 11, despite admitting ahead of the tournament he was still struggling with numerous physical issues.

It was an impressive performance from the 37-year-old but he immediately dismissed the idea it was anywhere near his vintage form.

"No, not yet. It needs time," said Nadal on court.

"I think for moments had been a good level of tennis, I've been able to do some positive things, but on and off. To play over two hours means a lot to me and the atmosphere here is just a joke.

"I really believe that tennis hasn't been an issue for the last two years, more the physical issues. If I'm able to play weeks in a row, then I can see how competitive I can be. That's not the case yet. Just step by step

and let's see how I recover."

Five-time Madrid champion Nadal inched ahead 2-0 early on but lost his advantage in controversial manner as chair umpire Fergus Murphy refused to let the Spaniard challenge a ball from De Minaur that was incorrectly deemed in.

Murphy said that Nadal hadn't clearly indicated his intention to challenge while Nadal argued that he had completely stopped and circled the mark with his racquet, which he believed was enough to trigger a challenge.

Despite Nadal's protests, and his request to speak to the supervisor, Murphy would not relent and De Minaur's long ball was deemed in as the Australian went on to break back and draw level.

The pair traded breaks once more before entering a tiebreak, which Nadal sped to a 6-2 lead. De Minaur saved four consecutive set points but Nadal converted his fifth opportunity to take the opening set after one hour and 16 minutes of play.

The second frame began with a break of serve that went Nadal's way and he was soon up 3-1.

De Minaur battled hard but couldn't create any break point opportunities on Nadal's serve and the match ended on a double fault from the Australian, his 33rd unforced error of the contest.



## Akhter motors round Gaddafi Stadium with ICC T20I trophy

LAHORE (APP): Former pace merchant Shoaib Akhtar took the ICC Men's T20I World Cup trophy round the Gaddafi Stadium pitch on a colorful Rangeela rickshaw among roars of approbation from the capacity crowd during the fifth and last match of Pakistan-New Zealand T20I series here on Saturday night.

The spectators in the stands warmly welcomed the crowd-puller of the year as they stole a peep at the silverware and the former fast-bowling legend Shoaib Akhtar.

Earlier in the afternoon, the ICC Men's T20I World Cup 2024 trophy reached Lahore on the third and last leg of its three-day tour in Pakistan and was put on display at the National Cricket Academy (NCA).

The ICC Men's T20I World Cup 2024 is scheduled to be held in the West Indies and USA between June 2 and June 29. The ICC T20 WC trophy reached Islamabad on April 25 and was put on display in Abbottabad on the second day of its tour to Pakistan.

## Babar, Shaheen aid Pakistan to level series against New Zealand

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Captain Babar Azam's 34th half-century, followed by Shaheen Afridi's four-fer powered Pakistan to a narrow nine-run victory against New Zealand in the fifth T20I of the five-match series here at Gaddafi Stadium on Saturday.

New Zealand invited Pakistan to bat first and got an early breakthrough as Saim Ayub fell prey to William O'Rourke with only eight runs on the board.

Babar Azam launched an onslaught, keeping Pakistan in command, meanwhile

Usman Khan, after a shaky start, joined the party.

Together they raised 73 runs for the second wicket in 45 balls, before Ish Sodhi removed Khan. The right-handed batter scored 31 off 24, featuring three boundaries and one six.

Fakhar Zaman joined Babar Azam on the crease but remained scratchy during their 42-run stand for the third wicket.

Azam top-scored for Pakistan with 69 runs from 44 balls with the help of eight boundaries, including two sixes before he was

bowled by Ben Sears' searing yorker.

Zaman switched gears during his one-sided 36-run partnership with Iftikhar Ahmed, scoring 28 runs but fell in the last over.

The left-handed batter scored 43 off 33 with the help of four boundaries and one six. Shadab Khan (15) and Imad Wasim (4) remained unbeaten as they pushed Pakistan's total to 178-5 in 20 overs.

For New Zealand, Foulkes, O'Rourke, Sears, Sodhi, and James Neesham bagged one wicket each.

## US diplomats unveil ICC T20 WC 2024 countdown clock at Kinnaird College

LAHORE (APP): Four US diplomats in Pakistan led by DCM Andrew Schofer on Saturday unveiled the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 West Indies and USA Countdown Clock at the historic Kinnaird College cricket grounds, marking five weeks to the mega event.

Deputy Chief of Mission, US embassy, Islamabad, Andrew Schofer, US Consul General in Lahore Kristin Hawkins, US Consul General in Karachi Conrad Tribble and US Consul General in Peshawar Shante Moore got together to celebrate the first ICC mega event in the US on the invitation of Kinnaird College Principal Dr. Rukhsana David.

The ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 West Indies and USA countdown clock unveiling was sponsored by the Ali Khan Tareen's Lodhran Pilot Project (LPP). The Countdown Clock marks the enthusiasm and

love of Pakistani fans for the sport — they adore.

DCM Andrew Schofer and CG Kristin Hawkins pressed the button to unveil the countdown clock in the presence of their colleagues from the US Mission. LPP CEO Ali Khan Tareen, a large number of young women cricketers from Southern Punjab and faculty of the Kinnaird College for Women University (KCWU) were also present.

Interestingly, the Countdown Clock has been unveiled the very day the ICC Men's T20 World Cup trophy has reached Lahore and will be put on display at the Gaddafi Stadium during the Pakistan — New Zealand T20I match in the evening.

The US diplomats also played an exhibition cricket match against the Ali Khan Tareen's team comprising young girls from Southern Punjab and these girls symbolized the bright future of women's cricket in Pakistan.

DCM Schofer and CG Kristin Hawkins opened the innings for the US diplomats' team while CG Conrad Tribble stole the show with his power-hitting. He attributed his batting prowess to his baseball skills in his young days.

DCM Andrew Schofer in his remarks said that the US Mission in Pakistan was excited about start of the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup in five-weeks, adding that they were excited about the Americans learning more about cricket.

The US diplomat admired the Kinnaird College for Women University and the LPP projects for the work they were doing in collaboration with the US Mission in Pakistan to empower young women through sports. DCM Schofer also hailed the opportunity to spend time with the young athletes and learning vital tips into the basic of how to play cricket.



## Kane hits double in Bayern win as Leipzig tighten grip on fourth



LEVERKUSEN (AFP): Harry Kane scored twice in Bayern Munich's 2-1 win over Eintracht Frankfurt on Saturday to set a new personal record for goals in a season as RB Leipzig tightened their grip on fourth spot with a home victory over Borussia Dortmund.

Kane scored in each half, finishing off a tearing Konrad Laimer run and converting a penalty, to raise his league tally to 35 goals in 31 games.

Kane is now six goals shy of Robert Lewandowski's all-time single-season Bundesliga goals record and has hit a personal best of 42 goals in all competitions this campaign.

The England captain's goals came either side of a Hugo Ekitike stunner, a day after the Frenchman became a permanent Frankfurt player.

Bayern veteran Thomas

Mueller said his side was "in a good flow", saying since getting past Arsenal in the Champions League quarter-finals "we've been getting better, we've got a grip on things".

Before the match, Bayern coach Thomas Tuchel hit back at claims from the club's honorary president Uli Hoeness that the manager wanted to buy rather than develop players, saying the "absolutely baseless" allegation "could not be further from reality".

Despite the victory, which solidified Bayern's chances of a second-placed finish, both Laimer and defender Matthijs de Ligt were subbed off with injury just days before Tuesday's home Champions League semi-final against Real Madrid.

Dortmund, Germany's other Champions League semi-finalist, had a set-

back ahead of hosting Paris Saint-Germain on Wednesday, being thoroughly outclassed in a 4-1 defeat at Leipzig.

The undermanned visitors, missing captain Emre Can, Donyell Malen, Ian Maatsen and Sebastian Haller, dominated early, hitting the lead after 20 minutes through Jadon Sancho.

The England winger curled an excellent shot from the edge of the box into the top right corner to give Dortmund the lead.

Jolted to life, Leipzig equalised almost immediately, Lois Openda turning in a superb Xavi Simons cross for his 24th goal of the season.

Originally called off-

side, the goal was awarded after a VAR review and the video referee intervened again shortly after, overturning a penalty for Leipzig.

Leipzig then scored two quick-fire goals either side of half-time. Benjamin Sesko pounced on a rebound just before the break and Openda found Mohamed Simakan early in the second.

Christoph Baumgartner added a fourth with 10 minutes remaining to send Leipzig five points clear of Dortmund in fourth, the final guaranteed Champions League spot.

Dortmund goalie Gregor Kobel said "like so often this season, we gifted the opponent too many goals".

With three teams in the semi-finals of the top two European competitions, Germany may however snare a fifth Champions League spot.

Werder Bremen guaranteed first division football next season, winning 3-0 away at Augsburg to go 10 points clear of the drop with three games to play.

Goals from Romano Schmid and Olivier Deman and a Marvin Ducksch penalty took Bremen to a second-straight win for the first time since February.

Wolfsburg also took a major step towards securing top-flight football, scoring two goals in the final minutes to come from behind and beat a 10-man Freiburg 2-1.

In Saturday's late game, Bundesliga champions Bayer Leverkusen will try and keep their unbeaten record alive this season when they host third-placed Stuttgart. No team in Bundesliga history has ever gone through a season unbeaten.

## Tsitsipas ousted by qualifier, Swiatek coasts into last 16



MADRID (AFP): Stefanos Tsitsipas suffered a surprise second round exit at the hands of world number 118 Thiago Monteiro in Madrid on Saturday, while Iga Swiatek cruised into the last 16 on a rainy day at the Caja Magica.

Tsitsipas, who arrived in the Spanish capital with only one defeat on clay this term, lost 6-4, 6-4 to the Brazilian qualifier in just over 90 minutes.

The Greek world number seven had a first round bye and came into the tournament on the back of a third title triumph in Monte Carlo and a runner-up showing in Barcelona in the previous two weeks.

But the left-handed Monteiro looked more comfortable on court, benefiting from having already won three matches this week, through qualifying and the main draw.

Monteiro, 29, landed a stunning 89 per cent of his first serves in throughout the clash with Tsitsipas, who saved three match points in the last two games but yielded on the fourth, to gift his opponent a milestone victory.

"For sure this is one of the biggest wins of my career," said Monteiro, who is through to the third round

at a Masters 1000 event for the first time.

"I knew it was a really tough match but I tried to believe in myself the whole time. I was feeling good on the court, I like to play on clay in altitude."

Since the start of 2021, this is just the second time in 11 Masters clay tournaments where Tsitsipas has not made at least the quarter-finals, and the 25-year-old Greek was disappointed by his performance.

"I just wish I was able to return the way I did in the last game," said Tsitsipas.

"I felt out of rhythm the entire match on my returns. I felt very disbalanced and just my body was going all over the place."

"It's not a great feeling, of course, but I have to accept it and move on. I was not perhaps 100 per cent ready for this match."

- 'Can still improve' -

Top seed Jannik Sinner has no such problem in reaching the third round.

He extended his unbeaten record against fellow Italians to 13-0 by defeating his Davis Cup teammate and good friend Lorenzo Sonego 6-0, 6-3 in just 69 minutes.

Through to the third round in Madrid for the second time in three appear-

ances, the top seed will face Jordan Thompson or Pavel Kotov for a place in the last 16.

Sinner dropped just four points behind his first serve against Sonego and faced zero break points.

"I feel like if you serve well here it's a huge weapon," said the 22-year-old Italian.

"I didn't play here last year, so in the two years since I've been here, I have improved many things."

"I can still improve because here it's very different to play; tomorrow is a practice day, so hopefully I can get a better feel of the court."

Over on Manolo Santana stadium, last year's women's finalist Swiatek eased past Romanian Sorana Cirstea 6-1, 6-1 to book a fourth-round meeting with home favourite Sara Sorribes Tormo or ex-world number one Victoria Azarenka.

Play started with the roof closed due to wet conditions but that had no effect on Swiatek, who leapt to a 4-0 lead inside 22 minutes.

The top seed got broken while serving for the opening set at 5-0 but that only delayed the inevitable as she struck right back to close out the set on the 40-minute mark.

The second set followed a similar pattern and Swiatek wrapped up the victory with a service winner, losing just two games in the one-hour 17-minute clash.

"For sure the weather is different than last year but still I know how to play in these kind of conditions. I feel really comfortable," said Swiatek, who is seeking a third WTA 1000 crown of the season this week.





## In brief

### ANF recovers 74 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (INP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting three operations across the country managed to recover 74 kg drugs and arrested two accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Saturday. He informed that 70 kg hashish was recovered from Saranan area in Pishin. In second operation, 2.2 kg opium, 1.5 kg hashish and 1 kg Ice were recovered from an accused rounded up near Motorway Toll Plaza Shekhupura. In third operation, 150 grams Ice was recovered from an accused arrested in Hayatabad Peshawar. Separate cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused while further investigations are under process.

### 116,200 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Saturday released 116,200 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 179,000 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1450.51 feet and was 36.51 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 36,100 cusecs and 5,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1144.30 feet, which was 94.30 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 56,100 cusecs and 25,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 43,300, 53,000, 84,800 and 19,800 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 66,300 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 11,400 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### Construction of parking plazas

RAWALPINDI (APP): Provincial Minister for Transport Bilal Akbar Khan said that parking plazas would be constructed soon to curb traffic and parking issues in Murree. Punjab government will take all possible measures for tourist facilities. He expressed these views while talking to the media during his visit to Murree on Saturday. The minister visited the Murree on the directions of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif as a follow-up to 'Murree expansion plan'. The minister examined the proposed sites for parking and discussed possibilities and opportunities for the construction of parking plazas. He also visited Murree's General Bus Stand and exchanged views with transporters on prevailing traffic issues and possible solutions. In his media interaction, the minister informed that the rush would be reduced after the placement of the parking lot. The Punjab government will take all possible measures to facilitate tourists along with providing quality travel facilities in Murree. The Secretary Transport Authority Murree will also be appointed soon, he said adding that strict action would be taken against all illegal bus stands in Murree. Earlier, DC Agha Zaeer Abbas Shirazi briefed the minister regarding traffic and parking issues. Secretary Transport Punjab, Ahmed Javed Qazi and AC Captain (Rtd) Abdul Wahab Khan were also present during the visit by the minister.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi chairing a meeting regarding improving Law & order situation and crackdown against criminals in the capital. —APP Photo

## Tharii-Ranipur section to be completed by Dec 2024: Abdul Aleem

ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan has said that the repair work of the 52 km long Tharii-Ranipur section would be completed by December 2024 at the cost of Rs 498 million. He expressed these views while responding to an attention notice in the National Assembly presented by the members of the National Assembly, Ms Nafisa Shah, Ms Naz Baloch and Ms Mehtab Akbar Rashidi, in which attention was drawn to the immediate repair of the highway as mentioned above.

Giving details of the repair work, Aleem Khan

said that repairing the Tharii-Ranipur section schemes was in the procurement process and their financial bids had been opened on April 24, 2024. He hoped that the documentation would be completed in the next two to three weeks while the construction and repair work would be started soon and would be completed by December 2024, according to the schedule.

Aleem Khan informed that the old alignment of the Ranipur section passes through the Sindh cities of Khairpur, Kot DG and Kumba, adding when the N-5 was converted into double, the distance

between Tharii and Ranipur was also decreased.

The minister reiterated his determination that the ongoing construction and repair projects of national highways and motorways across the country including the Sukkur-Hyderabad Motorway and Babu Sir Top Tunnel on the Gilgit-Rawalpindi highway would be completed on priority which will make travelling easier and safe.

Abdul Aleem Khan said he was monitoring the construction of motorways and national highways personally to ensure timely and international standard construction.

## HC attends funeral prayer of Faraz Tahir

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan High Commissioner to Australia Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri has attended the funeral of Faraz Ahmed Tahir, a victim of Bondi Junction incident.

The funeral ceremony was attended by Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, NSW Premier, MPs, Senators, and a large number of community members. The high commissioner said that Faraz laid down his life to save others. His bravery, courage, and selflessness would always be remembered, a post on Platform X said on Saturday.

He also conveyed sympathies and prayed for all the victims of the tragic events of Bondi Junction and wished fast and full recovery of the injured, including another Pakistani hero Muhammad Taha.

## Youth arrested

RAWALPINDI (INP): Police have apprehended a young man who orchestrated his own kidnapping drama, aiming to extort a staggering one crore rupees from his own family. The incident unfolded within the jurisdiction of Nasirabad police station, where the youth's father filed a complaint on April 25th, prompting swift police action.

Upon investigation, it was revealed that the young man, accompanied by his friends, meticulously staged the abduction to demand the exorbitant ransom from his unsuspecting father. Identified as Sajid, Aftab, and Qasim, all three culprits have been taken into custody, with charges to be brought against them in court based on substantial evidence.

Police authorities disclosed that the main culprit, Sajid, had conspired with his friends to carry out the elaborate scheme, which unfolded in the Chakri area, under the jurisdiction of Nasirabad police station.

This incident comes in the wake of another case just two days prior, where police in Muzaffargarh pursued a similarly concocted kidnapping involving a youth from Sindh province.

Named Muhammad Ahmed, the youth not only orchestrated his own abduction but also demanded a hefty ransom from his parents, aiming to secure twenty lakh rupees for his release and fund his desired extravagant wedding and lifestyle aspirations. Authorities have registered a case against Muhammad Ahmed and his accomplices at Rohilanwali police station, with the aid of modern technology enabling them to trace the youth to the Kacha area of Ranipur, Sindh.

## Naqvi directs new IG Islamabad to wipe out crime from capital

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi on Saturday directed the new Inspector General of Police Islamabad to improve law and order situation and crackdown against criminals in the capital.

In a high level meeting here, Mohsin Naqvi assigned a task to the police officials to conduct a strong crackdown against the gangs involved in the sale and purchase of drugs and apprehend also the drug mafia with the use of modern technology.

He said that drug peddlers are the enemies of the future of Pakistan and thus strictest action be taken against them while the surveillance outside educational institutions also be increased to stop the sale of intoxicants including ice and arrest the sellers.

The new Inspector General of Police Ali Nasir Rizvi gave a detailed briefing to the minister interior about the law and order situation in the meeting which

was also attended by all DIGs and CTOs.

The minister ordered to ensure foolproof security of foreign nationals living in Islamabad and to establish a special protection force for the security of foreign nationals in Islamabad while special attention should be given to the security of all important offices and places including the red zone and diplomatic enclave, he added.

He also ordered an effective action against beggar mafia and professional beggars in the city roaming freely in the city.

The minister asked the police to ensure 100% registration of First Information Report (FIR) on the complaints of citizens while using delaying tactics or denying registration of FIR will initiate an action against concerned police station and SHO, he warned.

The minister also directed IG police to immediately deal with promotion

cases of capital Police saying that the promotion is the employee's right that he should get on time because promotion will improve morale of police force.

The minister ensured the police officials that the steps will be taken to bring the salaries of Islamabad Police at par with the Punjab Police while ordered to fill the vacant posts in Islamabad police through fair and competitive recruitment process.

The minister also sought a comprehensive plan to solve the traffic problems in Islamabad while identifying areas of high traffic congestion and suggesting workable solutions, adding that Islamabad Safe City system will have to be equipped with modern requirements like Lahore Safe City.

He said that the government is determined to improve the condition of police stations in Islamabad and good results will be obtained in a few months' time.

## Pakistan, Canada agree to deepen bilateral cooperation in multiple domains



ISLAMABAD (APP): The 5th Round of Pakistan-Canada Bilateral Political Consultations was held in Ottawa wherein the two sides agreed to deepen bilateral cooperation in multiple domains.

The Pakistan side was led by Ambassador Mariam Aftab, Additional Foreign Secretary (Americas), while the Canadian delegation was headed by Assistant Deputy Minister (Indo-Pacific) Weldon Epp, Global Affairs Canada, according to a press release received on Saturday.

The two sides reviewed the entire spectrum of

bilateral relations and identified opportunities and possibilities for further cooperation, especially in the spheres of trade, investment, education, parliamentary exchanges, counter terrorism and people-to-people contacts.

The Additional Foreign Secretary briefed on Pakistan's foreign policy priorities and invited Canadian companies to invest in energy, mining and IT sectors in Pakistan.

The two sides discussed mutual collaboration at international fora, including the UN, and agreed to further deepen

cooperation.

They expressed satisfaction at the overall progress in bilateral relations and committed to enhance cooperation in all fields of mutual interest.

The Canadian side was apprised of recent developments in the South Asian region, especially Afghanistan, Pakistan-India relations and human rights violations in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

The 6th round of Bilateral Political Consultations will be held in Islamabad at mutually convenient dates.

## 69 premises sealed for violating dengue SOPs

RAWALPINDI (APP): District Health Authority (DHA) had sealed 69 premises and lodged 56 First Information Reports (FIRs) on violations of anti-dengue Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) from January 1 to date.

District Coordinator Epidemics Prevention and Control Dr Sajjad Mehmood while giving the details here Saturday said that the district administration, in collaboration with

allied departments had issued tickets to 129 and a fine of Rs 238,000 was imposed on violations of dengue SOPs in 2024.

Dr Sajjad informed that around four confirmed cases had been reported in the district this year, while the number was two in 2022 and 2023 during the period.

The health officer further stated that during indoor vector surveillance, the teams checked 1,372,873 houses and lar-

vae were detected at 3,080 sites while during outdoor surveillance larvae were found at 732 spots while inspecting 361,501 places.

He said that anti-dengue surveillance had been expedited to control the growth of larvae while the spray was being carried out at places that were vulnerable to mosquito breeding. Anti-dengue SOPs were being followed strictly and data was being upgraded on the dashboard regularly, he added.

## Mobile snatcher targeting lady school teacher held

RAWALPINDI (APP): The police on Saturday have successfully apprehended a mobile snatcher who targeted a lady school teacher few days ago.

The culprit, identified as Usman, was held with the help of modern technology, human intelligence, and CCTV footage analysis.

The incident occurred in the Tula Road area of Civil Lines, where the accused, riding a motorcycle, snatched the purse

of a female school teacher and fled the scene. Following the incident, special teams led by SP Potohar were mobilized to track down the perpetrator.

After hectic efforts of the police, Usman was located and arrested. Additionally, the motorcycle used in the crime was also seized.

The recovered purse and a sum of Rs. 6000 in cash were returned to the school teacher by the SHO Civil Lines and a

lady police officer.

SSP Operations commended the exemplary performance of the police team involved in the operation, emphasizing that stringent measures will be taken against individuals involved in such criminal activities.

Expressing her gratitude, the school teacher extended her thanks to the Chief Minister of Punjab, IG Punjab and the Rawalpindi Police for their swift action in apprehending the culprit.

## Saudi ministry warns against fraudulent Hajj schemes

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah has advised pilgrims not to fall prey fraudulent schemes and to exclusively book their sacred journey through authorized companies.

It emphasized that performing Hajj without proper permit constitutes a legal violation, subject to enforcement. The ministry said reservations for performing Hajj rituals within Saudi Arabia are facilitated through the official website and the Nusuk application. Pilgrims from Europe, America, and Australia can book Hajj through the Nusuk platform, while booking from Islamic countries is handled by designated reservation

offices, it added.

An official source from the ministry has cautioned individuals intending to undertake the Hajj pilgrimage this year against fraudulent Hajj campaigns proliferating on social media platforms across various nations.

It said the ministry has diligently monitored advertisements from companies and campaigns, as well as identified fake accounts on social networks. The source said it is imperative for individuals to exercise vigilance against such deceptive campaigns and companies that falsely claim to organize Hajj at enticing prices.

Furthermore, the ministry has expressed gratitude towards the

Iraq's Supreme Authority for Hajj and Umrah, alongside its authorities, for their collaborative efforts leading to the apprehension of over 25 counterfeit companies involved in commercial Hajj activities. It underscored the importance for all nations to take decisive measures in addressing such irregularities and combating counterfeiting practices. The ministry stipulated that individuals intending to undertake the Hajj pilgrimage from outside Saudi Arabia must obtain a Hajj visa. Those holding visit, tourism, work, transit, or other visas are prohibited from participating in Hajj rituals within Saudi Arabia, it maintained.

## Jamal: Govt to promote collaboration with industry

ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan has reiterated government's stance of promoting partnerships and collaborations between government, industry, academia, and civil society to drive innovation and entrepreneurship, particularly emphasizing technologies supporting Sustainable Development Goals achievement.

He was addressing a ceremony organized by Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) in collaboration with IPO-Pakistan on the

occasion of World Intellectual Property Day across sectors, supporting advancements in health-care, sustainable agriculture, and clean energy solutions. Jam Kamal Khan endorsed ICCI President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari's proposals for the establishment of a world class Expo-Center, IT Park and formation of an Industrial Estate demands for promoting trade and investment opportunities in the federal capital.

The minister commerce pledged the incorporation

of business community's proposals in the upcoming federal budget to promote businesses in Pakistan and also said that ICCI's demand for curtailing the tenure of traders elected bodies from two years to one year will be given due weight.

Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that the business community especially the Islamabad Chamber is committed to promote the cause of intellectual property rights for the promotion and strengthening of the businesses.



### Freedom Day celebrated

KABUL (TOLOnews): In a statement on the occasion of the 32nd anniversary of the victory of the Mujahideen against the then communist government, the Islamic Emirate said that it is a day of freedom of the Afghan nation. The Islamic Emirate described the coup by People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan on 27th April 1978 as a dark day in history, as a result of which the people of Afghanistan suffered severe human and financial losses.

### Afghan migrants deported

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations states that more than a thousand Afghan migrants returned to the country after being expelled from Pakistan. The ministry says that a total of 1,243 Afghan migrants returned to the country following forced deportation. On April 25th and 26th, migrants returned to the country through the Torkham border crossing in Nangarhar province and Spin Boldak in Kandahar province.

## Main threat to SCO countries emanates from Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): Russian Defense Minister says the primary threat against Shanghai Cooperation Organization member states originates from Afghanistan.

Sergey Shoigu, speaking on Friday at the meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's defense ministers in Astana, Kazakhstan's capital, criticized America's efforts to regain influence in Central and South Asia after withdrawing from Afghanistan.

Shoigu states that international terrorist groups seek refuge in Afghanistan due to its politically unstable and ambiguous situation.

The Russian Defense Minister regards the deployment of US military infrastructure in the region as a direct threat to the stability of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and emphasizes that these objectives should be seen as a "direct threat to the stability of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization."

According to him, the US seeks to impose a new security system in the Asia-Pacific region to assert its dominance.

The presence and establishment of extremist groups in Afghanistan and the increasing foreign attacks by these groups, especially ISIS-Khorasan, have raised



serious security concerns for the countries of Central Asia.

Sergey Shoigu, in his speech at the meeting of the defense ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, called on participants to protect the organization's stability against "destructive external influences."

He stated, "The main accent should be on the development of contacts through the military line between the SCO and Collective Security Treaty Organization."

He specifically referenced "color revolution" efforts and advocated for creating a system ensuring equal security for all Eurasian countries.

### Anniversary of Mujahideen victory held

KABUL (TOLOnews): Today (Saur 8) marks the 32nd anniversary of the Mujahideen victory in the country.

The Mujahideen, comprising various factions, after fourteen years of struggle, managed to overthrow the last communist regime led by Dr. Najibullah on Saur 8, 1371 (solar calendar), and seize power.

Fazl hadi Wazin, a university professor, told TOLOnews regarding Saur 8: "The defeat of the Soviet Union and the fall of the communist regime on Saur 8 in Afghanistan was the result of the legitimate jihad of the Afghan people; a jihad in which the entire nation of Afghanistan participated. However, unfortunately, internal disagreements among the Mujahideen leaders, as well as other factors including foreign interventions, prevented the realization of the goals of this great jihad and stopped the Afghan people from achieving the objectives they had fought for."

After fourteen years of struggle and the Mujahideen victory, Sibghatullah Mojaddedi was selected as the head of the interim administration for two months, after which Burhanuddin Rabbani took power; however, the continuation of Rabbani's government was met with opposition from some jihad figures.

Sayed Ishaq Gilani, a political affairs expert, commented on the ensuing disputes against Burhanuddin Rabbani's government: "Saur 8 was a day of success for the Afghan nation, which finally brought about a major transformation; however, unfortunately, the groups could not cooperate with each other to offer a system to the Afghan nation that would be acceptable to all and ensure a lasting republic for a while."

The communist ideology faced defeat in Afghanistan on this day; however, after the Mujahideen came to power, internal conflicts began in the country.

Sayed Akbar Agha, a political affairs expert, said: "If we do not keep past experiences in Afghanistan in mind and do not learn from them, foreigners might again succeed in imposing their ideologies on us."

## Uzbekistan embassy hold cultural program

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Embassy of Uzbekistan in Kabul organized a cultural program in memory of Amir Timur Kurgan, Amir Ali-Shir Nava'i and Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur in the capital.

Yadgar Shadmanov, the ambassador of Uzbekistan, said that these historical figures have left a legacy in various sectors for today's and future generations.

Uzbekistan's Ambassador to Kabul said: "These three figures, namely Amir Timur, Ali Shir Nava'i, and Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur, are known in the world of science and culture by everyone because they have left lasting legacies with their pen and creations, and also in the sector of governance."

A number of cultural figures said the holding of such programs are a way to further recognize the impactful roles of historical



figures. "Holding such

gatherings helps especially the Uzbeks living inside Afghanistan to become aware of their identity and culture, and it is very influential," said Mahboobullah

Toran, a cultural activist.

"From the works of our ancestors like Amir Ali Shir Nava'i and Amir Saheb Qur'an, each of them had brilliant records in their eras," said Inamullah Frotan,

another cultural activist.

In this program, a number of youth who had roles in cultural activities and also created literary works were honored by the Embassy of Uzbekistan.

## Afghanistan and Turkmenistan strengthen trade ties

KABUL (BNA): In a meeting between Nooruddin Azizi, the Acting Minister of Industry and Commerce, and Chakiyev, the Deputy President of Turkmenistan, held in Kabul, both nations expressed their commitment to bolstering bilateral trade and enhancing transit cooperation.

The meeting, attended by a high-ranking delegation from Turkmenistan, focused on various areas of

economic collaboration and explored avenues to facilitate the movement of goods between the two countries.

One of the key topics discussed was the implementation of preferential tariff arrangements for Afghan export goods.

Additionally, the meeting addressed the trilateral transit agreement involving Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan. By enhancing transit routes and

promoting seamless movement of goods, the three nations aim to create a more efficient and interconnected trade network in the region.

The agreement seeks to leverage the geographical advantages of the countries involved, promoting economic integration and facilitating trade across borders.

Furthermore, discussions were held regarding the establishment of a major logistics center in

Torghundi, Afghanistan.

The meeting also focused on resolving quarantine issues related to Afghan export and transit goods, a critical aspect of ensuring smooth trade flows.

Efforts to enhance banking relations between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan were emphasized, as stronger financial ties can foster increased trade and investment opportunities.

## Strengthen collaboration in mining sector pledged

KABUL (BNA): The Acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum, Sheikh Shahabuddin Delawar, and Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, Serik Zhumangarin, met in Kabul to discuss and emphasize the importance of enhancing collaboration in the mining sector between the two nations.

A joint statement released by the Ministry highlighted the key outcomes of the meeting.

During the meeting, Acting Minister Delawar provided comprehensive information on Afghanistan's abundant mineral resources, the country's mining capacity, and the established facilities that facilitate mining extraction.

Deputy Prime Minister Zhumangarin, leading a high-ranking delegation from Kazakhstan, reaffirmed his country's keen interest in expanding economic and trade relations with Afghanistan.

He emphasized the need to strengthen bilateral ties



for development, trade, and economic cooperation across various sectors, with a particular focus on the mining industry. Expressing confidence in the expertise of Kazakh companies in the mining sector, he expressed readiness for practical cooperation with Afghanistan.

Both sides expressed their mutual desire to continue fostering working relations and knowledge exchange.

This collaborative approach aims to leverage the meeting between the

Acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum of Afghanistan and the Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan marks a significant milestone in the efforts to strengthen bilateral relations and explore the immense potential of the mining sector.

Both Afghanistan and Kazakhstan are interested about the future prospects of their partnership, which aims to pave the way for sustainable development, increased investment, and shared prosperity in the mining sector and beyond.

## Jawzjan's flower village becomes haven for domestic tourists

JAWZJAN (TOLOnews): The Flower Village in the mountainous regions of Aqcha district, Jawzjan province, is hosting domestic tourists these days.

A number of domestic tourists who visited the area said that the security provision enabled them to explore the country's green and recreational areas.

Flower Village, located in Aqcha district, is situated 110 kilometers from Sheberghan, the capital of

Jawzjan province, where flowers bloom in the spring and perfume the slopes of nature.

The blossoming of these flowers captivates every viewer.

"We came here for leisure and entertainment, and we saw many interesting things like beautiful valleys and lush plains that we had not seen before. It is a very scenic place," said Abdul Rahman, a resident of Jawzjan.

"It has very nice valleys, but many people do not know this area well, so visitors are less frequent, and they lack information that there is such a scenic place here," said Qiyamuddin Qiyam, a resident of Jawzjan.

The department of Information and Culture of Jawzjan said that since the beginning of this year, thousands of citizens have come to this province and visited its historical and

recreational sites.

Saifuddin Mutasem, the head of Information and Culture of Jawzjan, said: "You see that thousands come here for tourism and spend their holidays here."

The department of Information and Culture of Jawzjan said that with the presence of reliable security and an increase in tourists to the province, they are planning to provide facilities.

## Unknown respiratory illness afflicts over a hundred women, children

BADAKHSHAN (Khaama Press): Sources in Badakhshan province report that more than a hundred women and children in the Khawahan district of the province have been afflicted with an unknown respiratory illness.

Zabihullah Amiri, the head of information and culture in Badakhshan province, told Khaama Press on Sunday, April 27th, that an unknown respiratory illness has spread in the Khawahan district of the province, prompting health teams to arrive from the center to the area.

According to reports, this illness emerged three days ago among women and children, but doctors have yet to identify it. It is said that 40 women and 80 children have been affected by this illness so far.

Amiri, the head of information and culture in Badakhshan, states that the



initial findings suggest the illness is "whooping cough," but it has not been confirmed accurately.

Severe coughing and chest pain are mentioned as prominent symptoms of

this illness.

According to sources, 80 children and 40 women have been transferred to the Khawahan district health center.

The long distance to the

health center from Khawahan district and the lack of health facilities in Badakhshan's Khawahan district are cited as significant reasons for the spread of this type of illness.

## Three road construction projects launched in Kabul



KABUL (Ariana News): Three road construction projects worth about one billion Afghanis started in capital Kabul on Saturday.

The projects were inaugurated by Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar.

The projects are: the second phase of Kotal Khairkhan road, the first part of the Shahid square to Qasaba, and the Airport road to Gumruk.

In the inauguration ceremony, Mullah Baradar said that Kabul municipality is working hard to beautify and regulate the city, and people should cooperate with the government in protecting public benefit projects.

He directed the officials of Kabul municipality to complete the mentioned projects on time and with good quality.

The second phase of Kotel Khairkhan road is 2.5 kilometers long and 60 meters wide. This road will

cost 364 million Afghanis and will be completed in 20 months.

The Shahid square-Qasaba road is 1.8 kilometers long and 45 meters wide, which will be built at a cost of 175 million Afghanis in one year.

The Airport-Gumruk road is 2.7 km long and 60 meters wide, which will be completed at a cost of 407 million Afghanis in 20 months.

The projects are funded by Kabul Municipality.

## Remembering fall of Afghanistan's 1st republic

KABUL (TOLOnews): On Saur 7, 1357 (solar calendar), following a coup by the People's Democratic Party, the first republic regime in Afghanistan was overthrown.

Friday marks the 46th anniversary of the day the People's Democratic Party assassinated Mohammad Daoud Khan, who had established the country's first republic, along with 18 members of his family at the presidential palace, effectively toppling the first republic regime in the country. The morning of Saur 7, 1357, began with the alarming sounds of cannons and gunfire.

46 years ago today, tanks and helicopters from the army stormed the presidential palace from both ground and air, marking the first coup against the first republic regime.

Sultan Mahmoud Telayie, a relative of Sardar

Mohammad Daoud Khan, said: "A president who was trying to keep Afghanistan together, wearing a helmet, along with all his family members, was attacked at the presidential palace by the regime of the People's Party and communists trained by the Russians, and at nine o'clock in the morning of Saur 7, 1357, all his family members were martyred."

The coup on Saur 7, 1357 is regarded as a significant event in Afghanistan's history and marked the beginning of years of conflict and rebellion in the country.

After the assassination of Sardar Mohammad Daoud Khan, Noor Mohammad Taraki, one of the leaders of the People's Democratic Party, seized power and initiated another major political shift in Afghanistan.

This rebellion in 1358

led to the entry of the Soviet Red Army into Afghanistan, resulting in a decade-long war between the Mujahideen and the Soviets.

Tariq Farhadi, a political analyst, told TOLOnews: "Saur 7, 1357 (solar calendar) changed the course of Afghanistan; the communist coup led to the entry of the Soviet Union into Afghanistan and subsequently brought America into the Afghan internal wars."

During these conflicts, which lasted nearly ten years, approximately two thousand military and civilian individuals in the country lost their lives, and millions more were forced to flee the country.

On April 28, 1991, the Mujahideen came to power after the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, led by Dr. Najibullah, collapsed.





PESHAWAR: A lawyer casting her vote during High Court Bar Association election.

## KP CM directs officials to remain alert during rains

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur today directed district administrations and other concerned departments to remain alert in view of upcoming rains spell in the province.

In a statement in Peshawar, he directed to make arrangements in advance to minimize possible damage due to rains. Ali Amin Gandapur said the instructions issued by PDMA should be strictly implemented.

He directed to ensure presence of staff of district administration and local bodies in the field and to constantly monitor the possible flood situation in rivers. The Provincial Disaster Management Authority has issued an alert about rains and snowfall in different parts of the province starting from today. The spell will continue till Tuesday.

## Israeli forces kill two Palestinians

WEST BANK: Israeli forces have shot dead two young Palestinians and injured two others as they continued their military incursions into the occupied West Bank. Mustafa Sultan Abed, 22 and Ahmad Mohammad Shawahneh, 21, were shot dead near the Salem checkpoint in the city of Jenin, and ambulances were prevented from reaching the area to recover the bodies of the two slain youths, the Palestinian news agency Wafa reported on Saturday.

"What we know is that they were left to bleed out for about an hour before ambulances were allowed to arrive and attend to them," said Al Jazeera's Zein Basravi, reporting from Ramallah in the occupied West Bank. "This is a violation of international law. Israeli soldiers are obligated by international law to give life-saving aid, even in an instance such as this."

Two moderately wounded Palestinians were rushed to Jenin city, a Palestine Red Crescent Society medic was quoted as saying by Wafa. Al Jazeera's Basravi said across the occupied West Bank, there have been four raids on cities and seven on villages from Friday night, with a village west of Ramallah being the latest to be targeted, and an incursion into Tulkarem ending hours ago.

"We know that Israeli forces went in and took security cameras off the street in front of Palestinian homes that residents use to monitor the raids," he said. At least 20 Palestinians were arrested during the Israeli raids on Saturday, among them children and former prisoners, according to the Palestinian Prisoner's Society NGO. In Tulkarem, Israeli soldiers arrested a young man after they beat him and ransacked his family house, according to Wafa. Since the start of the war on Gaza after the October 7 attacks by Palestinian groups, Israel has arrested 8,480 Palestinians throughout the occupied West Bank, about 3,660 of them held illegally under administrative detention with no charges brought against them. — Aljazeera

## Peshawar High Court Bar Association elections Grand Alliance clinches all major positions

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In the annual elections of the Peshawar High Court Bar Association, the Grand Alliance clinched all major positions, including president, vice president, and secretary-general.

Fida Gul Advocate, representing the Grand Alliance, won the presidency, Alam Khan Adeenzai became the secretary-general, and Miyan Asif Aman secured the position of vice president. Malgari wakeelan managed to secure only the position of library secretary, which was won by Muhammad Arif Firdous. Remarkably, this marks the second consecutive victory for the Grand Alliance's joint candidate in the presidential.

According to unofficial

results, Fida Gul Advocate of the Grand Alliance won the presidency with 1145 votes, while his opponent, Aminur Rahman Advocate of Malgari wakeelan, received 875 votes. Mian Asif Aman, the joint candidate of the Grand Alliance, secured victory for the vice president's seat with 1058 votes, while his rival, Shaikat Ali Afridi of Malgari wakeelan, received 900 votes.

Similarly, for the position of secretary-general, the Grand Alliance's candidate Alam Khan Adeenzai Advocate secured victory with 735 votes, while his competitors, Amjad Hassan Tanoli and Javid Ali Khan, received 665 and 581 votes, respectively. Fawadur Rehman of the Grand Alliance won the position of finance secretary

with 908 votes, while his contender, Ruqiya Saeed, received 571 votes. Ijaz Ali Shah, the Grand Alliance's candidate, secured victory for the joint secretary's seat with 1232 votes, while his competitor, Zahid Iqbal of Malgari wakeelan, received 697 votes. Muhammad Arif Firdous of Malgari won the position of library secretary with 1110 votes, defeating his rival, Noorzeb Khalil, who received 801 votes.

Similarly, for the position of press secretary, the Grand Alliance's Shah Khan Zeb Mahmand secured the most votes with 1242, while Murtaza Qureshi received 707 votes. Notably, Miss Mehwish Ashfaq and Muhammad Ishfaq were elected unopposed as executive members.

## Sharjeel assures resolution of journalists issues

F.P. Report

KARACHI: In important meeting of the Information Department was convened in Karachi, chaired by Senior Minister of Sindh and Provincial Minister for Information, Sharjeel Inam Memon.

During the meeting, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon instructed to prioritize the resolution of issues faced by media workers and organization. In the meeting, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the Sindh government aims to enhance facilities for the journalistic community. It is imperative to ensure the elimination of obstacles that impede journalists from fulfilling their journalistic responsibilities.

He said that the challenges encountered by journalistic organizations should be addressed, and their financial issues resolved. Ensuring the prioritized resolution of problems



faced by both print and electronic media is essential.

Sharjeel Inam Memon said that all organizations, including PBA, APNS, and CPNE, should be consulted regarding the problems and their solutions. Additionally, more measures should be implemented for the welfare of media workers and organizations.

He said that for easy and quick access to the public, social media accounts should be established for all departments. The public should be informed about government projects for public welfare through

media channels. He said that people should be provided with detailed information about education, health, and other facilities and projects.

Secretary Information Nadeem Ur Rehman Memon, DG Information Saleem Khan, Director Admin Mansoor Rajpoot, Director Advertising Muhammad Yousif Kabooro, Director Press Riaz Memon, Director Electronic Media Fida Baladi, Director Publication Imtiaz Joyo, Director Films Hizbullah Memon, Director Social Media Faisal Farooqui also participated in the meeting.

## Trump trial tests his campaign strategy of embracing bad publicity

NEW YORK (Reuters): Meetings with foreign dignitaries at Trump Tower. A staged visit to a convenience store in the New York City Democratic stronghold of Harlem. Daily remarks broadcast on national cable television from outside the courtroom, and a blizzard of angry posts on his Truth Social platform.

In the midst of his New York hush money trial, Republican former president Donald Trump is testing the boundaries of the saying that there is no such thing as bad publicity. Even if you are running for the highest office in the land.

Making his third White House run, Trump is using the elevated media attention to amplify his claims of judicial persecution while simultaneously trying to appear presidential by meeting leaders or envoys from U.S. allies, who have proven willing to call on him despite his facing dozens of charges in four separate criminal cases.

Media are barred from televising Trump's trial and he is a mute observer in the proceedings. Before the trial started on April 15, debate centered on how Trump would balance his dual role as a criminal defendant trapped in court out of public view for most of four days a week.

His movements curtailed, Trump and his campaign have capitalized on the "audience of millions" afforded by cameras that follow his every move, said Republican consultant Jeanette Hoffman, including his staged visits to the convenience store, or bodega, in Harlem and with union workers at a construction site in Midtown Manhattan. "No campaign would want to have their candidate in the courtroom instead of with voters on the campaign trail," Hoffman said. "But I also think they're smart to maximize their moments of support in front of the camera during the trial."

Still, Trump has not had

a campaign rally since the trial started, although two are planned for next week in the battleground states of Michigan and Wisconsin. An incoming storm forced him to abruptly postpone a North Carolina rally on April 20. On his one day off from the trial this week he played golf. Opinion polls suggest that however Trump tries to make the best of a bad situation, the trial carries political risks. They show some Republican voters could turn against him if he becomes a convicted felon, costing him crucial support in a close Nov. 5 election rematch with Democratic incumbent Joe Biden.

The tawdry details being aired at the trial - the case revolves around payoffs to women Trump is alleged to have slept with - could repel the women voters he needs to win in November, said Tricia McLaughlin, former communications director for former Republican presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy.

## KP govt decided to buy local wheat

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has decided to buy 300 thousand metric tons of local wheat. According to the provincial food minister, the government has fixed the price of wheat at Rs3900 per maund and the government has decided to buy 300,000 metric tons of local wheat.

Food Minister Zahir Shah Toro said that 29 billion rupees have been allocated for the purchase of wheat, buying wheat at the local level will save Rs9 billion. It is pertinent to note that the announcement of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has come at a time when farmers have been forced to sell their cultivated wheat on the streets of the city due to the delay in the purchase of wheat in Punjab and the farmers' organizations have also called a protest on April 29 outside Punjab Assembly.

## Moscow, Kyiv target each other's energy sector

MOSCOW / KYIV: Russia and Ukraine renewed attacks on energy infrastructure overnight, damaging plants and causing fires, officials from the warring countries said. The Ukrainian army said in its regular situational update on Saturday that Russia has hit Ukraine with a "massive missile attack". Energy Minister German Galushchenko also said in a Facebook post that the "enemy" had again attacked Ukraine's energy infrastructure.

"In particular, facilities in Dnipropetrovsk, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Lviv regions were attacked. There is damage to equipment," he said. The DTEK power operator said equipment at four thermal power plants was "severely damaged" in the overnight strikes. State electricity operator Ukrenergo added it had disconnected its main overhead power line in the west of the country as a preventive measure.

"We ask all consumers to consume electricity sparingly. Industry is asked to maximise electricity imports and use alternative power sources," Ukrenergo said. Ukraine also said 21 drones out of 34 were also shot down in Russia's latest barrage of attacks. In recent months, Moscow has launched some of its most significant strikes on Ukraine's energy facilities, knocking out a substantial chunk of the production and triggering blackouts.

The Russian Defence Ministry said on Saturday that its forces had carried out 35 strikes in the last week against Ukrainian energy facilities, defence factories, railway infrastructure, air defences, and ammunition stocks. It said in a statement that the strikes, which spanned April 20 to 27, were "in response to attempts by the Kyiv regime to damage Russian energy and industrial facilities". Kyiv says Moscow is escalating its attacks ahead of its nationwide celebrations on May 9, when Russia marks victory in World War II, and while Ukraine awaits the arrival of the highly anticipated US weapons.

Meanwhile, on Saturday morning, Ukraine attacked the Ilsky and Slavyansk oil refineries in Russia's Krasnodar region with drones, causing fires at the facilities, a Ukrainian intelligence source told the Reuters news agency. The SBU security service conducted the attack, the unnamed source said, adding that the drones also targeted the Kuschchevsk military airfield in the same region overnight.

"The SBU continues to target military and infrastructure facilities behind enemy lines effectively," the source said. Al Jazeera's John Holman, reporting from Kyiv, said Ukrainian firms have been developing long-range drones that can go into Russia and target refineries. "That strategy has been happening over recent weeks," he said.

Kyiv officials have said they consider Russian oil refineries legitimate targets despite calls from Western allies to cease attacks to avoid a possible Russian retaliation and increases in global oil prices. — Aljazeera

# I'm shocked by your audacity,' German envoy told

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Pro-Palestinian activists disrupted the speech of German Ambassador to Pakistan Alfred Grannas when he took the podium to speak at the Asma Jahangir Conference 2024 in Lahore on Saturday.

The German envoy was called out by the representatives of the Progressive Students' Collective when he began his speech during the annual conference, the theme of which this year is 'The People's Mandate: Safeguarding Civil Rights in South Asia'. As Grannas started speaking, one of the guests at the event, an activist, who was standing in the middle of the conference hall, said: "Excuse me Mr ambassador. Excuse me. I'm shocked by your audacity that you are here to talk about civil rights."

The activist also questioned the envoy about his government's complicity in the ongoing genocide, as his speech was largely aimed at exploring the state of human and civil rights in South Asia, including Pakistan. "Why your country is brutally abusing the people speaking for the rights of Palestinians," the activist said, addressing the German envoy.

Ambassador Grannas, who was visibly taken aback, began shouting while asking the protesters not to shout. He also gestured at the students while

waving his left hand in the air, asking them to "go out". "If you want to shout, go out, and there you can shout because shouting is not a discussion. That it is [sic]... if you want to discuss..." the envoy said, soon after which the conference went off-air for a while on a digital media platform's YouTube channel.

However, the speech by Ambassador Grannas resumed in a matter of few minutes. The protest by the activist came days after the conference organisers shared that the envoy would participate in the event. However, the curtain raiser about his participation in the event garnered immense criticism from users on X, formerly Twitter, who questioned his presence owing to Germany's support for Israeli offensive in Gaza.

When reached out for a comment by media regarding the envoy's mic being muted, Munizae Jahangir — journalist and board member of the Asma Jahangir Foundation, clarified: "German ambassador mic was not muted at all, we don't have that technology or above all, the intention." She also maintained that the conference had arranged a "full panel on Palestine" and with great difficulty got a noted human rights activists recognised as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty

International. "We have over 22 sessions, 140 female lawyers from across Pakistan (including far flung areas like Turbat, Gilgit and newly-merged districts) 140 prosecutors, ambassadors from more than 12 countries, and 80 speakers," she said. She added that the holding conference every year was only made possible due to the "hundreds of hours of voluntary work go into it by lawyers and journalists who are committed to human rights values".

Jahangir further said that this was "our commitment to Asma's principles of democracy and free speech". The German government has been explicitly backing Israel in its war on Gazans following the October 7 surprise attack by Hamas, providing both diplomatic support and significant transfer of arms, while it has also meted out harsh treatment to protesters demonstrating against the genocide of Palestinians in Gaza.

Over 34,000 Palestinians, including more than 25,000 children and women, in Gaza have been killed following Israel's brutal offensive in the wake of October 7 attack. Almost all countries in the Western and European world have extended their support to Israel despite unabated deadly attacks on innocent civilians.

## Meddling in court affairs IHC judges 'propose contempt proceedings'

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In compliance with the Supreme Court's April 3 order, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) judges, in a unanimous stance, proposed a "contempt proceeding" against any meddling in judicial affairs, revealed sources privy to the matter.

This was stated in the proposal submitted by the IHC judges to the Registrar of the Supreme Court earlier this week. Subject to the institutional consensus, the high court should exercise its contempt of court powers to counter meddling, the sources said quoting the IHC proposal on how to stop meddling in the judicial matters.

In their recommenda-

tions came to the fore today, the IHC judges also proposed a "high court administrative committee" to make a final decision on matters related to the alleged interference in the court's affairs, the sources added. The committee then decide whether to look into the matter on the administrative or judicial side. In view of the seriousness of the matter, the committee should be empowered to send the case to the "full court", the well-placed sources said quoting the judges' recommendations.

A proposed 6 to 7-page draft proposing amendments to the judges' code of conduct was also included in the recommendations.

The draft suggests that it should be made obligatory for the civil, session and high court judges to report any kind of interference in the court's affairs within seven days of the incident, the insiders added.

The judges would inform the inspection judge about the alleged meddling, it added. The inspection judge will bring the matter to the knowledge of the chief justice of the high court concerned. A judge who will not report the alleged meddling within seven days should be considered guilty of misconduct. The sources further said the judges suggested there should be an "institutional response" to any kind of meddling.



ISLAMABAD: District judiciary judges in a group photo with Justice Athar Minallah at the Federal Judicial Academy.

## Hamas says it received Israel's response to its ceasefire proposal

CAIRO (Reuters): Hamas said it had received on Saturday Israel's official response to its latest ceasefire proposal and will study it before submitting its reply, the group's deputy Gaza chief said in a statement.

"Hamas has received today the official response of the Zionist occupation to the proposal presented to the Egyptian and the Qatari mediators on April 13," Khalil Al-Hayya, who is currently based in Qatar, said in a statement published by the group. After more than six months of war with Israel in Gaza, the negotiations remain deadlocked, with Hamas sticking to its demands that any agreement must end the war.

An Egyptian delegation visited Israel for discussion with Israeli officials on Friday, looking for a way to restart talks to end the conflict and return remaining hostages taken when Hamas fighters stormed into Israeli towns on Oct. 7, an official briefed on the meetings said. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Israel had no new proposals to make, although it was willing to consider a limited truce in

which 33 hostages would be released by Hamas, instead of the 40 previously under discussion.

On Thursday, the United States and 17 other countries appealed to Hamas to release all of its hostages as a pathway to end the crisis. Hamas has vowed not to relent to international pressure but in a statement it issued on Friday it said it was "open to any ideas or proposals that take into account the needs and rights of our people."

However, it stuck to its key demands that Israel has rejected, and criticized the joint statement issued by the US and others for not calling for a permanent ceasefire and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza. White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said on Friday he saw fresh momentum in talks to end the war and return the remaining hostages.

Citing two Israeli officials, Axios reported that Israel told the Egyptian mediators on Friday that it was ready to give hostage negotiations "one last chance" to reach a deal with Hamas before moving forward with an invasion of Rafah, the last refuge for

around a million Palestinians who fled Israeli forces further north in Gaza earlier in the war. Meanwhile, in Rafah, Palestinian health officials said an Israeli air strike on a house killed at least five people and wounded others. Hamas fighters stormed into Israeli towns on Oct. 7, killing 1,200 people and capturing 253 hostages. Israel has sworn to annihilate Hamas in an onslaught that has killed more than 34,000 Palestinians.

Meanwhile, three-ship flotilla planning to reach Gaza with humanitarian aid from Türkiye was prevented from sailing by Guinea-Bissau authorities, which took down their country's flags from two ships, organizers said.

Just before the flotilla was set to sail from Türkiye to Gaza on Friday with 5,000 tons of aid, a surprise inspection by the Guinea-Bissau International Ships Registry resulted in the removal of the flags from two of the Freedom Flotilla ships. A press release by the Freedom Flotilla Coalition described the cancellation of the vessels' registry as a "blatantly political move," adding: "Without a flag, we cannot sail."