

### Girls school blown up F.P. Report

MIRAN SHAH: A girls school was targeted by a bomb explosion, causing extensive damage to the privately-owned school located in Drazanda area of North Waziristan. The unknown perpetrators carried out the attack using explosive materials, destroying the educational facility. DPO has stated that an investigation has been launched to determine the culprits behind this heinous act.



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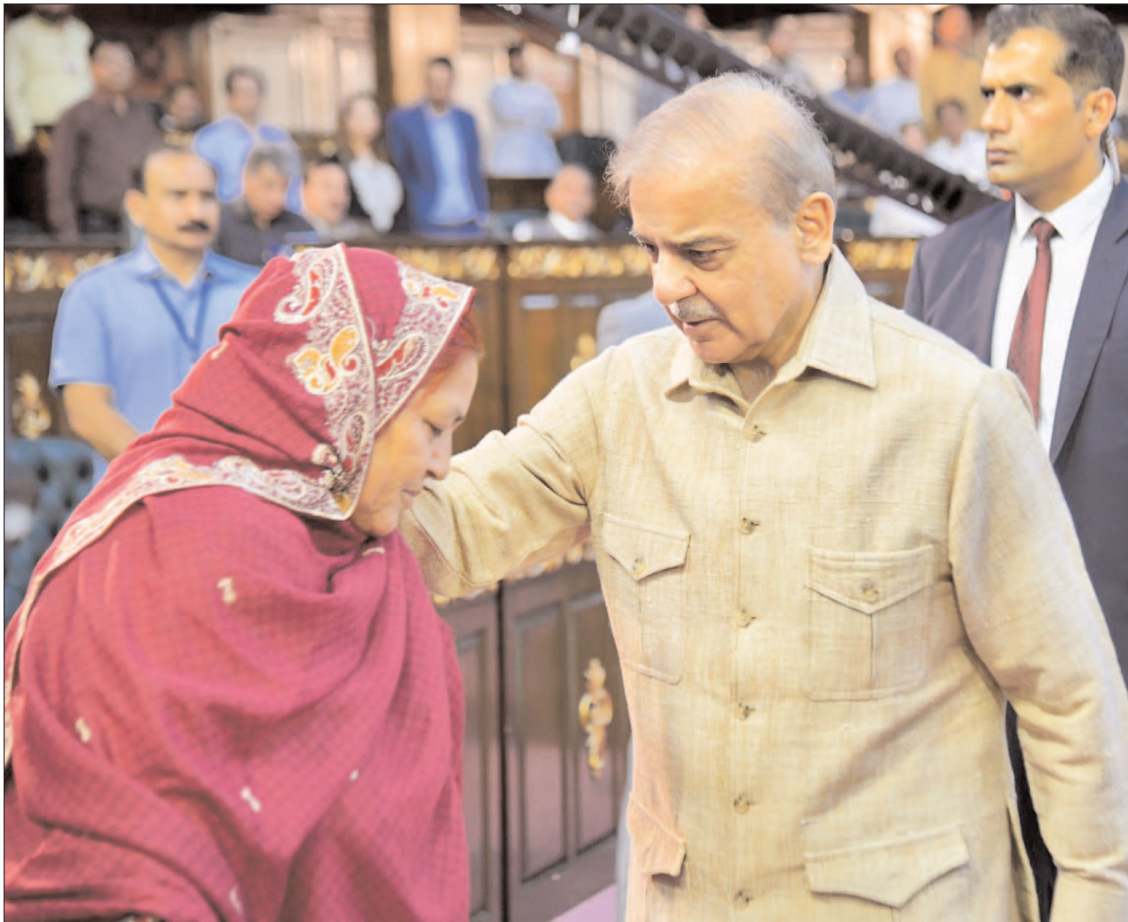
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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif interacting with families of Martyrs at an event commemorating the unfortunate riots on May 9.

## Perpetrators of May 9 incidents would be brought to justice: PM

— May 9 incidents a revolt against State and institutions

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said that the government would definitely go after the culprits of May 9 violent arson attacks with strict punishments through courts so that such unfortunate incidents must not recur in the future.

"There is no reprieve for the culprits of May 9 incidents. I assure you that the law will take its due course and that no such incident will recur in the country," he said while addressing the families of martyrs at the Convention Centre. The event was organized by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to mark the first anniversary of the May 9 (2023) violent incidents and to express solidarity with the martyrs and their families.

The prime minister said that the martyrs had rendered the supreme sacrifices for the safety of the people and the country. He expressed the dismay that an organized group with a negative mindset had vandalized the martyrs' memorials on that day last year.

He said that the perpetrators of the treasonous act, who attempted to create a gulf between the state institutions and the nation, would ultimately face the consequences. Such elements must get exemplary punishment so that they should not dare to indulge such a heinous activity in the future, he added.

The prime minister, while paying tribute to the martyrs, said that they did sacrifice their lives to ensure a safe future for hundreds of thousands

## Pakistan keen to transform Qatar ties into a robust economic partnership

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said that Pakistan was keen to transform its excellent ties with Qatar into a mutually beneficial robust economic partnership.

The prime minister, in a meeting with Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Qatar Mohammed bin Abdulaziz Al-Khulaifi, who called on him here, stressed that the two countries should continue to work together to strengthen bilateral cooperation in all spheres of mutual interest, especially in trade and investment. Highlighting the important role of Qatar Investment Authority (QIA), he said that Pakistan would like to see Qatar expand its investment portfolio in Pakistan in priority sectors. To this end, the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) would be able to ensure swift coordination, he assured.

Welcoming the Qatari dignitary and delegation, the prime minister said that Pakistan greatly valued its historic, cordial and fraternal relationship with Qatar and both countries had always supported each other through thick and thin. Prime Minister Shehbaz conveyed his warm wishes and greetings for the Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrehman bin Jassim Al Thani. The Qatari minister of state thanked the prime minister for receiving him and conveyed a special message of the leadership of Qatar to him, emphasizing Qatar's desire to strengthen the enduring bonds of brotherhood with Pakistan as well as its keen interest in investing in Pakistan. The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs is on a one-day visit to Pakistan as a special envoy of the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the State of Qatar.

of children without becoming orphans. "The whole nation is proud of its heroes for their utmost love for the motherland." At the moment, PM Shehbaz requested the audience to rise from their seats as a mark of respect for the martyrs and their families.

He said that the brave officers and jawans of the Pakistan Army had always on the forefront to cope with the challenges - be a war or

natural disaster. The prime minister lauded the Pakistan Army for supporting the families of the martyrs over the years and added that such a mechanism should be adopted by other institutions as well. He held out the assurance that the government would fully support the initiatives for the welfare of the martyrs' families.

(Continued on Back Page)

## Tarar calls for taking May 9 cases to logical conclusion

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Thursday requested the judiciary to take the May 9, 2024 cases to a logical end.

Addressing a press conference along with Minister for Defence Khawaja Asif here, he wondered what was the reason that the courts did not take these cases to their logical conclusion. He said that the evidence in the May 9 cases was clear and the identity of the attackers was known. Even it was clear who entered inside various buildings and who stood outside and gave instructions, he noted.

Tarar said that Imran's three sisters were involved in the May 9 attacks but none of them was booked. Answering a question, he said that during Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf rule, instructions were issued to prison authorities to force incarcerated Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz leaders to sit on the floor in the biting cold of December. Moreover, they were not provided chairs and pillows, he added.

He said that the then leaders of opposition parties and workers meted out such treatment whereas the PTI founder had a cycle for exercise, a walking gallery and desi chicken in meal. APP/C:mhn/P:mhn/L:irm/E:irm/I:soh/W:soh/R:soh.

## 7 labourers shot dead in their sleep in Gwadar

### F.P. Report

GWADAR: Unidentified gunmen shot dead seven labourers from Punjab in their sleep in Gwadar in the wee hours of Thursday. Police officials said all the seven labourers were belonged to Punjab city of Khanewal.

According to police, the labourers were targeted by the militants as they were sleeping in their residential quarters in Sarbandar area near Gawadar Fish Harbour Jetty. Another labourer was injured in the incident. The deceased and the injured worked at a salon in Gwadar.

The police personnel shifted the dead bodies and the injured to a hospital in Gwadar. Those who were killed in the targeted attack were working at a salon in the coastal city. They had rented a small house by polling money. Police have launched an investigation and carried out raids to arrest the culprits.

Last month, nine people from Punjab were killed after abduction in Balochistan's Noshki area. Last year, six laborers from Punjab were shot dead and two others were injured by unknown armed assailants in the Satalite area of Kech, Turbat.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has strongly condemned the terrorist incident in Gwadar, expressing deep sorrow and regret over the killing of seven innocent people in the heinous act. Mohsin Naqvi offered his heartfelt sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims, saying he equally shares in the grief of the bereaved families.

The minister said beasts who play with the lives of innocent people do not deserve to be called human beings. "We are committed to total elimination of the scourge of terrorism from the country," he added. Meanwhile, Balochistan Home Minister Mir Zia Ullah Langau said the terrorists will be dealt with strictly. He noted that a report of the incident has been called for, and the incident is being reviewed from all

aspects. "The killing of innocent labourers is a cowardly act," he said, adding that the terrorists will be brought to justice. Meanwhile, the Balochistan government also condemned the killing and called it "open terrorism", according to a spokesperson. Administrative officers reached the site of the incident and were in touch with district administration, the spokesperson said. Families of the deceased are being contacted, the spokesperson added. An investigation into the incident has been ordered, the spokesperson noted.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif strongly condemned the killing of seven people in Gwadar. According to media reports, unidentified gunmen shot dead seven labourers in an attack in Sarbandar area of Gwadar in Balochistan early Thursday.

The prime minister prayed to Allah Almighty for peace for the departed souls and sympathised with the bereaved families. "We share the grief of the victim families. Such an attack is a cowardly act of anti-state elements," he said and reiterated the resolve to eliminate terrorism from the country.

Meanwhile, Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has vehemently condemned the heinous murders of seven laborers in Gwadar at the hands of terrorists.

In a statement released by the Media Cell Bilawal House, Chairman PPP declared the merciless slaughter of innocent laborers in Gwadar as a blatant act of terrorism. He emphasized the widespread outrage felt across the nation, including Balochistan, highlighting the collective sense of shame humanity feels in the face of such barbarism. Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari urged for swift justice, insisting that those responsible for this crime be held accountable. He also affirmed the Pakistani nation's solid commitment to the total eradication of terrorism.

## Commander CENTCOM calls on COAS

### F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: General Michael Erik Kurilla, Commander United States (US) CENTCOM called on General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), COAS at GHQ.

During the meeting, matters of shared interests, particularly cooperation in regional security matters came under discussion. Both sides discussed avenues of joint training and reiterated the need for enhancing training interactions between CENTCOM and Pakistan Army. The visiting dignitary acknowledged and appreciated Pakistan Army's successes in fight against terrorism and Pakistan's continued efforts for bringing peace and stability in the region.

## Two Hajj flights leave for S Arabia

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Two Hajj flights departed from Karachi for Saudi Arabia, carrying a total of 330 pilgrims, in the wee hours of Thursday, marking the start of Hajj flight operation. The first flight with 150 intending pilgrims and second flight carrying 180 pilgrims left for the Madina by private flights from Jinnah International Airport Karachi.

The officials from religious ministry and a large number of people were present at the airport to see off the pilgrims. More than 68,000 intending pilgrims under government's regular Hajj scheme would be flown to Saudi Arabia by 259 flights of several airlines in a month-long pre-Hajj flights operation.

# May 9 a black day in history of Pakistan: COAS

## Gen Asim Munir visits Lahore Garrison, lays wreath at Martyrs' Monument

### F.P. Report

LAHORE: General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS) visited Lahore Garrison, on Thursday. COAS laid floral wreath at Martyrs' Monument and paid solemn tribute to the Shuhada who sacrificed their lives for the motherland. COAS was given detailed briefing on operational preparedness of the formation.

While addressing the Garrison officers and soldiers at Corps Headquarters, COAS lauded the troops for their services to nation and appreciated their professionalism. COAS underscored that inimical forces and their abettors have unleashed digital terrorism and are trying hard to create division between Armed Forces and people of Pakistan through peddling lies, fake news and propaganda. However, the designs of all these forces will be defeated with the support of the nation.

COAS asserted that every soldier and officer of Pakistan Army puts his duties and responsibilities first, regardless of any other affiliations or preferences and continue to render extreme sacrifices on daily basis.

COAS said that 9th May will undoubtedly remain a black day in the history of



Pakistan when deliberately indoctrinated and misdirected guided miscreants attacked the symbols of the state and national unity, disgracefully desecrating the Shuhada monuments.

Due to these deplorable acts of criminally orchestrated violence, enemies of Pakistan were provided the opportunity to mock the state and the nation. COAS deplored that now the same plotters were brazenly and shamelessly trying to twist the narrative and implicate the state in this despicable endeavour. This mindset is precisely the reason why there can be no compromise or deal with the planners and architects of this dark chapter in our history. Those gullible elements who did not understand the real motive behind this criminal enterprise and were used as cannon fodder for the political ambitions of

the masterminds have already been accorded reasonable benefit of doubt on the direction of Supreme Court of Pakistan. However, the real leaders who present themselves as victims now will be held accountable for their actions, particularly when there is irrefutable evidence of their involvement and complicity in organised violence and sabotage.

COAS reassured the officers and soldiers of Pakistan Army that no one will be allowed to disrespect Shuhada, their families or the institution. Planners, abettors, facilitators and culprits of 9th May will be brought to justice according to the law of the land and our patience not to respond to daily provocations in this regard made in brazen violation of the constitution has limits and it must never be misconstrued as weakness.



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Crore



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Dec. 2023  
**52,600**  
Crore



New Business Sales  
Growth  
**26%**  
Dec. 2023  
**22,000**  
Crore



Total Policyholder Claims  
Growth  
**41%**  
Dec. 2023  
**24,700**  
Crore



Total Policyholder Bonus  
Growth  
**23%**  
Dec. 2023  
**11,900**  
Crore



Total Shareholder's Cash Dividends  
Growth  
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# Zahid, Muzammil discuss uplift projects in Mansehra



**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Zahid Chanzab, Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism and Culture, called on KP CM's Advisor Finance Muzmmil Aslam at his office Civil Secretariat Peshawar and discussed with him matters relating to the implementation of ongoing and new develop-

ment projects in his constituency Mansehra PK-38. In order to reflect some essential projects in the annual development program (ADP) of Mansehra, certain recommendations and suggestions were also put forth for the inclusion in various sectors including education, health, education and tourism as well as to ensure its timely completion.

Zahid Chanzab on this occasion said that despite being an excellent tourist and serene area, Mansehra remained backward, while it has been intentionally and continuously kept neglected in the past regimes while progress and prosperity has been seen only during the short tenures of the PTI-led governments. Both the ministers agreed that the financial

challenges facing the province would be tackled soon while a new era of development would usher in Mansehra at par with the other neglected areas of the province in the next five years. Zahid Chanzab clarified that that by developing the tourism industry in a vast tourist region like Mansehra, the economic conditions of the people here will improve considerably besides the income of the province enhance tremendously. Advisor Finance assured Zahid Chanzab that in the new budget, sufficient funds will be allocated for the development of all sectors in Mansehra and strong measures will be taken to promote the tourism industry in addition to education, health and other social sectors. It also includes recommendations and proposals for announcing attractive incentives for foreign investors, he concluded.

# Meeting discuss arrangements for Shandur Polo Festival

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: On Thursday, Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Nadeem Aslam Chaudhary, chaired a meeting to discuss arrangements for the upcoming Shandur Polo Festival. The meeting, attended by various officials and stakeholders, focused on ensuring a successful and well-organized event. Key participants included Additional Chief Secretary Home, Secretary Information & Public Relations, Secretary Administration, Secretary Culture and Tourism, Director General Information, representatives of Civil Aviation,

Chitral Polo Association, Chamber of Commerce, Travel Agent Association, as well as Commissioner, Regional Police Officer Malakand Division, Commandant Chitral Scouts, Deputy Commissioners, and DPOs of Upper and Lower Chitral, who joined via video link. During the meeting, Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhary received a comprehensive briefing on the planning and coordination efforts for the festival. Emphasizing the importance of portraying a positive image of Pakistan globally, he urged all stakeholders to expedite their efforts in finalizing arrangements and devel-

oping a comprehensive plan. Chief Secretary Chaudhary highlighted the significance of the Shandur Polo Festival as a cultural showcase for the province, stressing the need for top-notch arrangements to accommodate local and foreign tourists, media representatives, and other guests. He directed the National Highway Authority to accelerate road works to facilitate tourists and ensure the availability of heavy machinery for emergency situations like landslides. Furthermore, Chief Secretary Chaudhary instructed for the establishment of special stalls to promote handicrafts and

locally produced goods of Chitral, aiming to boost the local economy. It was also noted that special PIA flights from Islamabad to Chitral will be arranged to facilitate tourists attending the festival. The final schedule of the polo tournament will be announced soon, considering input from all stakeholders and weather conditions. Efforts are underway to enhance accommodation facilities and overall infrastructure to ensure a memorable experience for attendees. The successful organization of the Shandur Polo Festival is anticipated to have a positive impact not only on tourism but also on the economic prosperity of Chitral.

# 22nd IPMG meeting exemplifies the commitment of provincial stakeholders

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The National Commission on the Status of Women with the support from UN Women and Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, successfully convened the 22nd Inter-Provincial Ministerial Group (IPMG) meeting in Peshawar. The two-day event aimed to provide an opportunity for provincial representatives to discuss on key issues and formulate actionable plans to enhance gender parity in state institutions across Pakistan. In the welcome address, Ms. Nilofar Bakhtiar, Chairperson of NCSW, outlined the vision for the IPMG, emphasizing the urgent

need for inter-provincial collaboration to accelerate gender parity at all tiers of the government. She stated, "The 22nd IPMG meeting exemplifies the commitment of provincial stakeholders towards advancing gender equality. Through our efforts and shared best practices, significant progress has been made in addressing gender disparities." Lansana Wonneh, Country Representative of UN Women Pakistan, highlighted the crucial role of provinces in providing accurate and inclusive gender data. He stated, "As we navigate the path to gender equality, accurate and inclusive data serve as our compass. Provinces play a pivotal role in pro-

viding this vital information, shedding light on the nuanced realities of women's lives". Furthermore, Mr. Wonneh emphasized the importance of comprehensive data collection and analysis in driving targeted policies and interventions to ensure equality for all individuals. Chief Guest of the IPMG Mashal Yousafzai, Advisor to Chief Minister KP emphasized the importance of aligning efforts and leveraging the expertise of all stakeholders to overcome challenges and create a society where every girl realizes their full potential. She committed that the appointment of the Chairperson for the

women's commission of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will be made before the end of the ongoing month. Aftab Alam Afridi, Minister of Law, Parliamentary Affairs and Human Rights Department Government of KP, expressed his unwavering support for initiatives aimed at promoting women's empowerment and gender equality in Pakistan. He stated, "True progress towards a more equitable society begins with acknowledging and addressing gender disparities. During the meeting, UN Women Pakistan and NCSW launched an extensive research study on "Economic Empowerment of Women in Distress – Shelters and Prisons in Pakistan."

# May 9 vandalism: Darkest day plunged country in chaos

PESHAWAR (APP): Widespread protest demonstrations against May 9, 2023 vandalism was held on Thursday in all districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where people have strongly condemned the ransacking of the Govt. and security installations that caused over Rs2.5billion losses to the cash-strapped country. From Chitral to DI Khan and South Waziristan to Kohistan, the civil society members, teachers, students, intelligentsia, political and social workers, media professionals, labourers and farmers took out protest rallies and walks with banners inscribed with different slogans against May 9 vandalism. The protestors demanded the award of strict punishment to all the attackers, facilitators and abettors of May 9 mayhem so that no individual could dare to repeat such gory incidents in future. Strongly deploring violent attacks on Radio Pakistan Peshawar, Jinnah House Lahore and other government and security installations on that fateful day, the speakers said these broad day assaults have not only tarnished the country's image but also fueled anarchy, intolerance and bigotry

in society. In this connection, a large number of students of different educational institutions visited the burnt building of Radio Pakistan Peshawar where they lit a candle light and laid floral wreath to express solidarity with the May 9 victims. Assembled at Sir Shahibzada Abdul Qayyum auditorium of the national broadcaster, the students of Govt and private schools including APS Peshawar lit candles and laid flower wreaths and offered prayers for eternal peace of the martyrs and progress and prosperity of Pakistan. Wajihullah Khan, a student of Army Public School (APS) Peshawar said that May 9, 2023 was a blackest day in the country's history as on this fateful day PBC, APP, Jinnah House, Govt and national monuments were attacked by the violent mob in a bid to destabilize the country. These violent attacks were an attempt to silence the state-run media and deprive people of education and credible information besides damaging the cultural heritage, he added. He said Pakistan was a strong country with a powerful army and a nuclear power

and that our security forces morals could not be shaken through such cowardice acts. Other students including Mudassir Ali and Ajmal Shah said it was heartbreaking to see the burnt building of the national broadcaster today where piles of ashes and broken windows and doors spoke about the negative designs of attackers. Expressing grief over burning of rare drama and music scripts and taprecorders of the national broadcaster, the students demanded award of strict punishment to the attackers by making them an example for others. Pakistan Peoples Party leader and former senator, Rubina Khalid also visited Radio Pakistan Peshawar and declared that the attack on national broadcaster and security installations was like an assault on the country. Talking to the media, she said that armed forces are the pride of the nation and the entire nation expressed solidarity with them. She said the sacrifices made by Pakistan Army in war against terrorism were matchless and the entire nation held them in high esteem. She said the attacks on security monuments and

installations were not pardonable. She said that assault on GHQ Rawalpindi, Punjab Regimental Centre Mardan and putting on fire a historic plane near PAF base Mianwali have exposed the negative designs of inimical forces who have no regards for institutions of Pakistan and should be punished under the law. The miscreants backed by a horde of a political party had crossed all the limits on May 9 after severely damaging the martyrs' monument at Sirgodha and ransacked Jinnah House Lahore. "What message was passed by the miscreants after damaging ancient monuments along with security installations at Rawalpindi, Lahore, Abbottabad, Mianwali, Sargodha, Peshawar and Mardan," she questioned. Muzafarul Mulk, former MNA said that killing of about 100 people and injuring hundred others during May 9 rioting showed attackers' disregard for humanity. Praising the restraint shown by the armed forces of Pakistan on May 9, he said that the Pakistan Army had saved the country from chaos and destabilization.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi talking to media during his visit to buidling of Radio Pakistan Peshawar which was burnt on May9, 2023.

## Nation awaits punishment of May 9 culprits: Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi condemning incidents of vandalism on May 9 Thursday said that nation awaits the punishment of elements involved in inciting people to damage building of historic importance on that day. He was talking to media after visiting the building of Radio Pakistan Peshawar that was burned by rioters on May 9. He also laid floral wreath during his visit to Radio Pakistan. KP Governor said that due punishment should be awarded to elements that provoked people on May 9. He said that country should not be run on doctrine of necessity but by following policy of reward and punishment aiming betterment of people and development of the country. We condemn the vandalism witnessed on building of national importance including Radio Pakistan and Karnal Sher Khan Monument, he said and added that the culprits and provocateurs should present themselves for accountability and forgiveness. He said that law and order situation and provincial economy of KP was deteriorating with each passing day that needs mutual consensus and a reconciliatory approach. He said that mutual cooperation would benefit people of KP besides strengthening its finances. Faisal Karim expressed concerns over incidents of terrorism against security forces, attacks on custom officials and kidnapping of a judge stressing proactive approach to avoid such incidents. He said that we want to abridge gaps between center and province for benefits of people who have chosen KP as their abode. He also questioned the spending of amount received by KP to improve law and order. Criticizing the claims to release party leader from jail forcibly, he said that it would be unwise and against the law.

## Skill education must for uplift: Meena

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Minister for Higher Education, Meena Khan Afridi, stated that in today's era of development, it is essential to provide skilled education to both male and female students. This will ensure that students can secure respectable employment opportunities in the market even before completing their degrees, and their demand will increase, which will help curb unemployment to a great extent. The provincial minister expressed these views during a two-day National Women Youth Career Conference organized by the Department of Higher Education and the Dost Foundation at Frontier

Women Girls College, Peshawar. The college principal, Rosh Zahra, gave the provincial minister a tour of the various stalls set up on the college premises, while the event's chief organizer, Syeda Mehwish Bukhari, gave the provincial minister a detailed briefing on the two-day event. She explained that the main goal of the event is to provide career counseling for students, with about 20 departments' employers attending to inform students about potential career opportunities upon completion of their education, as most of the students only have information about the teaching profession. Additionally, the conference will feature various competitions, including painting, skills, handi-

crafts, naat, mehndi, cooking, and poetry focusing on empowered women. In her speech, Afridi said that nations with self-respect and pride achieve great heights. She encouraged students to discover and showcase their talents, stating that they have the potential to become doctors, scientists, bureaucrats, politicians, and more. She emphasized the need for students to have confidence in themselves, as they are the future leaders of Pakistan and will play a significant role in the country's development. The provincial minister commended the organizers for holding the conference and expressed hope that it would aid students in career counseling.

## Anwar, Farukh discuss FAO projects in KP

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: On Thursday, the Secretary of Livestock, Fisheries, and Cooperative Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Dr. Anwar Ali Khan, met with Farukh Tuyrov, Head of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They discussed ongoing and new FAO projects in the province, particularly in the livestock and fisheries sectors. The Director General of Livestock and Dairy Development Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Dr. Asal Khan, was also present during the meeting. Mr. Farukh briefed Dr. Anwar Ali on FAO schemes and discussed facilitating and training farmers to enhance agricultural business development, increase agricultural productivity, and

connect the sector with mainstream markets. He further stated that the organization is committed to transforming the dairy sector in the province on modern lines to achieve better results and higher income. The Secretary of Livestock appreciated FAO's continuous efforts towards the welfare of farmers and ensuring food security in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Discussing the establishment of Livestock Farmers Field Schools (LFFS), Mr. Farukh said that FAO would provide an effective platform for small-scale dairy farmers to collectively address their issues and enhance their understanding and expertise, which would lead to numerous improvements in the sector. Recognizing the importance of market connectivity, they agreed to strengthen marketing

capabilities by fostering closer ties with urban markets. They noted that this is a crucial step for the success of small-scale dairy businesses. LFFS will primarily comprise small-scale dairy farmers with government support, providing opportunities for other progressive dairy farmers in the surrounding areas. Mr. Farukh highlighted that improved access to high-quality food, fodder, and technologies will drive further positive changes in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's dairy sector, resulting in increased milk production to meet the growing demand in the province. He added that under FAO's Technical Cooperation Programme, a new project aims to enhance fish farming methods in the province and promote overall economic development.



PESHAWAR: Students of APS observing candle vigil in memory of the victims of May 9 at Radio Pakistan.

The PMLN leader said these acts of vandalism and arson were very heinous crimes and demanded speedy trial of May 9 vandalism cases under the law. He said May 9 vandalism had raised many questions including whether ransacking of security and national installations are justifiable in case of an arrest of a political leader or putting him in jail in corruption cases. They said that May 9

He further claimed that the PTI founder had tried hard to destabilize the country through continued agitation, and a provocative attitude that tarnished the country's image and ruined the national economy. He also questioned whether our political leaders are capable enough to quickly respond and counter such untoward incidents. They said that May 9

vandalism had taught us to unite against inimical forces and concentrate on training political workers to promote tolerance and harmony in society besides strengthening democracy in the country. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi visited the mausoleum of Kargil War hero Captain Karnal Sher Khan Shaheed (NH) at Swabi and

laid floral wreath on the grave of gallant officer of Pakistan Army. He paid rich tributes to the hero of Kargil War and held his sacrifice in high esteem. The Governor recited fatiha for eternal peace of Captain Karnal Sher Khan Shaheed and prayed for the elevation of ranks of all the martyrs including Karnal Sher Khan and stability and development of the country. Talking to media, he said that May 9 vandalism had badly damaged the image of the country. He said on May 9 last year, the negative interest of the enemies of Pakistan were fulfilled by setting on fire the government and security installations. "The whole nation is waiting for award of strict punishment to all attackers of May 9, vandalism" Faisal Karim Kundi said. "If the attackers of May 9 are not punished today, then tomorrow some other groups will come out by carrying out such a heinous acts," the Governor said. He said that attack on martyrs' statues and memorials on May 9 last year was highly deplorable and called for strict action against all culprits.





## In brief

### DG KPRA visits Mardan F.P. Report

MARDAN: Director General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority (KPRA) Fouzia Iqbal visited Regional Office Mardan on Thursday to meet the KPRA team. Director Revenue Maqsood Hassan and Advisor Tax Enforcement Fazal Amin Shah accompanied her in the visit. Additional Collector Mardan and Malakand Region Naik Muhammad welcomed the DG to his office where they were given a detailed briefing on the revenue collection of Mardan and Malakand Region. The DG KPRA examined sector-wise revenue collection and asked for reasons behind sudden increase and decline in revenue collection from certain sectors. She appreciated the efforts of the team of Mardan and Malakand Region and stressed on putting up extra efforts to meet the annual revenue collection target assigned by the government to KPRA. "Every officer of the authority has to put extra efforts to achieve the revenue target for the ongoing financial year," she said adding that officers should try to avoid litigations as revenue gets stuck indefinitely in courts and try for resolving issues on table. The DG also listened to the issues of Mardan and Malakand Region team and assured to address the same at earliest.

### Eunuch shot dead in Buner F.P. Report

BUNER: The eunuch Babli age 26 shot dead by unknown attackers at Chanan in jurisdiction of City police station Swari late night on Wednesday. The killed Babli is said to be from Peshawar. Buner Rescue 1122 media coordinator Niaz Khan confirmed the incident. The rescue team shifted the dead body to District Headquarters Hospital Daggar. The transgender community Buner chapter has condemned the brutal murder of colleague and demanded tracing and arresting the culprits.

### SIC holds rally F.P. Report

LARKANA: Pakistan Sunni Tehreek held a Pakistan Zindabad rally from Tank Chowk Larkana, wherein Leader Haji Ghulam Hussain Jatoti District President Hafiz Muhammad Aslam Kandharo Hussaini Hafiz Abdul Razzaq Bhutto Hussaini Muhammad Saleh Kahro Zahid Ali Chandio Muhammad Muthal Bhutto Arbab Ali Solangi Ghulamullah Kori and a large number of workers also participated in holding banner placards and Pakistan Long live. Speaking to the media, Pakistan Army raised slogans of Zinda Paidabad and said that from this rally today, we are sending a message to all the patriots and the whole world that we love the country of Pakistan and the forces of Pakistan with our heart and soul. On May 9, the Pakistan Army We strongly condemn the tragedy that happened and we want to tell the enemies of the country and the army that the Pak Army and the people have love for each other.

### Three killed

KASHMORE, (INP): At least three people were killed and four others injured in rocket launcher attack of robbers on a house here on Thursday. According to details, robbers fire rocket launcher on a house in Gailpur, Kacha area of Kashmore. As a result of attack, two brothers including one-year-old Abdul Jabbar, 10-year-old Abdul Ghafoor and their uncle Hussain Bux Shar Shar 50, were killed on the spot while a woman among four others were injured.



SWABI: KP Governor, Faisal Karim Kundi offering fateha at the mausoleum of Karnal Sher Khan Shaheed.

## KP takes lead in wheat purchase drive at Rs3900

### F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa takes the lead in kick starting the wheat purchase campaign, setting the stage for a prosperous harvest season. Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur inaugurated the initiative, signaling the government's unwavering commitment to support local farmers.

Under the campaign, 3 lakh tonnes of wheat will be procured from farmers across the province, with an additional 3 lakh tonnes to be bought if needed. CM

Gandapur, accompanied by Provincial Food Minister Zahir Shah Toro, oversaw the commencement of operations at the provincial reserve center in DI Khan.

Emphasizing transparency and farmer welfare, CM Gandapur reiterated the government's dedication to ensuring fair prices and seamless transactions. The purchase rate of 3900 rupees per 40 kg aims to provide farmers with their due share of prosperity.

Stringent measures have been put in place to uphold quality standards, with dis-

trict-level committees and an online app facilitating transparent procurement processes.

The initiative not only supports farmers but also injects 12 billion rupees into infrastructure development, benefiting communities across the region. CM Gandapur commended the efforts of the food department team and urged farmers to adhere to government policies for transparent wheat transactions. He emphasized zero tolerance towards corruption, affirming strict action against any malpractice.

### KP Governor visits Swabi F.P. Report

SWABI: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi Thursday visited the mausoleum of martyred Captain Karnal Sher Khan and laid flowers on the grave of martyred and recited Fatiha.

The governor prayed for the elevation of ranks of all the martyrs including Karnal Sher Khan and for the stability and development of the country. The events of May 9 have damaged the reputation of the country, Governor said while talking to the media men during his visit. One year ago today, the interests of the enemies of the country were fulfilled by setting fire to the country, Faisal Karim Kundi said.

The whole nation is waiting for the punishment of the evil elements of May 9 from the state and the courts, Faisal Karim Kundi said. "If the evil anti-national elements of May 9 are not punished, tomorrow some other group will come out for such a heinous conspiracy," Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi said. One year ago today, the martyrs' statues and memorials will be burnt and the hearts of the heirs of the martyrs will be wounded, Faisal Karim Kundi said.

### Schools to remain closed

MUZAFFARABAD (INP): The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government Thursday announced the closure of all schools, colleges and other educational institutions across the region for two days.

The government announced the closure of schools due to the long march announced by Public Action Committees to Azad Jammu and Kashmir's (AJK) capital Muzaffarabad on May 11 (Saturday). Earlier today, the federal cabinet approved the deployment of Frontier Constabulary (FC) in Azad Kashmir for security of Chinese nationals and power houses.

The FC will be deployed for an initial period of three months to maintain law and order in the region, sources said. The FC will be responsible for providing foolproof security to Chinese citizens and power houses, including the Neelum-Jhelum, Mangla, and Gul Pur power houses, sources said.

### Recruitments in Timergara Medical College

## JI Youth wing alleges irregularities

### F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Lower Dir chapter of Jamaat-i-Islami youth wing on Thursday demanded the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister Ali Ameen Gandhapur and chief secretary to properly probe into all appointments to the Timergara Medical College (TMC), purchase of land and equipment for the college and district headquarters hospital Timergara.

Speaking at a news conference at the Timergara press club the JI youth wing district president Ateequr Rehman alleged that more than 120 employees were recruited in sheer violation of merit who were drawing salaries from the government while several of them were living abroad. The JI district secretary information Shuiab Ahmad, general secretary Ikram Khan, Kamil Khan, nazim Shah Hassan, Fazal Subhan and other activists were also in attendance.

Ateeq said the JI youth wing had been running an agitation campaign against the illegal recruitments and other irregularities in the Timergara Medical College from the day first. He said that dozens of qualified and educated youths were deprived of their right to jobs because blue-eyed people were appointed in violation of merit. He said the recruited employees had been drawing salaries for the last 26 months while classes at the college were yet to start. He said that some of the employees were working in a specific hospital. He said that Rs 500 million were spent only

on renovation of the building for the college.

The JI youth leader said that he had all documentary proofs about the recruitment, purchase of land and equipment for the college. He demanded of the government and concerned high ups to declare the whole process of recruitment to the college null and void. He said the JI youth wing would never accept these irregularities and embezzlements. The JI youth wing leader said that equipment worth millions of rupees were purchased for the DHQ hospital. He said the matter needed to be properly investigated as low cost equipment had been purchased instead of quality items. He said the project director had also failed to complete the project within its stipulated time. He complained the DHQ hospital was short of essential medicines despite a huge allocation of funds.

The JI youth wing said that the PTI led government should probe the matter if it really wanted to end corruption and demerit. He asked the PTI lawmakers from the Lower Dir district to intervene in the issue and provide the local youths with their due right. He said the JI youth would soon announce its future course of action if the government failed to probe into the matter.

Meanwhile, the director general health services Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Dr Shaukat Ali, who also occupies charge of project director Timergara Medical College, rejected all the allegations of illegal appointments, irregularities in the purchase of land for

doctor's colony and instruments for DHQ hospital Timergara. Talking on phone from Peshawar Dr Shaukat, who is now suspended as DG health, because of another inquiry against him, told that his opponents had filed a writ petition against the recruitment in the Peshawar High Court.

He clarified the court had decided the case in his favour and against the petitioners. The DG said the Peshawar High Court had declared the appointments according to the rules. Regarding the purchase of land for doctors colony Dr Shaukat said the department had identified five different sites to the Lower Dir deputy commissioner and he had chosen the most suitable place on the lowest rate.

He said that according to government policy, agricultural land could not be acquired for such construction. About the irregularities in the purchase of instruments for the hospital he said that all equipment were operational and to the mark. The DG health said that the matter was already investigated by several agencies and it's audit had been found correct.

He said the high ups of the planning and your family too development department had visited the hospital and inquired about the allegations. He said that neither he nor his department was afraid of such maligning tactics. He said that he had been found innocent in the inquiry against him and he would be restored in a couple of days.

## KKKUK holder research models, posters exhibition

### F.P. Report

KARAK: The Department of Zoology at Khushal Khan Khatkhat University, Karak, hosted its Research Models and Poster Exhibition on Thursday. The inauguration ceremony, was graced by the Registrar of the University, Dr. Rafi Ullah Khan.

He underscored the significance of the event in both academic and community spheres and commended the organizers for their efforts in arranging such an important exhibition.

The event brought

together students and faculty members to exhibit their research models, posters, and projects. "This exhibition is a celebration of academic inquiry and innovation," remarked Dr. Abdul Aziz, Head department of Zoology. He said that the exhibition highlights the passion and dedication of our students and faculty members in advancing the field of zoology.

Ms. Sadia Norin and Ms. Zuhra Saif Ullah, both lecturers in Zoology and instrumental in organizing the exhibition, supported Dr. Aziz's sentiments,

emphasizing the importance of providing students with a professional platform to present their idea and work. The exhibition, organized in collaboration with the Office of Research, Innovation, and Commercialization (ORIC), shows the university's commitment to fostering interdisciplinary collaboration. The exhibition which was visited by students, faculty members, administration and community, provided different types of medical tests like blood grouping and sugar tests.

## Pakistan forces Zindabad rally held in Jamrud

### F.P. Report

JAMRUD: In connection with May 09, Pakistan Zindabad and pro-forces rally was carried out at Bab-e-Khyber, Jamrud district Khyber on Thursday.

Under the auspices of Pakistan Muslim League, Nawaz (PMLN) the rally was attended by PMLN local elite Pirzada Pir, head of ex-Fata Levies Force Said Jalal, police official Malik Mazhar, a number of

the party volunteers, and social workers. Speaking on the occasion local leader of PMLN Pirzada Pir and others expressed their regret over the last 09, May, 2023 mishap and applauded the forces for dealing with the incident patiently.

With joint efforts of the forces and citizens foiled the conspiracy, hatched by the enemy against the unity of the country, they remarked. They went on that the day of 09, May will

be remembered unluckily as a "Black Day" in the history of Pakistan when a handful miscreants challenged writ of the government and sit on fire residency of the founder of the country and monuments of the Martyrs.

They maintained the entire nation's standing with the forces and demanded of the Army Chief and the Chief Justice of Pakistan to bring to justice those who violated the law on 09, May, 2023.

## Climate change effects Okra crop in KP, farmers struggle to adapt

### Anees Takar

**OKRA is a favorite vegetable in summer and almost everyone eats it with passion. Untimely rains and low temperatures in the month of April have destroyed many crops including okra, due to which the farmer has become very worried and okra vegetable has become scarce in the market.**

Shaukat Ali belongs to Charsadda Shulgara and has been involved in the agriculture sector for generations. Shaukat Ali usually grows vegetables in his fields and makes a living from them. Shaukat Ali said that every year we sow okra seeds in our fields in the month of March, which is about two months before the normal sowing (Maina Fasal). 'Maina Fasal' is a word commonly used in Pashtun areas, which means to cultivate a crop before the sowing season of a vegetable or grain. This is usually done so that their vegetables or grains can reach the market quickly and sell at a good price.

Shaukat Ali says that this year we sowed the okra seeds in the month of March, but the seeds did not grow because the rains were high and the temperature

was too low. He mentioned that in the month of April, the temperature dropped to the lowest level recorded, 13 degrees Celsius. He said that when the seed is sown, high temperature is required for it, the seed grows quickly in favorable temperature and the plant grows happily but due to unfavorable weather and temperature, the okra seed rotted in the soil.

According to the Agriculture Department Charsadda (ADC), the temperature should be 20 to 30 degrees Celsius for the best growth and development of the seeds during the cultivation of the Okra crop. The Okra crop does not tolerate the effect of haze. At the time of cultivation, if the weather becomes cloudy and the temperature is less than 20 degrees Celsius, the seed germination is affected. According to the ADC, the Okra crop is harvested twice a year, the first crop is harvested from mid-February to mid-March, while the second crop can be harvested in June and July.

According to the Meteorological Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) data, the maximum temperature in the month of April is 34 degrees Celsius, while the minimum temperature is 13 degrees Celsius.

Most of these days are characterized by relatively low temperatures, but only a couple of days where the temperature rises above 30 degrees Celsius, the rest of the month records less than that.

According to the Meteorological Department KP, in the month of April this year, KP has received the highest rainfall in 59 years, which has been recorded at 174.9 mm. Due to these rains, the flow of water in different rivers of the province increased due to which many areas were flooded, and many crops were destroyed along with the population.

According to the data released by the Irrigation Department, 122,000 cusecs of flood water were flowing over the Munda Headworks in the Swat River in the month of April. Due to which the flow of water in the Khyali River passing through Charsadda increased, and the flow of water had risen to 98,000 cusecs, due to which the flood water entered in eleven tehsils of Charsadda, Hisara Yasinza, Dheri Zardad, Omarzai, Nisatta, Tarnab, Agra, Battagram, Daulatpura, Hasanzai, Katuzai and Mirzadher and carried away the crops of about five thousand acres including about 3800 acres

of wheat, 900 acres of sugarcane, and nearly 200 acres of vegetables and other crops.

Dawood Khan, a journalist, and expert working on climate change, says that the effect of climate change has affected almost all vegetables because people in our country, especially in KP, are involved in the agriculture sector, so it is a big problem for them. He said that the main reason for rotting the seeds in the soil is the unavailability of climate-resistant seeds. He said that our farmers are still unaware of modern farming and practicing the old methods for cultivation, resulting in low income and production of crops.

Dawood Khan said that the traditional methods used for agriculture must now be abandoned, and the farmers must sow such seeds that are compatible with climate change. He said that Japan, China, and other developed countries have done a lot of research in agriculture and have developed seeds that can withstand the effects of climate change. He said that the developed countries have also increased their productivity, and they grow more crops from less land; the main reason is that they have abandoned the traditional methods of agriculture and started growing crops in new

ways. And their farmers are now prosperous.

Talking about the agriculture department, Shaukat Ali said that whenever we have contacted them regarding our problems, seeds, or fertilizers, we do not get a satisfactory response. He said that unfortunately we are an agricultural country, but there is no relief for the farmer in this country; rather, the farmer is getting weaker and suffering from problems.

Mohammad Abrar, who is working as Deputy Director in the Department of Agriculture, Charsadda, said that Charsadda is known as the food basket and the effects of climate change are rapidly setting up in our region due to which many crops have been destroyed in the areas and the landlords are facing a lot of trouble. He said that we have planted different types of fruit orchards on 175 acres of land in different areas of Charsadda which can reduce the effects of climate change and due to these gardens the effects of climate change will also be reduced.

Mohammad Abrar said that the government is going to install different types of weather monitoring devices in our offices, which will give us timely information about the weather.

"It will empower us to inform our farmers about weather updates and necessary precautions," said Abrar. He said that with the support of the Asian Development Bank, we will give subsidized fertilizer and quality seeds to the registered farmers in October, and these seeds will have the ability to withstand climate change.

Mian Shahid Hamid, Project Director of the Progressive Climate Foundation, has been working on climate change for a long time. He said that we run various awareness campaigns with the collaboration of the Agriculture Department regarding the awareness of climate change, and training is given to the farmers regarding the cultivation and protection of crops. "Apart from these, different types of sessions are also conducted to prevent deforestation, clean water, and the ecosystem," said Mian Shahid. Mian Shahid said that climate change not only affects the crops but also affects the level of underground water, forests, birds, and animals and the entire system. "Our aim is to educate people, especially the farmers about modern methods of cultivation and climate resistance seeds and fertilizers," said Mian Shahid.





# Half of Gaza water sites damaged or destroyed

GAZA (BBC): Hundreds of Gaza's water and sanitation facilities have been damaged or destroyed since Israel began military action against Hamas, satellite analysis by BBC Verify has found. Damage to a major supplies depot has also severely disrupted repairs. The lack of clean water and flows of untreated sewage pose a serious threat to health, say aid agencies.

The Israel Defense Forces told the BBC that Hamas cynically exploits civilian infrastructure for terror purposes. The destruction comes despite Israel's duty to protect critical infrastructure under the rules of war, unless there is evidence sites are being used for military reasons, say human rights lawyers. Clean water has always been a limited resource in Gaza and the territory has largely relied on a system of boreholes and desalination plants for its supply. Our analysis found that more than half of these vital facilities have been damaged or destroyed since Israel launched its retaliation in Gaza after Hamas attacked on 7 October.

We also found that four of the six wastewater treatment plants - crucial to preventing the build-up of sewage and the spread of disease - have been damaged or destroyed. The two others have shut down because lack of fuel or other supplies, according to one aid agency. The plants were among more than 600 water and sanitation facilities that we analysed, using a list of locations provided by Gaza's Coastal Municipalities Water Utility



(CMWU). In one satellite image, of Khan Younis in the south of Gaza, two damaged large water storage tanks can be seen. The destruction of water and sanitation facilities has led to "disastrous health consequences for the population", said Dr Natalie Roberts, executive director of Medecins Sans Frontieres UK.

"The rates of diarrhoeal disease have gone catastrophically high," she said. In very severe cases, such disease can kill young children and the vulnera-

ble. Rates of hepatitis A - found in contaminated water and particularly dangerous for pregnant women - are also high, according to the charity.

"This is killing people," Dr Roberts said. There is a particular spike in disease in Rafah in the south where many Gazans have fled to, Dr Roberts said, and a risk of cholera. There has been widespread damage to buildings across Gaza since Hamas attacked Israel on 7 October. According to the UN, about 69,000 housing units

have been destroyed and a further 290,000 damaged. Homes are now "very unlikely" to have running water, according to aid workers we spoke to. To carry out this analysis we sought advice from experts at the UN and Human Rights Watch on the best approach. For each site, we sourced the most recent high resolution satellite imagery and compared each shot with an image taken prior to 7 October.

We then marked a facility as destroyed or damaged if the closest structure to the given co-

ordinates appeared to be reduced to rubble, partially collapsed, or showed other signs of damage. BBC Verify has not distinguished between "destroyed" and "damaged" facilities. This is because without knowing the precise outline of each facility, we cannot say whether it has been partly damaged or completely destroyed. Water wells usually consist of an underground borehole and electric pump, together with a small control room above ground. However, as the control room is not always visible or easily identifiable we had to rely on analysing the nearest visible buildings when assessing damage. Of the 603 water facilities we analysed, 53% appeared to have been damaged or destroyed since 7 October. A further 51 facilities were in areas that showed some damage or where solar panels had been removed, but we were unable to determine whether the water facility itself had been damaged so these were not included in our analysis.

The latest available satellite images were acquired in March and April, and our analysis has been ongoing since April. The majority of sites identified as destroyed or damaged are in northern Gaza or in the area around the southern city of Khan Younis. At one wastewater facility in Bureij, in the centre of the Strip, solar panels that power the plant had been obliterated and sewage treatment tanks appeared to have algae growing on the surface. Not all damage is visible from satellite images, so our analysis may have missed some affected facil-

ities. Some sites also may not be fully operational due to a lack of fuel. For example, the Unicef desalination plant in Deir al-Balah - one of three large seawater facilities in Gaza - can only work at 30% capacity because of lack of fuel, Unicef told the BBC. With most Gazans now displaced from their homes, and living in tented camps, the build-up of sewage in the streets is even more of a threat. "The pumps for sewage are not operating and the streets are flooded [with it]," said Muhammad Atallah, who works for the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights. The conflict has already made water facility repair difficult for Gaza's water authority, but a strike on a key maintenance warehouse has made it harder still. The building, in the neighbourhood of al-Mawasi, was severely damaged in a missile strike on 21 January. Four people died and 20 others were injured, according to the CMWU. Monther Shoblag, the director general of CMWU, told the BBC this warehouse, which acted as a depot for both the CMWU and Unicef, contained more than 2,000 items used for maintenance, and was the heart of the water and sanitation services in Gaza. Its destruction has severely limited CMWU's ability to repair and maintain vital facilities such as water pipelines, he said.

The IDF said the warehouse was not targeted, but that Hamas terrorists operating nearby were struck and "it is possible that parts of the warehouse suffered damage as a result of the strike". We gave the IDF a sample of five other

damaged or destroyed water sites from our analysis. In one case, the IDF denied there had been an air strike, in the four other cases it said Hamas fighters or sites were the actual targets. "Hamas stores its weapons and ammunition within these civilian structures, constructs terror infrastructure beneath them, and from them, launches its attacks... The IDF is locating and destroying these terror infrastructures, which have been discovered, among other places, in and near the water facilities in question," Leila Sadat, a special adviser on crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court, told the BBC that facilities critical to the survival of civilians should be protected unless a military body has some concrete evidence to suggest otherwise.

To assess war actions in terms of legality, you need to consider "the pattern" of those actions, she said. "You can't just look strike by strike... [t]hey [the IDF] have hit water pipes, tanks, reservoirs, and infrastructure," she said. "To take out over half of water and sanitation would be very difficult without intentionally doing so. So the pattern is evidence of either a reckless approach to civilian objects or the intentional destruction of them; these were not all mistakes," she added. In response to our findings, Sara Elizabeth Dill, an international criminal and human rights lawyer, said: "What we are seeing is essentially siege warfare and the total destruction of Gaza, without regard for human life or human decency, or any attempts to comply with international law."

## Russia's celebration of victory in WW-II is a key pillar of Putin's rule

MOSCOW (AP): Russia is wrapping itself in patriotic pageantry for Victory Day, a celebration of its defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II that President Vladimir Putin has turned into a pillar of his nearly quarter-century in power and a justification of his move into Ukraine.

Even though few veterans of what Russia calls the Great Patriotic War are still alive 79 years after Berlin fell to the Red Army, the victory over Nazi Germany remains the most important and widely revered symbol of the country's prowess and a key element of national identity. Thursday's festivities across Russia, led by Putin who this week began his fifth term in office, recall that wartime sacrifice in what has become its most important secular holiday.

The Soviet Union lost about 27 million people in the war, an estimate that many historians consider conservative, scarring virtually every family. Nazi troops overran much of the western Soviet Union when they invaded in June 1941, before being driven back all the way to Berlin, where the USSR's hammer and sickle flag was raised above the ruined capital. The US, U.K, France and other allies mark the end of the war in Europe on May 8. The immense suffering and sacrifice in cities like Stalingrad, Kursk and Putin's native Leningrad - now St. Petersburg - still serve as a powerful symbol of the country's ability to prevail against seemingly overwhelming challenges. Since coming to power on the last day of 1999, Putin has made

May 9 an important part of his political agenda, featuring displays of military might. Columns of tanks and missiles roll across Red Square and squadrons of fighter jets roar overhead as medal-bedecked veterans join him to review the parade. Many wear the black-and-orange St. George's ribbon that is traditionally associated with Victory Day. Putin, 71, talks frequently about his family history, sharing memories of his father, who fought on the front during the Nazi siege of the city and was badly wounded. As Putin tells it, his father, also named Vladimir, came home from a military hospital during the war to see workers trying to take away his wife, Maria, who had been declared dead of starvation. But the elder Putin did not believe she had died - saying she had only lost consciousness, weak with hunger. Their first child, Viktor, died during the siege when he was 3, one of more than 1 million Leningrad residents who died in the 872-day blockade, most of them from starvation.

For several years, Putin carried a photo of his father in Victory Day marches - as did others honoring relatives who were war veterans - in what was called the "Immortal Regiment." Those demonstrations were suspended during the coronavirus pandemic and then again amid security concerns after the start of the fighting in Ukraine. As part of his efforts to burnish the Soviet legacy and trample on any attempts to question it, Russia has introduced laws that criminalized the "rehabilitation

of Nazism" that include punishing the "desecration" of memorials or challenging Kremlin versions of World War II history. When he sent troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022, Putin evoked World War II in seeking to justify his actions that Kyiv and its Western allies denounced as an unprovoked war of aggression. Putin cited the "denazification" of Ukraine as a main goal of Moscow, falsely describing the government of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who is Jewish and lost relatives in the Holocaust, as neo-Nazis. Putin tried to cast Ukraine's veneration of some of its nationalist leaders who cooperated with the Nazis in World War II as a sign of Kyiv's purported Nazi sympathies. He regularly made unfounded references to Ukrainian nationalist figures such as Stepan Bandera, who was killed by a Soviet spy in Munich in 1959, as an underlying justification for the Russian military action in Ukraine. Many observers see Putin's focus on World War II as part of his efforts to revive the USSR's clout and prestige and his reliance on Soviet practices.

"It's the continuous self-identification with the USSR as the victor of Nazism and the lack of any other strong legitimacy that forced the Kremlin to declare 'denazification' as the goal of the war," Nikolay Epplée said in a commentary for Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center. The Russian leadership, he said, has "locked itself up in a worldview limited by the Soviet past."

## Algeria's leader demands justice

ALGIERS (AP): While France celebrated the anniversary of victory over the Nazis, Algeria commemorated a more somber anniversary: The crack-down by French colonial forces on Algerian independence activists the same day 79 years ago. Both events took place on May 8, 1945.

In Paris, French President Emmanuel Macron lay a wreath at the eternal flame beneath the Napoleon-era Arc de Triomphe, honoring those killed fighting the Nazis and marking the end of World War II in Europe. At the time of the war, Algeria was the crown jewel in France's colonial empire, and Algerian soldiers were among those sent to fight for France in Europe. The end of World War II unleashed independence movements across the former French and British empires.

In Algiers, ceremonies were being held to honor demonstrators who took to the streets in the towns of Guelma, Sétif and Kherrata to call for freedom from French rule. "On this day we are remembering the massacres of May 8, 1945, committed by the colonizer with extreme brutality and cruelty, to repress a growing national activist movement that had resulted in massive demonstrations expressing the revolt of the Algerian people and its aspiration to freedom and emancipation," Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune said in a statement.

They were unusually strong remarks from the Algerian leader, and a reminder of the lingering tensions with France more than 60 years after Algeria won its independence in a painful 1954-1962 war. Algeria and France today have close economic, security and energy ties, but the question of historical justice remains a sore spot. Tebboune is expected to raise it on a trip to France later this year.

The issue of historical memory "will remain at the center of our concerns until it enjoys an objective treatment that pays justice to historical truth," Tebboune said in his statement this week. During a visit to Algeria in 2022, Macron struck a clumsy rapport with Tebboune and agreed to create a commission of historians from both countries to make proposals for reconciliation.

The commission released proposals this year, including returning documents and artifacts from French archives to Algeria. Algerian politicians have also sought financial reparations over French nuclear tests in the Sahara - and, most importantly, an official apology from France for colonial-era crimes.

## Russia ramps up attacks on Ukraine's power plants

KYIV: People in several regions of Ukraine have been experiencing power blackouts after the latest wave of Russian attacks on the country's energy infrastructure. President Volodymyr Zelensky said there had been missile and drone attacks on critical energy facilities in seven regions.

BBC Verify has been tracking Russian strikes on energy targets in the past months and industry experts have said Russia has been shifting its strategy - increasingly targeting power plants to try to disrupt energy supplies to Ukrainians. In posts on social media, Mr Zelensky said more than 50 missiles and 20 drones had been fired by Russia, hitting facilities in the Lviv, Vinnytsia, Kyiv, Poltava, Kirovohrad, Zaporizhzhia, and Ivano-Frankivsk regions. Ukraine's national electricity company, Ukrenergo, said there were new blackouts in nine regions and warned of possible power cuts across the country as a result of the new damage and ongoing fighting. Before the most recent Russian attacks, our analysis verified damage to 12 facilities and Ukrainian authorities have reported at least a dozen more hit - with the impact ranging from them running at significantly reduced capacity to being taken entirely out of commission. On 22 March, a series of air strikes hit power plants across Ukraine. One thermal plant in Kharkiv was destroyed, according to government-run energy company Centnergo. An image of it, which we have verified, shows a hole blown in the

centre of the building that served Ukraine's second-largest city. Russia also hit the two power plants run by private firm DTEK - one in Ladyzhyn in central Ukraine and another in Burshtyn in the west. DTEK said at the time, without specifying which, that some of its facilities had been destroyed totally and others were running at around 50% capacity. You can see the extent of the damage to the Ladyzhyn plant in satellite images from before and after the strikes. Other key facilities we have verified as being hit on this day include Ukraine's largest hydroelectric power station in Zaporizhzhia, where a fire broke out at the facility on the vast dam spanning the Dniro river. Strikes on three different hydroelectric plants followed a week later. Footage posted on social media on 29 March showed two big explosions at the Kremenchuk Hydroelectric Station in central Ukraine, although satellite imagery of it is not conclusive about the level of damage.

A third wave of attacks came on 11 April, including the destruction of the Trypillia power plant in Kyiv. Footage of it on fire went viral on social media and received significant media coverage. This is the only strike BBC Verify has been able to corroborate from that night, but Ukrainian authorities also reported damage to plants in Sumy, Zaporizhzhia and Odesa. More hits were reported on 27 April and then again on 8 May, though we have not been able to find any verifiable footage of these so far. This is large-

ly because the publishing of images or videos of strikes on key infrastructure is banned under martial law in Ukraine. Russia has carried out frequent and widespread attacks on Ukraine's power infrastructure since the beginning of its full-scale invasion in 2022, but one expert told BBC Verify that its tactics have changed in recent months. Volodymyr Omelchenko, director of energy programmes at the Ukraine-based Razumkov Centre think tank, said Russian forces have been targeting larger energy generation infrastructure over smaller substations - as power plants take longer to fix. As of mid-April, he said Ukraine had lost more than 80% of all thermal generation capacity, on top of the destruction of Ukraine's largest hydroelectric power station. Mr Omelchenko added he believes the attacks are aimed at creating a "socio-economic collapse" in Ukraine, rendering the country essentially impossible to live or run a business in. "Moscow hopes that the collapse of the energy sector will force millions of people to emigrate," he warned. Another energy industry expert told BBC Verify the focus on thermal and hydroelectric generation plants was also intended to reduce the flexibility of Ukraine's grid, as they can supply power regardless of the time of day or weather conditions. The damage to the facilities, according to Olena Lapenko from the DiXi group think tank, means Ukraine's national energy company has been forced to import power from neighbouring countries to meet peak demand in the evening. — Aljazeera

## Brazil still reeling from massive flooding as it faces risk from new storms

PORTO ALEGRE, Brazil (AP): As major floods engulfed entire cities in the northern part of the Brazil's Rio Grande do Sul state last week, meteorologist Estael Sias knew the water would drain into capital Porto Alegre's metropolitan region and that she would need to find a safe place.

So she, her husband, three children, and two dogs left everything behind. Less than 24 hours later, water started filling her neighborhood in Canoas, now one of the state's most affected cities. "My house was inundated," Sias recalled, her voice cracking. "And it was very hard to leave my house, to make my family leave." She said she could protect her close family, but not others who insisted on staying put. "It has been very distressing and still is. I don't know how it will be when I return home."

Authorities in southern Brazil rushed to rescue survivors of massive flooding that has killed at least 100 people, but some residents refused to leave belongings behind while others returned to evacuated homes despite the risk of new storms. Heavy rains and flooding in Rio Grande do Sul since last week also have left 130 people missing, authorities said. More than 230,000 have been displaced, and much of the region has been isolated by the floodwaters. Storms

were expected in the state, with hail and wind gusts reaching up to 60 kilometers per hour (37 mph), according to the national meteorology institute's afternoon bulletin. And the institute forecasts a cold front this weekend with additional rains, to be particularly intense in the state's north and east. In Porto Alegre, about 300 people were sheltering at the local club Gremio Nautico Uniao, based in the upscale, little-harmed neighborhood of Moinhos de Vento. Dozens lay on mattresses as volunteers brought boxes filled with feijoada - a typical Brazilian bean-and-pork stew. Heitor da Silva was among them, having heeded authorities' warnings. Still, he's anxious about his future. "I only took my documents, three shirts, two pieces of underwear and my flip-flops. All the rest is gone," said da Silva, 68. "I already had very little, but that stayed there. When I go home, there will be nothing. Then what?" Staffers of the state's civil defense agency told The Associated Press they have been struggling to persuade residents of the city of Eldorado do Sul, one of the hardest hit by the floods, to leave their homes. It is located beside Porto Alegre, near the center of the state's coastline. At least four people declined to evacuate. A flyover of Eldorado do Sul in a mili-

tary helicopter showed hundreds of houses submerged, with only their roofs visible. Residents were using small boards, surfboards and personal watercraft to move around. Mayor Ernani de Freitas told local journalists that the city "will be totally evacuated."

"It will take at least a year to recover," he said. Rio Grande do Sul's Gov. Eduardo Leite, speaking at a news conference, appealed to residents to stay out of harm's way, as the anticipated downturn may cause more severe flooding across the state. "It isn't the time to return home," he said. The civil defense agency's own urgent warning asking displaced residents not to return to flooded areas also stressed the risk of disease transmission. Army Gen. Marcelo Zucco, one of the coordinators of rescue operations, told the AP his team is working at full speed before heavy rains that are forecast to hit the Porto Alegre area this weekend. Moderate rain was falling in the city. "We hope the next rains are not like those we saw, but there's no way to be sure there won't be trouble ahead of us," Zucco said. "At this moment, we are focusing on finishing rescue operations and starting logistical support to the population. That's bringing water, medication, food and transportation for the sick

to some hospital," the general added. He also said some improvement in conditions for the day helped his men finally access some areas by land.

Unusually heavy rains have also inundated parts of Uruguay, causing rivers to overflow in the country's east and displacing nearly 1,000 people, authorities said, with rescuers reporting that they had evacuated 200 stranded people, helped by the army. There were no immediate reports of casualties, but the rescue service said flash floods had damaged over a dozen roads and left thousands of people without electricity. Over the weekend, rain in northern Rio Grande do Sul could prompt renewed swelling of rivers that are already causing widespread flooding around the Patos lagoon, where the Porto Alegre municipal region is located, said Sias, the meteorologist in Rio Grande do Sul, who works for a forecasting service based there. "We will remain on this level of alert at least until the end of the month," she said. A report by the National Confederation of Municipalities estimates damages at 4.6 billion reais (\$930 million) in nearly 80% of Rio Grande do Sul's municipalities. Gov. Leite has said that the enormous impact will require something akin to the Marshall Plan for Europe's post-WWII recovery.

## Armenia's PM talks with Putin while allies' ties under strain

MOSCOW (AP): Armenia's prime minister visited Moscow and held talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin amid spiraling tensions between the estranged allies. Putin hosted Nikol Pashinyan for talks following a summit of the Eurasian Economic Union, a Moscow-dominated economic alliance they both attended earlier in the day. The negotiations came a day after Putin began his fifth term at a glittering Kremlin inauguration.

In brief remarks at the start of the talks, Putin said that bilateral trade was growing, but acknowledged "some issues concerning security in the region." Pashinyan, who last visited Moscow in December, said that "certain issues have piled up since then." Armenia's ties with its long-time sponsor and ally Russia have grown increasingly strained after

Azerbaijan waged a lightning military campaign in September to reclaim the Karabakh region, ending three decades of ethnic Armenian separatists' rule there.

Armenian authorities accused Russian peacekeepers who were deployed to Nagorno-Karabakh after the previous round of hostilities in 2020 of failing to stop Azerbaijan's onslaught. Moscow, which has a military base in Armenia, has rejected the accusations, arguing that its troops didn't have a mandate to intervene.

The Kremlin, in turn, has been angered by Pashinyan's efforts to deepen ties with the West and distance his country from Moscow-dominated security and economic alliances. Just as Pashinyan was visiting Moscow, Armenia's Foreign Ministry announced that the country will stop paying fees to the

Collective Security Treaty Organization, a Russia-dominated security pact. Armenia has previously suspended its participation in the grouping as Pashinyan has sought to bolster ties with the European Union and NATO.

Russia was also vexed by Armenia's decision to join the International Criminal Court, which last year indicted Putin for alleged war crimes connected to the Russian action in Ukraine. Moscow, busy with the Ukrainian conflict that has dragged into a third year, has publicly voiced concern about Yerevan's westward shift but sought to downplay the differences. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov conceded that "there are certain problems in our bilateral relations," but added that "there is a political will to continue the dialogue."



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## Asking for concrete steps on nuke facilities

**R**AFAEL Grossi, Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), urged Iran on Tuesday that it take "concrete" steps to improve ties between the UN nuclear watchdog and Iran. Grossi said, "What we are looking at is concrete measures that could make this [deal] operational." He said that Iran could take "very practical and tangible measures that can be implemented in order to accelerate."

Last September, Iran withdrew accreditation of the IAEA inspectors. In October, IAEA submitted a report saying that Iran possessed three times the enriched uranium that was permissible in the 2015 deal made with the United States and other European powers including France and Germany, apart from Russia and the United Kingdom. Grossi was in Isfahan to attend an international science conference hosted by Iran, where its civilian nuclear facility in Natanz near Isfahan is located. Atomic Energy Organisation (AEO) of Iran head Mohammad Eslami said at the joint press conference with Grossi in Isfahan, "We continue interactions over unresolved issues. The important point is that Mr. Grossi takes the necessary actions to settle the problems that are mainly political."

When Donald Trump became president of the US in 2016, he pulled out of the nuclear cooperation deal signed with Iran under President Barack Obama. Ever since the return of Joe Biden in 2021, efforts had been on to revive the deal. Israel has been opposing the deal tooth and nail. The attempt of the IAEA is to restore the inspector regime with Iran's nuclear facilities. There is a deep suspicion in the West that Iran is set to enrich the uranium to weapons-grade and be in a position to make several nuclear bombs.

Iran denies that it intends to make nuclear weapons and insists that its nuclear programme is for peaceful pursuits. At the first international conference on Nuclear Science and Technology held at Isfahan, Eslami said that Iran was ready to share the nuclear technology with other countries.

The liberal moderates in Europe and the US believe that it is better to deal with Iran directly and keep its nuclear programme within the range of the IAEA inspectors, instead of keeping it out which could be more dangerous. There are hardliners in the West, and Trump is only an extreme example, who think that Iran should not be given any leeway, and that Tehran must keep its nuclear facilities open to full inspection of international teams. Iran considers this a challenge to its sovereignty. The 2015 deal was a compromise, where the West's economic sanctions against Iran are withdrawn in return for Iran's cooperation. But equations between Iran and the West have always been volatile, and each side feels provoked by the other.

The IAEA has been trying to tread a balanced line between the two sides, though many believe that the UN nuclear watchdog was under the influence of Western powers, and that it was not a neutral body which it should have been. What is lacking between Iran and the West, and Iran and IAEA, is trust. There is a huge trust deficit, which is very unfortunate.

But the efforts of IAEA chief Grossi to keep the tenuous ties between the two sides is laudable. Iran has also been trying to be open to the overtures of the UN body. But there is little that the IAEA can do to deal with the present deadlock. The Americans and the Iranians have to speak directly to each other to resolve the differences. The back channels between the two sides have always been open, and it is a breakthrough here that will be reflected in the official stances of the two sides.

## Chip coercion further undermines trust

**T**HE United States is intensifying its tech war against China. In yet another act of "economic coercion" targeting Chinese companies, the US has revoked export licenses that allowed tech giants such as Qualcomm and Intel to supply chips to Chinese telecommunications equipment company Huawei, which Washington has already put on a trade restriction "entity list" since 2019 on the grounds that it poses national security risks to the US.

The move comes after the Chinese company unveiled its first AI-enabled laptop last month, and announced that its first-quarter profits surged more than fivefold year-on-year, making some China hawks in Washington to complain that previous US crackdowns on the Chinese company have not yielded the intended results. They have pushed for the US administration to further tighten the screws on the company.

Speaking before the House Appropriations Committee on Wednesday, Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo made no bones about Washington's abuse of export controls. "I tell semiconductor companies that they can't sell their chips to China," she told the panel. The new sanctions will certainly undermine the smooth development of Sino-US relations, which the two sides have managed to stabilize since last year through a series of high-level visits. The latest move not only runs counter to the World Trade Organization rules, but also belies the commitment the US has repeatedly made to China that it does not seek to "decouple" from the country or to contain its development.

The fact that the latest US restrictions are targeted at purely civilian consumer chip products exported to China also makes the promise that US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen made during her visits to China that US national security actions in the economic sphere are narrowly scoped and based on clearly defined national security concerns sound empty.

There is increasing evidence that the US is trying to erect a technological "iron curtain" to isolate China from the rest of the world in the realm of high technologies.

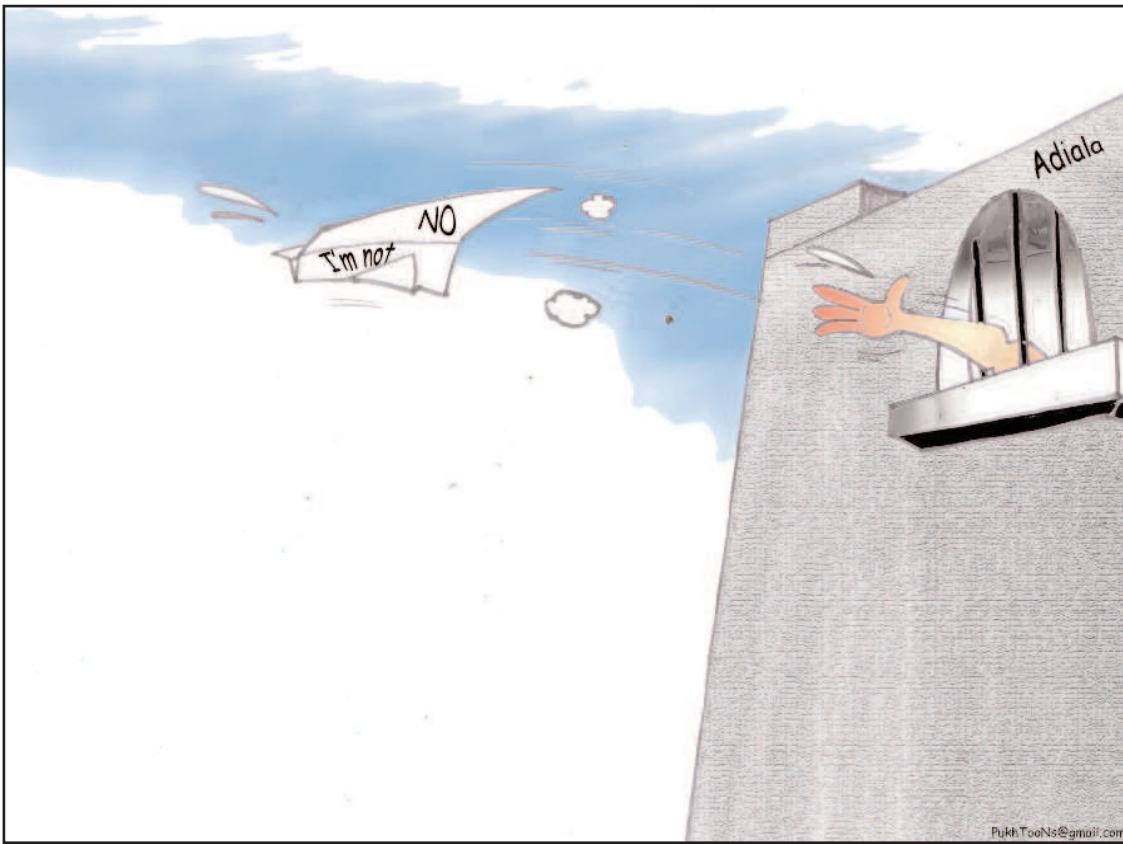
While unveiling US International Cyberspace and Digital Policy Strategy at a major tech forum in San Francisco on Monday, US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken declared that the US intends to enhance international technology collaborations — or "digital solidarity" — with its allies and partners in technological advancements ranging from artificial intelligence to quantum computing, which obviously is aimed at countering China's progress in these fields.

"Today's revolutions in technology are at the heart of our competition with geopolitical rivals. They pose a real test to our security," he said, adding "it is critical that we work with trusted vendors and exclude untrustworthy ones from the ecosystem".

The US has not achieved its goal of impeding China's technological advances with its sweeping technology restrictions in the past. It will not do so in the future.

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## The message Europe should take from Xi's visit

Khaled Abou Zahr

**W**AS Xi Jinping's first trip to Europe in five years a success? It certainly appeared that Xi's visits to France, Serbia and Hungary, which had both a trade and a political agenda, were successful for the Chinese leader. Can we say the same for France, the EU or Europe? Well, there is not a straight or single answer. And this by itself unveils some of Europe's grave contradictions on important geopolitical, security and trade issues.

There is no doubt that trade and business are interlinked with politics and the theme was clear. It was interesting to note that French President Emmanuel Macron and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on Monday held a trilateral meeting with Xi, while German Chancellor Olaf Scholz was missing. Ahead of the meeting, Von der Leyen criticized China's state subsidies for manufacturing, saying they were leading to market distortions and potential deindustrialization in Europe.

So, the discussions revolved around reducing trade imbalances and Macron emphasized the need to update EU-China relations due to Beijing's massive exports to Europe. The opening up of Chinese markets has been a consistent request. The EU is considering imposing tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles over state subsidy concerns. Macron aimed to prevent Chinese retaliation over this investigation, which could affect French exports like cognac. Yet one may say that this is all part of the push and pull between big trading blocs and, despite the trading deficit, Europe needs China's industrial capacity just as much as China needs the European markets.

On the trickier political agenda, when reading the coverage of this visit by the European media, I could not help but think this is like the Lebanese writing on Lebanese affairs, meaning that there is an overestimation of

Europe's impact and importance. The reality is that, even if Europe is the host, the agenda was set by Beijing. We can live in the illusion of being impactful in this dialogue, but the reality is that Xi already knew exactly what the outcomes would be.

The main topic was Ukraine and Russia. Macron looked to discuss China's influence on Moscow regarding the conflict. This was quickly brushed aside. The reality is that there is nothing France or Europe can say or do that could influence

Europe have to choose between China and the US at some point? Today, it can balance between both powers. However, the more the conflict in Ukraine intensifies and the more measures that are taken against Russia and its assets in Europe, the bigger the risks for Europe of being unable to maintain positive bilateral relationships. This is something that China knows: the transatlantic alignment is, to this day, the safety for Europe.

It is true that Xi's visit ignited a debate on Europe's relationship

pro-Vladimir Putin and, to an extent, enemies of Europe. This was also a huge mistake. This is precisely what will create more risks for the future of Europe. Serbia may have historically close links to Russia, yet it has applied for EU membership. And Belgrade must not be comfortable when hearing of potential fast-track access for Ukraine, as it has been a candidate since 2012. And due to the critics of its election process or the necessity of a normalization of relations within the Balkans, Serbia's access to the EU seems to be fading away. And so, this attitude opens the door for the Balkan country to seek other opportunities, such as with China.

In the same way, qualifying the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán as anti-US is a mistake. He is anti-progressive and there is a big difference. More precisely, he is conservative and this seems to be something Europe no longer tolerates. These divisions are the true risk to the future of the EU and its stability. This divide is no longer between countries but across and through them, and this extends all the way to the US between Republicans and Democrats.

The US ambiguity and the deep domestic divides, as well as the challenges between national sovereignty and mutualization with a unique voice for Europe, are putting forward new challenges for the old continent. This will force choices in terms of alignment if the conflict in Ukraine grows.

It was also a coincidence that Xi's visit took place the week of May 8, which was the anniversary of the capitulation of Nazi Germany and the end of Second World War combat in Europe. This was one of the deadliest conflicts in human history. And so, it is important to remember the horrors of war and find ways to bring stability rather than be caught in an uncontrollable spiral. This is, in my view, the main message of Xi's visit.

**The EU is considering imposing tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles over state subsidy concerns. Macron aimed to prevent Chinese retaliation over this investigation, which could affect French exports like cognac. Yet one may say that this is all part of the push and pull between big trading blocs and, despite the trading deficit, Europe needs China's industrial capacity just as much as China needs the European markets.**

China's policy on that matter, simply because they cannot deliver on any agreement. Moreover, the conflict in Ukraine pushes for a global strategic realignment that no luxurious French hospitality can change. It is also needless to say that some European actions have created a precedent that could be repeated. Despite being the only nuclear power in the EU, which confers France with strategic importance, there is a question of mutualization that was sparked by Xi's visit.

There was also, as we say in Arabic, the absent present in this visit, which is the US. And here lies the biggest strategic question: Will the EU and

with the US and this was a success for the Chinese leader because one must say that it was predominantly negative. The European position has become more anguished as a result of the growing US ambiguity. We are noticing more and more analysts and commentators criticizing the transatlantic alliance, especially those from the left and progressive crowd, who believe that Europe needs to free itself and break with the US. This would be a grave mistake.

This line of thinking was clear in the second leg of the visit of the Chinese leader. The same journalists depicted both Serbia and Hungary as

## As the world burns, Europe is out to lunch

Ross Anderson

**W**ITH half the world ablaze, from Gaza to Donetsk and Syria to Sudan, it is heartening to note that our friends in Europe have their priorities in the correct order: and at the top of that order is food.

In Germany, a popular and uniquely Teutonic campaign is underway for a cap on the price of a doner kebab, which had remained at about 4 (\$4.30) for years but doubled after the coronavirus pandemic and is now approaching 10. Across the border in France, the country's legions of traditional artisan pâtisseries are up in arms over a trend among young bakers to create giant croissants, pains au chocolat and pains aux raisins, some weighing up to 1 kg — partly for consumption by particularly peckish break-fasters, but mainly in a contest for fans on Instagram and TikTok.

Both comestibles, of course, have their roots in this part of the world. The doner kebab has Turkish origins, but what is it other than a poor man's shawarma? Arabs have been eating meat grilled on skewers for centuries and even exported it to Mexico in the form of tacos al pastor. The Germans, meanwhile, can thank Turkish migrant workers who arrived after the Second World War and brought with them the vertical rotisserie, invented during the Ottoman era and with which we are now all so familiar.

It would be fair to say that, elsewhere in Europe, the doner kebab has a less than salubrious reputation. In England's cities in particular, carousers who have supped not wisely but too well queue up in late-night kebab shops to purchase meat of indeterminate origin stuffed into recycled cardboard masquerading as pita bread, which they eat while walking home — and then wonder why they feel unwell in the morning.

In Germany, however, the doner is entirely respectable, a lunchtime staple for office and shop workers on benches in city parks.

Germans being Germans, they have even created a compound noun for the price campaign — "Donerpreisbremse," or "doner price brake."

And while Germany did not become Europe's free-market economic powerhouse by imposing artificial price caps on goods and services, nor are its politicians blind to an opportunity when it presents itself. In this case, the Left Party has identified a bandwagon and has wasted no time in jumping aboard.

The party has demanded that the price of a doner be capped at 4.90 and 2.50 for school pupils, with the gap between the subsidized price and the real one funded by the taxpayer. "This isn't an internet joke, but a serious call for help," the party's spokesman said. "The state must intervene so that food does not become a

luxury."

As to the origin of the croissant, that depends on which legend you choose to believe. One is that Europeans created it to mark the defeat of the Umayyad army by the Franks at the Battle of Tours in 732, its shape emulating that of the Islamic crescent; another is that all-night bakers alerted Christian forces to Ottoman tunnelling, thus ending the Siege of Vienna in 1683, and that their crescent-shaped baked goods referred to the emblems on the Ottoman flags. Both accounts are almost certainly fictional, but let us not permit the facts to get in the way of a good myth.

Unlike in Germany, the culinary argument in France is less economic than cultural. It was started by chef Philippe Conticini, whose 1 kg croissants — compared with the usual weight of about 80 g — are flying off the shelves of his Paris bakery, even at an eye-watering 32 each. Others have joined in. One baker in Paris offers "le big pain aux raisins," 350 g for 9.90; another in Toulouse has "la choco-latine XXL" at 12; and, in a sign that the trend has gone mainstream, the Paris department store Galeries Lafayette is knocking out "le big pain au chocolat" at 14.90 for 320 g.

Conticini's marketing director (of course he has a marketing director, what do you think this is all about?) defends the quality of the giant product. "It's now become a dictat that you have to create an event for Instagram or TikTok. Alas, that often takes precedence over taste," he admitted. "But we are here above all to procure emotions by tasting."

Others are unimpressed. One traditional pâtissier in Alsace complained: "Some of the new generation pastry chefs and bakers come up with creations with the foremost obsession being the impact of novelty in social media."

So far, again unlike in Germany, France's politicians have not yet chosen sides in the war of the giant croissants, but it can only be a matter of time. Few subjects capture the French imagination more comprehensively than gastronomy, which makes it a political matter. Charles de Gaulle once questioned how it was possible to govern a country that had 246 different kinds of cheese, and that was before they started putting truffle in the Brie.

And being on the wrong side of the argument can have fatal consequences. When it was pointed out to Marie Antoinette, queen of France during the French Revolution, that her subjects were too poor to buy bread, she is said to have responded: "Qu'ils mangent de la brioche." OK, it's not quite "Let them eat cake," the tone-deaf phrase for which she is best remembered. And the quote is almost certainly as much of a myth as the origins of the croissant — but they had the poor woman's head off for it anyway.

## Time for Israel to be held accountable

Daoud Kuttab

**W**ARS are known to encompass the absence of truth and the presence of trickery. Israel has proven this theory to a high degree. Nothing we are hearing or seeing from the Israelis is anywhere close to the truth. In almost every statement and every claim or defense, it is easy to notice lies, distortions and attempts at obfuscation. Unfortunately, this bad propaganda habit, or what Israelis call "hasbara," is now being used to even larger degrees in the US, as the pro-Israeli lobby is filling the airwaves, social media and even the halls of Congress with clear lies.

One congresswoman claimed intifada means the genocide of Jews. Students at prestigious universities are claiming, without any proof, that their lives are endangered by fabricated terrorist Hamas supporters, who also happen to be their colleagues and some of them even Jewish colleagues.

The claims are often made by third parties, like the American Jewish bil-

lionaire Bill Ackman, both to steer the media and to bully college administrations into crushing the new pro-Palestinian narrative that has started to trend in America's most prestigious higher education schools.

One of the biggest lies that has been repeated ad nauseum on US campuses actually originated from a pro-Israeli protester, who made it to goad university administrations to attempt to suppress pro-Palestinian protesters. The student at Northeastern University repeated the phrase "kill the Jews," giving the impression that this was the slogan of opponents of the Israeli war crimes in Gaza.

Going back to a 1990 massacre at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque, video footage exposed the Israeli fabrications regarding this incident, in which 17 Palestinians were killed and not a single Israeli was even injured. An investigation by the late Mike Wallace of CBS' "60 Minutes" revealed this lie and the media manipulation. At the time, I worked with Wallace and his producer Barry Lando to

meticulously review and debunk the Israeli lies. Lando would later recall the incident, saying: "What we found was that the official Israeli version put out by (Benjamin) Netanyahu was, as the Palestinians had charged, a total fabrication. There was no other way to describe it."

Israelis, led by the chief liar and obfuscator Prime Minister Netanyahu, are today going wild again, creating total fictions and then moving their troops to follow up on these lies. The lies started from Day 1, when Israel claimed its revenge war was a war of self-defense. Then there were the preposterous lies about beheaded children burned in stoves and mass cases of rape. All these claims have been absolutely proven to be untrue, yet they have been repeated so many times, including by the White House, that fact-checkers have largely given up on even checking the lies of the Israeli PM and his well-paid propagandists in Israel, the US and the rest of the world.

Similarly, Israel has launched unsubstantiated and coordinated efforts to delegitimize the UN's leading refugee aid organization for Palestinians, UNRWA. And in 2016, a Palestinian aid worker, Mohammed El-Halabi, who ran the World Vision International humanitarian project in Gaza, was arrested and charged with transferring \$50 million in aid to Hamas. Not only is that much more than the entire budget of the US-based Christian charity, but in court Israel failed to produce a single document to prove this preposterous claim.

While the truth is always the first victim of war and trickery is the fuel of armed conflict, it is amazing how a small country can continue to fool and trick the world's most powerful country, which also happens to be its major (and sometimes only) enabler. Israel now claims that it was blindsided by this week's Hamas deal and that the agreement approved by the Palestinian movement

was different to the one Tel Aviv had approved. This seems rather wild, since the three-phase ceasefire and prisoner exchange agreement was worked out personally by America's top spy, Bill Burns, who heads the CIA. Perhaps Israel would have been less surprised by the details had they not recalled their negotiators from Cairo.

Instead of dealing with their own mistakes and the absence of their negotiating team, Israel tricked their own best ally and threw an egg in the face of Burns by launching a ground attack against Rafah.

While we will not know for a while what went on in the private conversations between top Israeli and US officials, it is highly unlikely that anyone in Washington had any idea that Israel would break its own promises to President Joe Biden to refrain from launching a ground war on Rafah until and unless they could be sure that civilian lives were spared its usage of American-made bombs and ammunition. The fact that Washington last week suspended a shipment of

ammunition, according to Axios, appears to show displeasure (too little and way too late) by the Biden administration.

Israel's takeover of the Gaza side of the Rafah border crossing violates agreements with Egypt and the Palestinian government, as well as its reported commitments to Biden. The Camp David Accords and the subsequent amendments declared the entire area between the Palestinians in Gaza and the Egyptians in Sinai to be a demilitarized zone. After 2005, when Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip, Egypt became the only party allowed to deploy a limited number of soldiers near the Philadelphi Corridor.

Israel's lies and trickery have worked for years, but it is clear that their continuation will have a lasting effect on world leaders' relations with Israel and will certainly affect US-Israeli relations. Unless there is serious accountability for these lies and tricks, the region and the world will never be able to enjoy the peace and freedom they desire.



# Give or take a few bombs, US complicity in genocide remains ‘ironclad’

**ON Wednesday, May 8, United States Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin became the first senior administration official to publicly confirm that the US government has uncharacteristically paused a weapons shipment to Israel. Over the past seven months, the Israeli military has killed some 35,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip with solid US backing.**

Speaking at a Senate subcommittee hearing, Secretary Austin remarked that the pause takes place “in the context of unfolding events in Rafah”, the city in southern Gaza where an estimated 1.4 million Palestinians, including more than 600,000 children, are currently sheltering. The majority of these people were forced to flee to Rafah from other parts of Gaza, in keeping with Israel’s modus operandi of making Palestinians refugees over and over again.

And while Rafah has hardly been spared the terror and slaughter that have characterised the past seven months of Israeli operations in the coastal enclave as a whole, the threat of a full-scale assault on a mass of trapped civilians in the city has made even the global superpower – Israel’s devoted BFF – a bit squeamish.

To that end, news reports began emerging over the weekend that the Joe Biden administration had undertaken to suspend a shipment to Israel of munitions that might be used in a Rafah offensive. The shipment was said to consist of 3,500

bombs, of which 1,800 were of the 2,000-pound (907kg) variety and 1,700 were in the 500-pound (227kg) category.

Certain other weapons transfers to Israel were also said to be under review.

Of course, given that the US has been actively abetting genocide and famine in Gaza for well over half a year with all manner of munitions and money, it’s not exactly clear why the case of Rafah should suddenly elicit such imperial concern. But, hey, it’s potentially good PR.

Prior to Secretary Austin’s remarks on Wednesday, US officials had been noncommittal about the reports of a suspended weapons shipment. In a May 6 news briefing, for example, National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby flat-out refused to confirm whether or not the reports were correct, instead announcing: “All I can tell you is that ... our support for Israel’s security remains ironclad. And I’m not going to get into the specifics of – of one shipment over another.”

Indeed, it appears that “ironclad” is the US political establishment’s new favourite word when it comes to describing support for Israel – which means that, at the end of the day, Israel’s habit of massacring Palestinians will always be defended over the right of Palestinians to not be massacred.

Meanwhile, Kirby’s comment

Belén Fernández

about “one shipment over another” is telling, to say the least. After all, there are a whole lot of US weapons shipments to Israel – and holding up delivery of 3,500 bombs hardly constitutes a betrayal of the Israeli killing machine, as some more dramatic members of the US right wing have chosen to portray it.

For starters, Secretary Austin emphasised during his Senate subcommittee appearance that the paused weapons shipment will not affect the \$26bn in supplemental aid to Israel that the US Congress approved in April. This is on top of the various billions of dollars already provided annually to Israel by the US – most of which money, the Council on Foreign Relations notes, “is provided as grants under the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) program, funds that Israel must use to purchase U.S. military equipment and services”.

Nor will the suspension impact the additional \$827m worth of military goodies that the Biden administration has just authorised for Israel.

In other words, it is mostly business as usual – kind of the equivalent of giving somebody hundreds of dollars on a daily basis and then making a show of withholding five cents.

According to the US Conventional Arms Transfer Policy, the US government is obligated to “prevent ... arms transfers that risk facilitating or

otherwise contributing to violations of human rights or international humanitarian law”. And yet, what is US foreign policy itself if not one big violation of all of that?

Even prior to the 2001 launch of the massive global violation known as the “War on Terror”, the US had already spent decades enabling mass bloodshed from Latin America to the Middle East and beyond.

In the particular case of Israel, consistent US support for the wanton violation of human rights and international humanitarian law in Palestine and Lebanon makes you wonder why anyone ever bothered writing up a Conventional Arms Transfer Policy in the first place.

Now Secretary Austin, too, has reaffirmed the United States’ “ironclad” commitment to Israel even in the face of the paused munitions shipment – which just goes to underscore the largely cosmetic nature of the move, and the perceived need to project some degree of humanitarian awareness and concern.

Biden himself also chimed in on Wednesday with a warning that he will not be supplying offensive weapons to Israel in the event of an all-out assault on Rafah, noting that “civilians have been killed in Gaza as a consequence of those bombs”.

Well, yeah. Genocide is genocide. And give or take a few thousand bombs, US complicity in that genocide is totally ironclad.

# Peace starts with Palestine’s UN membership

**ON May 10, the United Nations’ 193 member states can end the Gaza war and the long-standing suffering of the Palestinian people by voting to admit Palestine as the 194th UN member state.**

The Arab world has repeatedly declared its readiness to establish relations with Israel within the context of the two-state solution. This goes back to the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative and has been reiterated in the 2023 Arab-Islamic Extraordinary Summit. On May 16, leaders of the region will gather for the 33rd Arab League Summit, where yet another plea for peace and stability will likely be made.

The way to end the war and normalise relations in the Middle East is clear. Admit the State of Palestine to the UN, on the 1967 borders, with its capital in East Jerusalem and with control over the Muslim holy sites. Then, diplomatic relations will be established and mutual security of both Israel and Palestine will be assured. The vast majority of the world certainly agrees on the two-state solution as it is enshrined in international law and UN resolutions.

Today, 142 of the 193 countries officially recognise the State of Palestine, but the United States has so far blocked Palestine’s membership to the UN, where statehood really counts. Israel continues to harbour its dream – and the world’s nightmare – of continued apartheid rule. Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago have very recently established diplomatic relations with the State of Palestine, and the General Assembly is poised to vote an overwhelming endorsement of Palestine’s membership.

Jeffrey Sachs and Sybil Fares

gal settlements as “facts on the ground”.

The unity of the global community for Palestine’s political self-determination is also reflected on college campuses across the US, United Kingdom and the rest of the world. Students know the torment of apartheid and plausible genocide when they see it; and are actively demanding an end to the torment.

According to Article 4 of the UN Charter, admission is effected by a decision of the General Assembly following a recommendation of the Security Council. On April 18, the Security Council’s vote on Palestinian membership was vetoed by the US, but with 12 out of the 15 council members voting in favour. The UK abstained, as if it’s not already made enough of a mess in the region. Because of the US veto, the General Assembly will take up the issue during an Emergency Special Session on May 10. This vote will show an overwhelming support of Palestine’s membership. It will then be taken up again by the Security Council.

Our point is to put UN membership upfront. Peace will never be achieved at the end of another “peace process,” as with the failed Oslo process, nor by the whims of imperial powers who have perpetually devastated the region. Israel’s leaders today are dead set against the two-state solution and the US and UK have been dead set in defence of Israel’s rejection of it. The US and UK have repeatedly destroyed the two-state solution by always being for it, but never just now. They have favoured endless negotiations while Israel pursues its apartheid system, a war constituting a plausible case of genocide, and ille-

In welcoming Palestine as a UN member state, the UN would also take crucial steps to ensure the security of both Israel and Palestine. Peace would be enforced by international law, and the backing of the UN Security Council, the Arab States, and indeed the world community.

This moment has been more than a century in coming. In 1917, Britain declared a province of the Ottoman Empire, which did not belong to it, as the Jewish homeland. The next 30 years were wracked by violence leading to the Nakba and then to repeated wars. After the 1967 war, when Israel conquered the remaining Palestinian lands, it administered an apartheid state. Israeli society became increasingly hardened to its rule, with extremist Israelis and Palestinians on each side of the bitter divide that only widens. The US and UK have been brazenly and cynically dishonest brokers. The politics in both countries has long been Zionist to the core, meaning that both countries almost always side with Israel regardless of justice and law.

We have arrived at a truly historic moment to end decades of violence. No more peace processes to be undermined by political manipulations. Peace can come through the immediate implementation of the two-state solution, with the admission of Palestine to the UN as the starting point, not the end. Diplomatic recognition should build in and invite further crucial steps for mutual security. It is time, on May 10, for all UN member states to uphold international law and vote for justice and peace.

## One reason America’s population isn’t about to start shrinking

**LAST week, President Joe Biden committed a diplomatic faux pas when he chided India and Japan, two critical US allies, for being “xenophobic.” Attributing America’s success to its historic openness to immigration, the president suggested that Delhi and Tokyo’s aversion to foreigners constrained their economic growth and population stability.**

Tactless as it may have been, Biden was not wrong. Japan, in particular, is expected to see its population drop by a third in the next half-century.

But a few months ago, the US Census Bureau released new projections showing that America’s own population will — for the first time ever — shrink after 2080.

Only one thing is preventing the nation from reaching this milestone next year: immigration. The consistent arrival of newcomers is expected to keep America from aging as rapidly as Japan and other major economies. If immigration opponents were to cut annual admissions in half, the US would start to shrink in 2044.

All countries’ populations change with trends in birth rates and life expectancy. And like many high-income nations, the US has witnessed a drop in fertility over the last half-century. Combined with longer life expectancy, this has contributed to severe demographic aging.

Aging is problematic for two reasons. It promises insolvency when too few working-age people pay into pension and health care funds that have obligations to support higher numbers of retirement-age seniors. Population decline also spells the decline of economic power and market size — one of America’s greatest geopolitical assets.

The primary demographic antidote for low fertility is immigration. Disproportionately working age and reaching higher fertility rates, immigrants inject youth, labor and innovation into societies, and — at high enough numbers — they offset aging trends. As Biden touted, this has been a core part of America’s economic growth over the last few decades, but also our demographic stability. Nearly all US population increases have been attributable to immigrant arrivals, as opposed to births outpacing deaths.

What makes the new Census Bureau projections especially bleak is that the shrinkage is expected to take place even if the US government keeps immigrant admissions at their present levels. And in case you haven’t downloaded Truth Social, present levels are unaccept-

Justin Gest

able to today’s Republican Party. In an interview with Time magazine published last week, former President Donald Trump said he wants to place new arrivals in detention camps and deport millions of immigrants that Census projections assume will otherwise remain in the US — both of which will only hasten our country’s demographic decline.

According to the Census report, the number of Americans over 64 years old will surpass the number of Americans under 18 by 2029. At that point, only 60% of the US population will be between 18 and 64 — down from close to 70% in 2010. Deaths in America are projected to outpace births by 2038 for the first time ever. At that point, there will be 13,000 more deaths than births in the US, but the shortfall increases to 1.2 million more deaths annually by 2100 — double the annual shortfall in Japan today.

The US population is projected to reach a high of nearly 370 million in 2080 before beginning its historic downward turn. But if immigration were to be cut approximately in half, Census Bureau demographers estimate that this milestone would occur in 2044. If borders close completely, as many Republican public officials advocate, the decline would start next year.

The immediacy of this impact should not be surprising. If US population growth is attributable to immigrant arrivals, which it now is, then America will cease to grow when no newcomers are admitted.

Of course, Republicans’ self-defeating anxiety around immigration is informed, to some extent, by an earlier Census report — the March 2015 release that anticipated a “majority minority” milestone in 2044. Unlike the new study, the projected decline of America’s “White” population to an under-50% share of the population made headlines everywhere. The numbers — which are problematic for numerous reasons — both emboldened liberals about their electoral prospects and generated fierce backlash to immigration among conservatives.

Once a bureaucratic matter so insignificant to conservatives that the Reagan administration endorsed amnesty for all undocumented foreigners, immigration has now become the central pillar of the post-2015 Republican Party. Immigration is the top issue priority for conservatives entering the 2024 general election, and a hindrance for Biden’s prospects among independents.

But if the 2015 Census projections inflamed anti-immigrant sentiment, the recent report might have the opposite effect.

That’s because my newest research suggests that information about the realities of demographic aging persuades people — especially moderates and centrists — to open their minds about immigration. My coauthors and I surveyed more than 20,000 adults across 19 European countries. A subset of these respondents was informed about real demographic trends, much like those revealed by the recent US Census report according to demographers, birth rates in their country “are significantly below the level needed to maintain the native population.” The same subset of respondents was also told that, even though many immigrants have already entered their country over the years, to maintain current population levels, the government will need to accept “significantly more immigrants from countries outside of Europe with higher birth rates, such as Muslim-majority and African countries.”

Remarkably, despite the invocation of the minority outgroups that rankle some voters, respondents in the subset were more likely to support increased immigration numbers than those who were not exposed to the news about demographic decline at all. In Western European countries — where elevated minority fertility rates are tempering the effects of demographic aging — respondents were even resistant to far-right fearmongering narratives about “replacement theory” after immigration was portrayed as critical to the nation’s endurance. This was especially true for respondents with centrist political ideologies, those who were over 35 years old and those with average educational backgrounds.

Rather than see immigrants as a threat to “replace” the nation, these respondents grew more likely to see them as a way to “replenish” the nation. The findings from this experiment and the Census Bureau report emerge at a moment when American and European political leaders are scrambling to fortify their borders. But just as people want a well-managed admissions system, there is a countervailing desire to sustain the national population.

As much as the world polarizes over foreigners’ arrival, demographic aging is an unwavering, intensifying reality that remains undressed, and a good reason to invest in an orderly immigration system that sustains the nation into the future.

# Overproduction of excuses for protectionism

MARCOS CORDEIRO PIRES

**ESTABLISHED powers change the rules of the game when they are at a disadvantage, but China will know how to position itself against the hypocrisy of its competitors.**

In a modern economy, a company’s productivity is a key determinant of its success. The higher the productivity, the lower the production costs, the greater the profit margins, and the lower the final price per unit.

This is why an innovative company focuses on research, innovation, technology, quality, and product design to enhance its competitiveness in a highly competitive environment. However, a company’s competitiveness is not solely determined by its internal factors. It is also influenced by external factors, such as regulations, transport logistics, taxation, labeling, phytosanitary controls, and exchange rates. These exogenous factors can significantly impact a company’s ability to compete in the global market.

Yet a company’s survival is not solely dependent on its internal capabilities. It is also contingent on the fairness of the international trade environment. Unfortunately, international trade can be manipulated by actions that hinder fair competition.

These actions include the imposition of economic sanctions, boycotts, blockades, manipulation of exchange rates, and baseless accusations that tarnish the reputation and suitability of companies. Such unfair trade practices can pose a significant threat to a company’s survival, underscoring the need to address protectionism with the multilateral institutions.

This problem is not new. In 1986, Sony founder Akio Morita, in his book Made in Japan, lamented the consequences of the 1985 Plaza Agreement, when the United States forced the appreciation of the Japanese yen and the German mark to reduce the competitiveness of foreign

industrial goods in the US market.

According to Morita, currency exchange rates should represent the reserves of foreign currencies and also each country’s industrial productivity.

The more competitive an industrial sector, the lower its production cost per unit and the lower its price in international markets.

However, this competitive advantage can be distorted when a partner is forced to overvalue its currency, making the product more expensive in the international market.

Therefore, manipulating exchange rates leads to price distortions, harming competitors. In that case, the US government guaranteed its company’s artificial competitiveness by raising the prices of imported high tech goods from Japan, Germany, and other countries. This example serves as a stark reminder of the detrimental effects of protectionism on international trade and competitiveness.

Market and rule manipulation can also occur through extraterritorial laws, often issued by the US Department of Justice, such as sanctions imposed on foreign companies and governments. Not long ago, Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou was detained in Canada under an order issued by the US. Previously, Frederic Pierucci, the former director of French company Alstom, was arrested for allegedly violating US competition laws.

This episode occurred when General Electric pushed to buy Alstom’s electrical equipment division, but the French government resisted the transaction. The acquisition only took place after the release of the French executive.

After his release from prison, Pierucci wrote the book The American Trap: My Battle to Expose America’s Secret Economic War Against the Rest of the World, which reported several actions by the US Department of Justice against

foreign companies to benefit US corporations.

In addition to Huawei, other Chinese companies are being sanctioned by the US for the most varying reasons, but behind all these measures is the attempt to block China’s development.

Recently, US authorities and the Western media defended protectionist policies under the cloak of “overcapacity” of production in China in several sectors, which could negatively affect industries in other countries.

This issue was addressed during US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen’s visit to China in early April. At that time, Yellen raised US concerns about China allegedly flooding global markets with electric vehicles, solar panels and other clean energy products, threatening US jobs.

The US administration’s complaints, particularly about EVs and equipment for generating clean energy, need to be contextualized, as these Chinese sectors show exponential growth in their productivity year after year.

The development of the clean energy (solar and wind) systems would be unimaginable without taking into account the quality, quantity and price of solar panels and rotors produced in China. Huge clean energy plants in Brazil would be unfeasible without China supplying this equipment.

Regarding the automobile industry, the competitiveness of Chinese companies is unquestionable. The country produced 30.16 million vehicles in 2023 and sold 30.09 million. Exports comprise a small portion (16.3 percent) of output, while imports, consisting largely of luxury vehicles produced in Japan, Germany, Italy and the US, comprise approximately 3 percent.

It is worth noting that China’s car production represents the combined production of cars in the US, Japan, India and the Republic of Korea.

on the “1940” and slammed him for it.

Public opinion today can easily be manipulated using short video clips, in which a whole 10,000-word essay gets reduced to three sentences. That is why Yau is being blamed for “bashing China”, a charge anyone who has the patience to listen to his speech in its entirety will disagree with.

Actually, Yau even said that the Chinese suffer from a Western blockade and vowed to build China into a technological power. He listed the problems hindering the path to growth in order to solve them, but those points seem to have missed the ears of the audience.

While it’s unfair to pick up few sentences from a speech

and make it viral without giving context, it’s necessary to realize that China has been doing quite well in the field of applied mathematics.

As early as 2021, Zhang Pingwen, a Chinese Academy of Science academician who is also the president of the China Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics, explained in an interview how Huawei spent 10 years on making its 5G technological standard on the polar coding research basis of professor Erdal Arikan in Türkiye.

China’s contribution in the field of applied mathematics should never be underestimated, but the field of public opinion needs more tolerance to accept different viewpoints. At least give people a chance to finish saying what they want to say.

# Selective hearing of speech on applied mathematics

ZHANG ZHOUXIANG

**AFTER two rounds of selection by two committees consisting of over 160 and 30 distinguished global scholars each, the first session of the International Congress of Basic Science held in Beijing last July selected 85 most important mathematical essays in the past five years. Only six of those essays were authored or co-authored by domestic professors.**

In comparison, the number of professors authoring or co-authoring the award-winning essays from the United States exceeds 70.

From the procedure followed there is no reason to suspect any “bias” against Chinese professors; all the related discussions and academic meetings were conducted by Chinese professors, with open, free, unguided

discussions.

That’s a key part of the controversy-stirring speech Shing-tung Yau, a world-renowned mathematician and professor at Tsinghua University, made at Huazhong University of Science and Technology on April 30.

His lament at the poor number of Chinese mathematicians getting major international awards was clearly misunderstood. Particularly, when he that said “China’s mathematical research level today has not even caught up with the US in the 1940s”, he meant China was lagging far behind in international academic influences, innovative capability, as well as talents dedicated to studying maths as a basic science, but unfortunately many just picked





**PESHAWAR:** Office of bearers Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Petroleum Dealers & Carriage Association talking to media at Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

## Pak Stock Exchange gains 56 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) Thursday gained 56.24 points, a slight positive change of 0.08 percent, closing at 72,658.05 points against 72,601.82 points the previous trading day.

A total of 674,981,699 shares valuing Rs 24.053 billion were traded during the day as compared to 970,325,029 shares valuing Rs23.514 billion the last day.

Some 376 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 218 of them recorded gains and 126 sustained losses, whereas the prices of 32 remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 175,149,131 shares at Rs 1.51 per share, Pak Elctron with 40,246,675 shares at Rs 27.55 per share and K-Electric Limited with 31,255,935 shares at Rs 4.69 per share.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed an increase of Rs 194.80 per share price closing at Rs 19,189.98, whereas the runner-up was Ismail Industries Limited with Rs 89.95 decline to close at Rs 1,289.29.

Bhanero Textile Mills Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 63.39 per share closing at Rs 996.61, followed by Hallmark Company Limited with Rs 62.90 decline to close at Rs 775.72.

**Rupee sheds 10 paise against US dollar**  
Pakistani Rupee on Thursday shed 10 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.20 against the previous day's closing of Rs 278.10.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market, however, stood at Rs 277.00 and Rs 279.80 respectively.

The price of the Euro remained constant at Rs 298.62, according to latest economic data of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen shed 1 paise and was traded at Rs 1.78 against Rs 1.79, whereas an increase of Rs 30 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 347.11 compared to the last closing of Rs 346.81.

The Emirates Dirham increased by 3 paise whereas Saudi Riyal went up by 2 paise and were traded at Rs75.74 and Rs74.17 respectively.

**Gold rates remain constant at Rs 239,200 per tola**  
The per tola price of 24 karat gold remained unchanged at Rs. 239,200 on Thursday.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold and 10 gram 22 karat gold also remained constant at Rs 205,075 Rs 187,986, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs 2,620 and Rs 2,254.80 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market remained stagnant at \$2,312, the Association said.

## OGDCL announces starting of oil, gas production

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), the operator of the Togh and Togh Bala Development and Production Lease (D&PL), on Thursday announced the successful commencement of production from the Togh-02 well from Lumshiwal-I Formation. The well is situated in the Kohat district.

The Togh-02 well is currently contributing 70 barrels of condensate and 8.0 Million Standard Cubic Feet per Day (MMSCFD) gas, into SNGPL's network. OGDCL remains steadfast on its core objective of adding to shareholder value through growth oriented business strategy.

Production from the well is projected to provide crucial annual foreign exchange savings in excess of \$38 million per annum, reinforcing import substitution and strengthening Pakistan's economy.

## Temporary disruption in flight operations

**F.P. Report**

LAHORE: A fire incident at Lahore's Allama Iqbal International Airport (AIIAP) has temporarily disrupted flight operations, particularly international flight operations. As a result, there may be delays, cancellations, or rescheduling of flights. All passengers advised to contact their respective airlines, before leaving for the airport, for the latest updates on flight schedules and any alternative arrangements that may be in place. Their airline will provide them with the most up-to-date information regarding your flight status and any necessary adjustments.

The Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority apologize for any inconvenience caused and appreciate your understanding during this challenging time. The safety and well-being of passengers remain top priority, and the authority working diligently to restore normal operations as soon as possible.

844 connections on illegal use of gas while another 228 on use of compressors and also booked an amount of Rs 38.97 against gas theft cases. The team also lodged 38 FIRs against gas pilfers.

In Bahawalpur the team disconnected 4 connections on illegal use of gas while another 01 on use of compressor.

The regional team of Gujranwala disconnected 01 connection on illegal use of gas while another one on use of compressor and also imposed fine of Rs 0.65 million against gas theft cases.

In Mardan the team disconnected 6 connections on illegal use of gas and team also imposed fine of Rs 0.36 million against gas theft cases.

The regional team of Faisalabad disconnected 2 connections on illegal use of gas while imposing fine of Rs 0.08 million against gas pilfers.

imposed fine of Rs 0.84 million against gas pilfers.

In Multan 10 connections were disconnected on illegal use while another 3 on use of compressor.

In Peshawar the company disconnected 67 connections on account of direct use of gas and illegal use of gas and amount of Rs 2.33 million have been booked against gas theft cases.

The regional team of Shiekhpura disconnected

## SBP injects Rs393.75 billion into market

KARACHI (APP): State Bank of Pakistan, Thursday, injected Rs 393.75 billion in the market through reverse repo purchase Open Market Operation (OMO).

According to OMO results issued here, the SBP conducted Open Market Operation, Reverse Repo Purchase (Injection) on May 9, 2024 for a tenor of one day.

The central bank received 6 quotes amounting to Rs 410.25 billion offered at the rate of return ranging between 22.12 - 22.06 %. Off them 4 quotes, amounting to Rs393.750 billion at the return rate of 22.07% p.a., were accepted.

# Petrol pumps owners demand prompt action

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Petrol pump filling station owners warned to go on strike if the government would fail to take prompt action against sale of smuggled Iranian oil and diesel at 'dabba' station and illegal actions by local administration on various pretext couldn't be stopped forthwith.

Talking to media persons after the a meeting of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Petroleum Dealers and Carriage Association (KPPD&CA) held here on Thursday at Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI),

office bearers of the association expressed grave concern over inaction against 'dabba' station and illegal actions against people doing legal business of petrol and imposition of fines on various pretext in the province, demanding to immediate stop this practice.

Office bearers said Iranian smuggled petrol which has come to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by paying regular duty in the name of Solvent, which has no consumption in our province, so it is parked at DI Khan.

They asked to probe why this product is coming to the province.

The office-bearers of the association also demanded

an immediate stop to the collection of samples by Patwaris and others at the petrol pumps.

The association threatened that if the government didn't accept their all genuine demands, they would go on strike across the province.

Earlier, an emergency meeting of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Petroleum Dealers and Carriage Association was held under the chairmanship of Abdul Majid Khan. Fuad Ishaq, president of the Sarhad chamber of commerce and industry participated in the meeting as chief guest.

The association patron in chief and former presi-

dent of the chamber Engr Maqsood Anwar Pervez, secretary general of the association Gul Nawaz Afridi, other senior office bearers, petrol pumps owners, dealers, managers and representatives were in attendance in a large number.

Fuad Ishaq also addressed the meeting and expressed grave concern over open sale of smuggled Iranian petrol through 'dabba' station, illegal actions against petrol pump owners, imposition of heavy fines and harassment on various pretext. He demanded of the government to accept all genuine demands of the association.

## IMF Resident Representative meets CCP Chairman

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Ms. Esther Pérez Ruiz, the IMF Resident Representative in Pakistan, visited the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) and met with Dr. Kabir Ahmed Sidhu, Chairman CCP, to discuss matters of mutual interest.

During the meeting, Dr. Sidhu briefed Ms. Ruiz on CCP's ongoing initiatives aimed at policing cartels to enhance competition, aligning with the Government of Pakistan's policies for sustainable economic growth.

The Chairman emphasized the critical role of taxation, remittances, and exports in attracting foreign direct investment, noting that market competition plays a vital role in this regard. He pointed out that for Pakistani products and services to compete effectively in international markets, a competitive environment is essential. The Chairman also highlighted that inefficiencies arise when there is a mismatch between demand and supply, and it is society that ultimately bears the cost of such inefficiencies.

CCP has a major role to curb the cartels and concerted, collusive practices in order to bring efficiency. In



this regard, one of the recent initiatives include the establishment of a Market Intelligence Unit (MIU) marking a transition from reactive to proactive enforcement.

Simultaneously, reviewing legal and regulatory frameworks in various sectors of the economy is another priority area for the CCP for promoting competition, said Dr. Sidhu.

Ms. Ruiz underscored the significance of competition in driving

exports and attracting foreign direct investment (FDI). The IMF representative further assured support for capacity building for enabling economic growth.

The meeting between Ms. Ruiz and Dr. Sidhu signifies a continued dialogue between international organizations and Pakistani authorities to promote economic stability and growth through fair competition practices.

## IMARAT Group and U Bank enter into strategic partnership

**F.P. Report**

KARACHI: U Microfinance Bank (U Bank) and IMARAT Group of Companies have entered into a strategic partnership for the provision of customized branch and branchless banking services to the IMARAT Group, including Graana and Agency21.

Under this collaboration, U Bank will be providing IMARAT Group with a range of tailor-made banking services, including employee banking for their staff members across multiple companies with complimentary insurance coverages, payroll disbursement, collection arrangements through branch banking as well as the digital network, and customized financial products designed for the employees as well as customers of IMARAT Group catering to their financial requirements and needs. The aim is to support all the relevant stakeholders, ultimately enabling overall economic growth and inclusion.

The signing ceremony was held recently in Islamabad, where the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by Mr. Mohamed Essa Al Taheri, President & CEO - U Bank, and Mr. Shafiq Akbar, Chairman IMARAT Group, in the presence of senior management members of both organizations.

Mr. Mohamed Essa Al Taheri, President & CEO - U Bank, com-



mented on the partnership: "At U Bank, we strongly believe in financial empowerment for all and the power of mutually beneficial collaborations with our prestigious partners to achieve that. This strategic alliance with IMARAT Group reinforces our dedication to providing comprehensive financial services tailored to the diverse needs of corporate employees and customers. We look forward to leveraging our banking expertise to contribute to their financial well-being."

Shafiq Akbar, Chairman of IMARAT Group, commented on the collaboration, stating, "At IMARAT, we believe in simplifying and enhancing the lives of our clients by providing straightforward, personal-

ized financial services. Our partnership with U Bank is a significant milestone that embodies this philosophy. It enables us to improve financial convenience and opportunities not only for our team members but also for our clients and partners. Ultimately, this collaboration is focused on enriching the financial health of our community and making a meaningful difference in their daily lives."

The collaboration between U Bank and IMARAT Group marks the beginning of a promising journey towards inclusive financial services and economic empowerment, contributing to the overall prosperity of the business community in Pakistan.

## IBA Karachi and ConnectHear host a career fair



**F.P. Report**

KARACHI: The Office of Diversity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (ODAI) under the umbrella of the Office of Student Affairs (OSA), at the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) Karachi and ConnectHear jointly hosted a career fair focused on supporting Persons with Disabilities or

special needs and promoted inclusivity and accessibility on campus.

ConnectHear is a social enterprise led by aspiring youth working for sign language accessibility and deaf-inclusion in Pakistan.

IBA-ODAI aims to support and facilitate students with ongoing or temporary disabilities and special needs by providing services for learning and inclusion to enable academic and personal success. IBA-ODAI collaborated with

ConnectHear as a community partner to host this event and is proud to have opened its doors for other university students to attend and benefit from.

Thirty-three organizations and seven hundred PWDs were invited to participate and were provided a platform to connect with potential employers and explore career opportunities in a supportive environment.

Several distinguished guests spoke about diversi-

ty and differently abled individuals, raised awareness about accessibility challenges faced in Pakistan, and emphasized on creating a more inclusive environment within the ecosystem.

Welcoming the audience, Co-Founder & CEO, ConnectHear, Azima Dhanjee; and Co-Founder & CTO, Arhum Ishtiaq; expressed their gratitude on the fruition of the successful fair. Mr. Ishtiaq shared that seven years ago, they embarked on a mission to make spaces accessible for everyone, regardless of their abilities. He opined that success for his team meant an abundance of inclusive hiring and onboarding because of this fair. He urged the audience to continue breaking down barriers and strive for a more inclusive future for everyone.

Former First Lady of Pakistan and Chief Guest, Samina Alvi, shared her thoughts on the work of

ConnectHear and STEM Charter as an important social challenge for Pakistan. She commended it as a very good effort to improve empowerment and rightful inclusion of PWDs. She also shared that the biggest policy change brought and implemented is of 5% quota in private and public sectors for disabled persons.

Country Head of Human Resources, Standard Chartered Bank Pakistan, Muhammad Umar, presented the keynote, emphasizing that we must change our perspective on what we can and cannot do.

"Today we are here to celebrate our abilities, not disabilities. To create an inclusive society, we need to ensure equal opportunities for everyone as every individual brings different skills and talents to the table. Organizations can and must play their role in building an infrastructure that ensures inclusivity for PWDs", said Mr. Umar.

Dean Student Affairs IBA, Maheen Ghauri stated that the IBA has always facilitated students and staff who are differently abled. When ConnectHear approached IBA for this initiative, the Institute supported the idea wholeheartedly. She emphasized that every individual is diverse, and each has their own distinct abilities. She added that it takes a village to create awareness and provide more opportunities. It is 400 people and tomorrow it could translate into millions.

The event also featured a panel discussion on 'Jobs for People with Disabilities in Pakistan: What's Happening Now'.

Participants met with companies to discuss potential job opportunities and avenues for professional success. The event's success highlights the commitment of ConnectHear and IBA Karachi to promote accessibility and inclusivity in Pakistan.

## London, Frankfurt stocks hit record highs on rate-cut hopes

LONDON (AFP/APP): The London and Frankfurt stock exchanges hit record highs Thursday as the Bank of England kept its interest rate at a 16-year high but raised hopes of a cut in the coming months.

Meanwhile, Wall Street failed to gain any traction from data showing a climb in claims for unemployment benefits that could raise the prospect of a US rate cut.

The British capital's benchmark FTSE 100 index, which has been breaking records repeatedly in recent days, topped 8,390 points around midday before paring down some gains.

The DAX in Frankfurt jumped above 18,600 points. The Paris CAC 40 also rose after falling earlier in the day.

The Bank of England kept its key rate at 5.25 percent for a sixth meeting in a row in efforts to tame inflation, mirroring a wait-and-see approach by the US Federal Reserve and European Central Bank.

UK annual inflation fell less than expected in March to 3.2 percent but BoE Governor Andrew Bailey voiced optimism that it would soon return to the central bank's two-percent target. "I'm optimistic that things are moving in the right direction," he said. His comments raised hopes that the BoE could soon cut rates. Its next meeting is in June.

"There is a cautious sense of optimism with analysts predicting we are edging closer to the first cut in interest rates since the pandemic, with the first cut potentially this summer," said Richard Flax, chief investment officer at Moneyfarm. The Bank of England also released its latest quarterly Monetary Policy Report, with forecasts for growth revised higher and the inflation outlook dropping below three percent, noted XTB research director Kathleen Brooks.





In brief

Sri Lanka names T20 WC squad

C O L O M B O (Agencies): Sri Lanka named its T20 World Cup squad Thursday with no changes from the team that won the three series against Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Zimbabwe this year. Wanindu Hasaranga was retained as skipper. Sri Lanka squad announced by Sri Lanka's cricket board: Wanindu Hasaranga (capt), Charith Asalanka, Kusal Mendis, Pathum Nissanka, Kamindu Mendis, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Angelo Mathews, Dasun Shanaka, Dhananjaya de Silva, Maheesh Theekshana, Dunith Wellalage, Dushmanta Chameera, Nuwan Thushara, Matheesha Pathirana and Dilshan Madushanka. The 2024 edition of the T20 World Cup will take place in the USA and the West Indies from June 1 to 29. The USA will play the opening match of the tournament against Canada, before facing Pakistan, India and Ireland in the league stages.

Athletic C'ship on World Athletic Day

A B B O T T A B A D (APP): Regional Sports Office and the District Sports Office on Thursday organised a regional sports event on the occasion of World Athletics Day, inaugurated by Commissioner Hazara Syed Zaheer-ul-Islam. Athletes from various districts participated in the inaugural ceremony. In the 100-meter race, Aziz Khan secured the first position, followed by Hamad Khan in second place and Saif-ur-Rehman in third. Abbas Khan claimed the first position in the 200-meter race, with Abdul Rahman and Zabiullah securing second and third positions respectively. Sanaullah clinched the first position in the 400-meter race, while Raheem and Muhammad Zaman secured second and third positions respectively. Waseef emerged victorious in the 800-meter race, followed by Sarfraz Ali and Sohail in the second and third positions. In the 50-meter dash for children under four years old, Musa claimed the first position, followed by Namaullah and Qaisar in the second and third positions respectively. At the conclusion of the event, Commissioner Hazara Syed Zaheer-ul-Islam distributed cash prizes, medals, and certificates to the winning athletes during the closing ceremony.

Chopra hopes for success

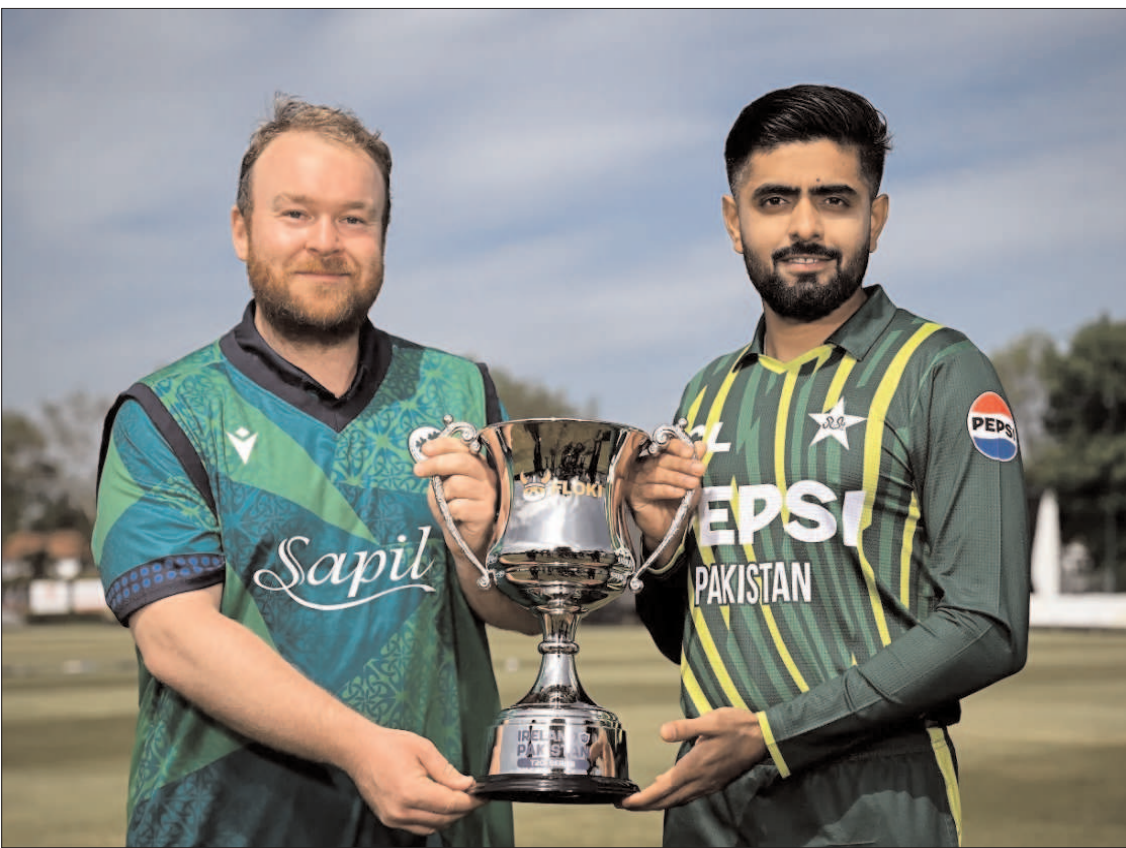
B E N G A L U R U (Agencies): Olympic and world javelin champion Neeraj Chopra said Indian athletes have shown they can compete with the European powerhouses of the event and that the key to success at the Paris Games is maintaining their self-belief. European athletes had won 15 of the last 16 gold medals in the men's event before Chopra threw 87.58 metres at the Tokyo Games in 2021 to become the first Asian man to win an Olympic javelin title. The 26-year-old will defend his crown at the July 26-Aug. 11 Games and will be joined by compatriot Kishore Jena, while DP Manu also has a chance of qualifying for Paris. The trio were in the finals of last year's Budapest world championships, where Chopra bagged gold to add to his silver from Eugene, Oregon a year earlier. "There was a time when I wasn't even sure of qualifying for the world championships, but see how times have changed," Chopra said in an interview with Sports Authority of India (SAI) media.

Pakistan to face Ireland to today

DUBLIN (PPI): The Pakistan men's cricket team will kick off its Europe tour with the first of three T20Is against Ireland on Friday. The remaining two matches will also take place at the Castle Avenue on Sunday and Tuesday, before the team heads to Headingley, Leeds, on Wednesday for a series of four T20Is against England. Following the England series, with matches scheduled at Headingley (22 May), Birmingham (25 May), Cardiff (28 May), and The Oval, London (30 May), both England and Pakistan will head to the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024. England will face Scotland in Barbados on 4 June in their opening match, while Pakistan will launch their campaign against the USA in Dallas on 6 June. This marks the first time Ireland will host Pakistan for a T20I series. The two sides have previously met only once in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2009 where Pakistan won by 39 runs

with Kamran Akmal receiving the player of the match award for his 51-ball 57 and two stumpings. Interestingly, both teams are in the same group for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 and will face each other in Florida on 16 June. Apart from the two sides, India, USA, and Canada are also in the same group, with the top two teams advancing to the second stage. Pakistan head coach, Azhar Mahmood: "Our preparations for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 began with the home series against New Zealand and now it's all about putting the final touches on those preparations. We have clarity on our game plans, strategies and combinations. It's about bringing everything together before we arrive in the United States. "We've only played Ireland once, so they will be a relatively new opponent for us. However, any team in T20 cricket can be dangerous as the match can swing in one over. The

three T20Is will provide us with good information about their players and how they approach T20 cricket." Meanwhile, fast bowler Mohammad Amir will miss the first T20I due to delays in the issuance of his visa. He is expected to join the side on Friday. Squads (to be selected from): Ireland: Paul Stirling (captain), Mark Adair, Ross Adair, Andrew Balbirnie, Curtis Campher, Gareth Delany, George Dockrell, Graham Hume, Barry McCarthy, Neil Rock, Harry Tector, Lorcan Tucker, Ben White, Craig Young Pakistan: Babar Azam (captain), Abrar Ahmed, Azam Khan, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Hasan Ali, Iftikhar Ahmed, Imad Wasim, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Mohammad Amir (unavailable for first T20I), Mohammad Rizwan, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Naseem Shah, Saim Ayub, Salman Ali Agha, Shadab Khan, Shaheen Shah Afridi and Usman Khan.



DUBLIN: Paul Stirling and Babar Azam pose with the series trophy.

Mohammad Amir receives visa for Ireland tour

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk) : Left-arm Pakistan pacer Mohammad Amir, on Thursday, finally received his visa for Ireland to participate in the three-match T20I series. According to the details, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) officials are currently engaged in arranging Mohammad Amir's flight to Dublin at the earliest. The left-arm pacer, due to a delay in the issuance of the visa will miss the first T20I and is expected to link up with the side on Friday. "Fast bowler Mohammad Amir will miss the first T20I due to delays in the issuance of his visa. He is expected to join the side on Friday," stated PCB in a press release. On the contrary, the national men's cricket team reached Dublin, Ireland on Wednesday morning via Dubai. Pakistan squad, led by captain Babar Azam, travelled without Shadab Khan and Hasan Ali, who linked up with the team in Dublin after participating in the County Championship. Notably, Mohammad Amir faced a similar situation during the tours of Ireland and England in 2018. Amir recently made his comeback to international cricket during the home T20I series against New Zealand after he took back his retirement before the series. Pakistan is scheduled to play three T20Is at Clontarf in Dublin on 10, 12, and 14 May 2024. All three matches will start at 3 PM local time. The three-match away series, followed by four T20Is in England, will serve as a stepping stone for the Green Shirts to boast their preparations for this year's ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 in the West Indies and the United States of America (USA).

Nadal squeezes past qualifier Bergs in Rome opener

ROME (AFP): Rafael Nadal battled into the second round of the Rome Open on Thursday after bouncing back from a set down to beat qualifier Zizou Bergs 4-6, 6-3, 6-4. Clay court icon Nadal will face world number nine Hubert Hurkacz next as he continued his comeback from injury with a punishing match against his Belgian opponent which lasted nearly three hours. Also on Nadal's side of the draw are last year's winner, world number four Daniil Medvedev, and the beaten finalist Holger Rune. "I'm happy to win a match which was important to me but I didn't play very well," admitted Nadal to Sky Sport. "I played very badly for about half an hour but then I got a bit better. But I'll have to improve a lot if I'm going to win the next match and I expect to do so." Spaniard Nadal has in recent times been a shadow of the player who has won 22 Grand Slams in a storied career which has also brought a record 10 titles in Rome, his most recent in 2021. The 37-year-old has

struggled with injury, dropping down to 305 in the world rankings after missing almost all of last year. He returned in April from another three-month lay-off with a second-round exit in Barcelona before reaching the last 16 in Madrid last week. Nadal has said that he will only play at the French Open, where he has won 14 times, if he feels competitive and although he showed glimpses of his old self against 108th-ranked Bergs he struggled on his serve and looked a long way from Grand Slam standard. Battling Nadal Outsider Bergs, 24, is an eight-time title winner on the Challenger tour and had in previous tournaments taken sets off high-profile players like Stefanos Tsitsipas and last year's losing Rome finalist Rune. The hard-hitting Belgian pushed his big-name rival all the way, briefly looking like he might win the biggest match of his career to date before Nadal fought back to take victory. Nadal showed signs of form in game four of the

first set, when a stunning passing shot and brilliant return of serve in consecutive points took him to 0-40 and an eventual break. But Bergs broke back straight away as Nadal's rustiness from his long lay-off showed, a super return of serve pulling the Belgian to within a game before he levelled at 3-3 with his serve. And Nadal dropped his serve for a second time as errors began to creep in to his game, a double fault at 15-40 down in game nine handing Bergs the chance to claim the set in the next, which he duly took to love. Nadal came out all guns blazing in the second set however, quickly racing to a 3-0 lead after the first game was interrupted for 10 minutes at 40-0 due to a spectator illness. He battled against a spirited Bergs to hold his next three service games and level the match before breaking out some vintage shots to break Bergs three games later and take firm control. Nadal then saved three break points in a row to move 4-2 ahead and served out to win, sealing the deal with his first match point.

Pak Taekwondo teams to participate in Asian C'ships

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Taekwondo teams of Khyroggi and Poomsae would depart to Vietnam on Friday to feature in the Asian Championships 2024. These teams have been preparing under the guidance of both Foreign and National Coaches, said a press release. The Ministry of Inter Provincial Coordination (IPC) and Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) has extended full support to the players

by providing training facilities, NOCs and financial assistance. The federation was confident on the teams' abilities and hopes a strong performance, which would serve as a solid foundation for future competitions, including the Indoor Martial Arts Games scheduled in October 2024 at Thailand. Meanwhile Pakistan Taekwondo Federation President and Secretary would also attend the General Council Meeting

of Asia, where they will present a bid to host the 7th Asian Open Championship in Islamabad, Pakistan in February 2025. Omer Saeed, CEO Pakistan Taekwondo Federation would also attend the said meeting as observer. National Taekwondo Kyorugi and Poomsae Teams includes Officials, 17 Male and 5 Female Athletes who would show their skills and techniques during said events of Asia.

Azlan Shah Hockey Cup Pakistan to face Japan in final

IPOH (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan and Japan will vie for the 30th Sultan Azlan Shah Hockey Cup 2024 trophy in Ipoh, Malaysia on Saturday with the Greenshirts looking to clinch their fourth title at the event. Both sides won their respective matches on Wednesday to book their place in the final. Pakistan edged past Canada 5-4, while Japan defeated hosts Malaysia 2-1. Pakistan, the three-time former Sultan Azlan Shah Cup champions, have remained unbeaten with three wins - against South Korea, Malaysia and Canada - and a draw against Japan. Mirroring Pakistan's performance, Japan also registered as many wins plus a draw. However, they were second in the points table.

Malaysia and New Zealand ended their tournament at third and fourth in the points table, respectively, with six points each. South Korea are placed fifth with three points, while Canada are at the bottom with no wins in the six-team invitational tournament. The final will start at 5:30pm Pakistan Standard Time. This will be the first time in 13 years that Pakistan have qualified for the final of the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup. They last played their previous final at the 2011 edition where they suffered a defeat against Australia. Before the final, Pakistan will have a chance to fine-tune their game as they play their last round match against New Zealand at the same venue on May 10 (tomorrow.) Path to the final

In the crucial match against Canada, Pakistan recovered from an early setback and registered a 5-4 win on Wednesday. Canada started the game aggressively and kept attacking Pakistan's goalpost from the word go. They succeeded in taking a 2-0 lead in the 17th minute of the game. Pakistan were on the backfoot but made a resounding comeback to end the game with a decisive 5-4 lead. Abu Bakr Mahmood scored two quick goals in the third quarter to bring Pakistan back into the game. Arshad Liaqat, Rana Waheed Ashraf and Ghazanfar Ali also notched up one goal each for Pakistan. Sean Davis scored a brace for Canada, while Harbir Sindhu and Avjot Buttar scored one each.

28th edition of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Open Golf C'ship-2024 begins

PESHAWAR (APP): The 28th edition of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Open Golf Championship-2024, which is the oldest in the country, got under way here at the 6666-yard PAF Golf Course on Thursday. This Championship is the major and top and national ranking golfing event of the country where the leading golfers of Pakistan from all over the country are taking part in different categories including Professional, Senior Professionals, Junior Professionals, (Amateurs (Handicap 09 & below), Senior Amateurs (Handicap 14 & below), Subsidiary (HCP-10-18), Ladies Amateurs (Handicap 36 & below), Veterans & Boys Cate "A" & "B". The top golfers are in the running for attaining KP Open Champion title in their respective categories. It has been a great honor and a privilege for the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Golf Association, Peshawar Golf Club management, to hold this Championship as a mega golfing event of Pakistan. In Pros category a total of 100 Pros, Amateurs category, 100, 50 in Senior Amateurs, and 15 Ladies golfers are competing for the top honor. Earlier, on the opening day Muhammad Akram of Gymkhana with his gross score two under 70, 35, one under at the front nine and 35, one under at the back nine, is the leader with two birdies at the hole no. 5, 6 and one birdie at the

back nine at hole no 10. "My long drives work very well and I hit almost all the regulations," professional golfer Muhammad Akram told APP here. "I would try my best to keep on with hole-to-hole calculations to keep my score good and at the end should win this prestigious golfing event of the country," Muhammad Akram said. "My putting was up to the mark and I went for putting, did some wonderful 12-foot putting as well," he added. He said closely followed by another national ranking golfer and former national team skipper Muhammad Tariq with his gross score 72, par, 35, one under at the front nine holes and 37, one over par, at the back nine by scoring two birdies at the front and a miss stroke and one bogey at the back nine. "My putting did not work at the Hole No. 10 par 3 and I tried hard to make a single bogey instead of more miss stroke because my second long drive hit the bunker but I managed it nicely to finish one over par 37, Muhammad Tariq said. About the golf course, he said, the greens and fairways are well maintained and he loves to play his game in PAF Golf Course Peshawar. "I have a lot of sweet memories with this golfing course as I led the Pakistan team to victory some time back, national top ranking Pro Muhammad Tariq said. He also appreciated the Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa Golf Association for organizing this historical and oldest event of the country by giving opportunities to the top golfers of the country to come and play. "I love the weather of Peshawar, especially the golf course with towering trees and lush greens out-field and well-maintained golfing course including the greens and fairways according to international standard," Muhammad Tariq said. Nadeem Abbas also carded 72, par, with 35, one under at the front nine and 37, one over par, at the back nine, Mehmood Hussain Kiani carded 73, one over par, 36, par at front nine and 37, one over par, at back nine with three birdies. Abdul Jabbar (73), Naseer Khan (74), Rana Iftikhar (74) were the other top scorers in the opening day round over 18 holes on the first day. In the Junior Professionals opening day, Muhammad Sahil took lead with his gross score 72, par, 37 one over par at the front nine holes and 35, one under at the back nine by hitting a single bogey at hole no. 1, hole no. 5 and 10 with birdie at hole no. 13 par 4 and 16, par three. He was followed by Abid Iqbal of Lahore Gymkhana with his gross score 75, three over par, 37, one over par at front nine and 38, two over par, back nine holes. Ashass Amjad (76), Umar Shahzad (76) and Jawad Ahmad (77) were the other top scorers over 18 holes on the first day.

PBCC gearing up to host 4th T20 Blind Cricket WC

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Blind Cricket Council (PBCC) was gearing up to host the 4th T20 Blind Cricket World Cup, with matches scheduled to take place in Punjab and Sindh from November 22 to December 3. PBCC Chairman Syed Sultan Shah said the event would be a grand success, with seven countries, including India, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Bangladesh, West Indies, New Zealand, and Nepal expected to feature in the event. Australia was also expected to confirm its

participation soon. Shah, who was also the President of World Blind Cricket Limited, said he would be visiting Sindh for meetings to host the World Cup with the provincial government. PBCC will work closely with the provincial governments to ensure a befitting hosting of the World Cup, he told APP. The event was expected to cost around Rs 60 million. Hosting the 4th T20 Blind Cricket World Cup is an honor for Pakistan, and the country is looking forward to welcoming

teams from around the world, he said. He also expressed that the India Blind Cricket Council Chairman Mahantish GK has also assured to come in the World Cup in Pakistan. The venues for the matches were yet to be decided, but PBCC was working with the provincial governments to finalize the arrangements. This is a great opportunity for Pakistan to host the mega event, and PBCC was fully committed to making the 4th T20 Blind Cricket World Cup a memorable one.

Atletico win appeal over racist abuse sanction



MADRID (AFP): The Spanish Football Federation on Thursday accepted Atletico Madrid's appeal against a partial stadium ban after racial abuse directed at Athletic Bilbao winger Nico Williams. Atletico were initially ordered to partially close their stadium for two La Liga matches following

monkey chants heard by Spain international Williams at Atletico's Metropolitan stadium last month. The federation pointed to Atletico's "active cooperation" in their decision to lift the stadium ban and a 20,000 euros (\$21,350) fine. Williams heard the abuse when he went to

take a corner. He subsequently scored, pointing to his arm in reference to his skin colour, in his side's 3-1 defeat on April 28. "There weren't many of them. There are stupid people everywhere... I hope this changes bit by bit" he said after the match. Atletico identified the person responsible for the abuse from cameras in the stadium. He was handed over to the police when the game ended, and banned from the club. The federation praised Atletico's swift action in what they accepted was "an isolated incident". Spanish football has suffered a spate of racist incidents in recent years, many of which have been aimed at Real Madrid forward Vinicius Junior. The Brazil international earned global support after facing off with a fan who was abusing him last year at Valencia's Mestalla stadium, which also faced subsequent partial closure.





## In brief

### AIOU holds first session

ISLAMABAD (APP): The first session of 68th meeting of the Board of Advanced Studies and Research (BASR) was held at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) the other day. Vice Chancellor AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, presided over the meeting. Directorate BASR, Prof. Dr. Syed Amir Shah presented a detailed report on the implementation of the decisions made during the previous meeting and the agenda for the current session. All four Deans, prominent scholars, subject specialists, supervisors, heads of departments attended the meeting. The 56 PhD synopses were on the agenda but due to time constraints, agenda was split into three sessions. In the first session took place and a total of 15 students from different departments including Early Childhood Education and Elementary Teacher Education, Statistics, Physics, Business Administration and Mass Communication presented synopses. Some synopses were approved with minor changes, while others were directed to be refined and presented again in 15 days. Additionally, some scholars were asked to present their synopses at the next meeting. VC AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood advised scholars to use simple and common words instead of complex language in their research proposals. The second and third sessions of the meeting are scheduled for May 15 and May 28, respectively. In the second session, 19 scholars will present their synopses, while 22 students will present theirs in the third session.

### Tent Pegging festival on 11th

RAWALPIND (APP): Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA), Rawalpindi would organize a two-day 'Commissioner Tent Pegging festival' at Gorakhpur Nursery on May 11. According to Director General (DG) PHA, Ahmed Hasan Ranja, PHA would organize historic Tent Pegging competitions at Gorakhpur Nursery on May 11 and 12. Tent pegging is a game where a person on a horse rides fast and uses a sword or a long stick to hit and pick up a wooden peg as a target. Teams from all over the country would participate in the competitions to be held at PHA Gorakhpur Nursery. The DG while presiding over a meeting at PHA Headquarters Rawalpindi on Thursday said that all relevant arrangements were being finalized. Ahmed Hasan Ranja said that Tent pegging is a traditional sport that started from the 18th century and this sport presents 'our rich rural culture'.

### CDA, PITB chairmen meet

ISLAMABAD (INP): To comply with the directives from the Minister of Interior, the Chairman of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) Muhammad Ali Randhawa, accompanied by the Member Technology, held a comprehensive meeting with the Chairman of the Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) and his team on the digitalization of CDA's, ICT records within the shortest possible timeframe. The meeting focused on strategizing the digital transformation process, including assessing the current state of CDA & ICT records, identifying technological solutions, addressing potential challenges, and establishing a timeline for completion.



ISLAMABAD: Visitors keenly viewing art work during an exhibition featuring a joint creative interpretation of Iqbal's Urdu and Persian poetry "...tar-e-harir-e do rang" by artists Shah Abdullah Alamee and Amna Manzoor at Tanzara Art Gallery.

## May 9 riots a conspiracy against country: Muqam

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs & Gilgit Baltistan and States & Frontier Regions, Engr Amir Muqam, has denounced the tragic and heart-wrenching events of May 9 as a conspiracy against the country. In a statement on May 9 incident, the federal minister regretted that miscreants attacked on Jinnah House and Military installations on 9th May and disgraced the Martyrs. He said that Pakistan Army rendering sacrifices for the peace in motherland and even

our enemies have admitted the bravery of our forces.

He also regretted that miscreant broke the statue of Colonel Sher Khan and disgrace of our Martyrs. Engr Amir Muqam said that the miscreants also attacked on Radio Pakistan Peshawar and burnt the precious archive.

He said that Chagi mountains model that was constructed in memory of May 28, 1998 nuclear explosions were also burnt down at premises of Radio Pakistan Peshawar. He said that Swat Motorway toll plaza and others properties

were also burnt down on May 9 by the attackers. He said that destruction to public, government and defence installations caused by May 9 vandalism was beyond imagination and culprits could not escape from the clutches of law.

Engr Amir Muqam said that miscreants would have to answer to May 9 vandalism and attack on monuments of Martyrs, Defense installation and government institutions.

He said that now it is crystal clear that these miscreants were working on enemy's agenda.

## Interior Minister inaugurates Margalla Trails Patrol Unit

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi on Thursday formally inaugurated the Margalla Trails Patrol Unit, a new security system started in just seven days.

Inspector General of Police (IG) Islamabad, Ali Nasir Rizvi gave a briefing about the Margalla Patrol Unit and introduced the patrolling unit to the minister.

The Minister inspected the motorcycle and cavalry unit and also met the police officers of the Margalla Trails Patrol Unit and advised them to perform their duties diligently.

A force of 60 police officers will patrol the Margalla trails, the unit has been formed to protect people on Margalla trails, the minister was briefed.

This unit consists of foot petrol, motorcycle petrol and Horseman consists of gasoline and the purpose of setting up the Margalla Trails Unit is to provide a safe environment to the citizens visiting the trails.

The Foot Patrol consists of 10 police officers who will patrol the trails on foot in full protective kit, the motorcycle unit consists of 06 motorcycles and 16 officers, while Horsemen will patrol the trails on eight horses.

The minister said that if a citizen loses his way or there is an emergency, these officers will reach for immediate help. He directed the officials to take immediate steps to solve the problem of mobile signal in the Margalla Trails area.

He also directed the concerned officials to review the location for the installation of the mobile towers.



## Course participants from armed forces' officers visit IIUI

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation of the participants of 39th Human Resource Development course arranged by Dawah Academy for the officers of Pakistan armed forces (Army, Navy and Air Force) visited the new campus of International Islamic University (IIU) here Thursday. The delegation of the participants of one month long course was led by Incharge Training Department, Dr. Abdul Faraed Brohi. Incharge Protocol and Public Relation, Nasir Farid was also present on the occasion.

Speaking to the delegation, Vice President Administration, Finance and Academics, Professor Dr. Abdul Raheman hailed the services of the

forces of Pakistan. He said that the forces of Pakistan were pride of the nation. He appreciated that Dawah academy had been arranging important courses of Islamic orientation. He elaborated the University vision, its history and future objectives.

He also shared the University's vision of progress and apprised the latest steps taken by the University for Academic Excellence. He specially mentioned that as per the vision of Dr. Hathal Homoud Aloatibi, President IIUI, the University was keenly focusing on service to society and dissemination of true image of Islam. He also mentioned IIUI's role in maintaining peace and fight against Islamophobia through

Paigham-e-Pakistan. Sharing his experience as an educationist, Dr. Abdul Raheman enlightened the participants about the role of higher education institutions in society building and importance of behavioral changes through education. He also shed light on the inculcation of Islamic thoughts in young minds and importance of guidance from religion in our daily life routine.

The participants took keen interest in the University's faculties, degree programs, training and research projects, while they also termed the course of Dawah Academy as one of the most constructive activities in their lifetime. Later, the delegation also visited the central library of the University.



ISLAMABAD: PPP MNA Asma Alamgir addressing a press conference at National Press Club.

## IESSI organizes free medical camp

ISLAMABAD (APP): The ICT Employees Social Security Institution (IESSI) with the collaboration of District Health Office (DHO) and Akbar Niazi Teaching Hospital Thursday arranged a free medical camp at Rural Health Centre (RHC) Baharakah.

Talking to APP, the Spokesman of Islamabad Capital Territory Administration said that the people had access to medical checkups for vari-

ous acute illnesses, diabetes screening, breast cancer screening, gynecology consultations, specialist consultations, and pediatrician consultations in the camp.

Additionally, free medicines were also provided to those in need. He said the initiative aimed at to provide essential healthcare services to the community.

On directions of Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon, the

Assistant Commissioner Secretariat paid a visit to the medical camp and reviewed the facilities being given to the ailing humanity.

The medical camp commenced at 9:00 am and has already served over 300 patients by 12:30 pm, with services continuing until 4:00 pm. This outreach initiative underscores the commitment of various organizations to address the healthcare needs of underserved communities.

## Chairman PRCS delivers recommendations at meeting

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari participated in the inaugural session of the preparatory meeting for the 34th international conference convened by the International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC) and Red Crescent Societies in Geneva.

According to a press release issued here Thursday, he presented recommendations on behalf of the PRCS for the upcoming international conference, highlighting the organization's commitment to implementing actions following global humanitarian laws, the Geneva Conventions, climate change adaptation and disaster preparedness.

During his visit, Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari also had a meeting with the newly elected President of IFRC, Ms Kate Forbes.

Both leaders discussed the arrangements for the 34th International Conference, focusing on the recommendations put forth by the Pakistan Red Crescent Society.

President Forbes praised Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari's leadership in alleviating the suffering of vulnerable people in Pakistan through the Red Crescent Society and expressed a commitment to enhancing cooperation for advancing humanitarian services in innovative ways in the future.

Laghari extended congratulations to the

President IFRC on the successful completion of her first 100 days in office while Ms Forbes acknowledged that in her initial days, her priorities encompassed national society development, climate change, youth engagement, equitable resource allocation, governance and leadership, accountability and transparency.

Furthermore, Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari briefed on the initiatives related to environmental conservation and sustainability, including measures to address climate change and the promotion of Solarization and greenhouse initiatives.

Emphasis was also laid on the active involvement of youth in various activities.

## Tech advancements must for uplift: Shaza

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja Thursday said that the promotion of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is the top priority of the government.

The Ministry of IT and Telecom is focusing on the provision of better connectivity services across the country, Shaza Fatima said this while talking to Chief

Executive Officer (CEO) Zong Mr. Huo Junli who called on the minister at her office.

Matters regarding digitalisation, connectivity, spectrum auction and 5G rollout were discussed in the meeting.

She said that issues relating to Telecommunication will be resolved on an urgent basis.

Quality digital services can be provided by using

the latest technology, adding that the better use of technology is pivotal for the uplift of the country.

She noted that a strong digital ecosystem is the base of digitalisation. CEO Zong Huo Junli said that the Ministry of IT and Telecom industry can jointly put Pakistan on the path of a better digital future. The meeting was also attended by Member Telecom Muhammad Jahanzeb Rahim

## Experts for capacity building of farmers on modern technologies

ISLAMABAD (APP): The experts at a policy dialogue on Thursday demanded Pakistan-China Council on Agriculture Development led by the private sector of both the countries to focus technology transfer and capacity building of Pakistani farmers on modern technologies under China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The experts were addressing the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) the policy dialogue titled "Greening of the CPEC: Sustainable Agriculture in Pakistan and the Learnings from China" organized here.

Dr Hassan Daud Butt, former project director CPEC, former CEO Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment said that the future of agriculture production and food

security relied on technology advancement, good policies and leadership. However, it was pertinent to establish a council of agriculture development led by private sector and linked them to Chinese counterparts that would help achieve targets swiftly.

He said China has made massive progress in the field of agriculture through consistent policies, leadership and technology-driven interventions.

Butt added that the Chinese advancement in agriculture sector was unique in its fashion as less public capital and more private sector investment was utilized in developing the agriculture sector.

"Pakistan needs to learn from Chinese about planning on short, mid and long-term goals with top to bottom approach with poli-

cy consistency. Moreover, the leadership on public and private sector needs to be strengthened through mutual collaborations, whereas prudent and timely reforms in agriculture sector are needed," he said.

He said the SDPI's scoping study is based on sustainable agriculture development in Pakistan through lessons learnt from Chinese progress. He urged the authors to add livestock as component to the study focus to further broaden the scope with insights on the marketing aspect as well.

Research Associate, Misbah Khan provided a comprehensive view on the preliminary findings of the report titled "Scoping Study on Agriculture Development in Pakistan".

The report shed light on precision agriculture in Pakistan and its challenges,

policy infrastructure bottlenecks and financial constraints whereas climate-smart agriculture was given due to focus.

For the report, she said consultations were conducted with federal and provincial stakeholders, development organisations and the local communities, particularly farmers.

The scoping study underscored the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in agriculture sector of Pakistan and discussed the lessons learnt from China, she added.

Khan mentioned that Pakistan might create its route towards resilience, productivity and environmental stewardship by developing synergy with China's technology advancement, policy support and investment opportunities.

## All eyes PM's upcoming visit to China: Tarar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar said on Thursday that eyes of the whole world were focused on the upcoming visit of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to China.

During a meeting with Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong, the two leaders discussed Pakistan-China relations, China Pakistan Economic Corridor, government initiatives to revive Pakistan's economy and other important issues.

During the discussion regarding Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's upcoming visit to China, the minister said that besides the ongoing projects under CPEC, new projects and investment in CPEC will also be discussed.

"The relations between Pakistan and China are based on friendship, trust and mutual respect," he said adding the relationship between the two countries has taken the form of a comprehensive strategic partnership.

The CPEC was an important cooperation project between the two countries and China was Pakistan's largest trading partner.

"Thanks to CPEC, the access of Chinese products to the markets of Pakistan

and Pakistani products to China has increased", he remarked.

Tarar said that China's cooperation in the completion of several major projects in Pakistan under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project was enviable. The federal minister of information also informed the Chinese ambassador about the government's economic initiatives and the visits of high-level delegations from Saudi Arabia and Iran.

"Economic indicators are becoming positive after the present government came to power," he said and added that international journals were also predicting improvement in Pakistani economy.

The Chinese ambassador appreciated the government's economic initiatives and expressed the hope that the country under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif would con-

tinue on the road to progress and prosperity.

The minister also informed the Chinese Ambassador about the government's measures to protect Chinese citizens in Pakistan.

In the meeting, it was also agreed to promote cooperation between the two countries in the fields of information and culture. During the visit of the Prime Minister to China, the news exchange agreement between China's news agency "Xinhua" and Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) will also be signed, he said.

During the meeting both sides also agreed to promote cultural and educational exchanges between the two countries.

At the end of the meeting, both the leaders expressed their determination to continue cooperation with each other in multiple sectors.





700 children treated: ARCS

KANDAHAR (Ariana News): Officials from the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) in the southwest of the country said they treated 700 children with heart defects last year and plan to treat another 15,000 children this year. Marking World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day under the theme this year of “Keeping Humanity Alive”, officials and residents in Kandahar and Balkh provinces appealed to international organizations to continue helping Afghans.

Afghan worker died

KABUL (Khaama Press): Tehran’s firefighting and safety services have confirmed that an elderly Afghan worker died after falling into a well. The state news agency of Iran reported, citing Sayed Jalal Maleki, the spokesperson for Tehran’s Firefighting and Safety Services that the incident occurred on Tuesday, May 8th. Reports indicate that this 70-year-old Afghan worker lost his life during the cleaning of a 28-meter-deep well when the rope he was tied to broke.

## Over 3,000 Afghan migrants deported

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations of Afghanistan has announced that over three thousand Afghan migrants have returned from Iran and Pakistan, both “forcibly and voluntarily.”

On Thursday, May 9, the ministry released a newsletter stating that these individuals had entered the country the previous day through the “Islam Qala,” “Torkham,” and “Spin Boldak” borders.

According to the ministry, 2,809 Afghan migrants voluntarily

returned from Iran, and another 748 were forcibly returned from Pakistan.

This is happening while the process of deporting Afghan migrants has continued over the past months from Iran and Pakistan.

Previously, Ahmad Vahidi, Iran’s Minister of the Interior, had announced that over the past year, one million and three hundred thousand “illegal” migrants had been deported from the country.

Additionally, several organizations aiding Afghanistan have repeatedly expressed concern

about the deportation of Afghan migrants from Iran and Pakistan and have called for a halt to this process.

The World Food Program has also warned that there is a possibility of deporting 1.24 million Afghan migrants from Iran and Pakistan in 2024.

This comes amid a dire humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, exacerbated by drought, conflict, and widespread violations.

The lack of employment and occupation opportunities has further aggravated the situation.

## Debt-ridden driver survives on a loaf of bread

KABUL (Khaama Press): The lives of many people in Afghanistan are shaped by layers of poverty, poverty that, in different periods, has either caused deprivation or led to severe social insecurity. In this report, you read about the life of an elderly man who has parked his taxi in a corner of the bustling city of Kabul, and beside it, a loaf of flatbread from a clay oven is visible, which he says he uses to get through the day.

It seems that no one has listened to his words for a long time, and he hasn’t had an opportunity to share his complaints with anyone candidly. Habibullah, who is 60, has been driving in Kabul, Afghanistan’s busiest and most chaotic city, for about 30 years.

Habibullah says, “I work as much as I can until my body and nerves tire from the exhaustion and the noise of cars and road-blocks.” Before becoming a driver, he tried other jobs but believed that in “this country,” no job yields results: “We tried everything, from manual labour to farming, apprenticeship, and street vending, but nothing worked until I sold my ancestral land and bought a vehicle.”

The trial and error phase in this elderly man’s life has been so prolonged that it’s easy to conclude that no suitable jobs offer satisfying income. This compels Habibullah to drive in the city, even “these days when people have become very impoverished.”

He adds that currently, many people use bicycles out of necessity and poverty, covering long distances with them.

Citizens who cover long distances in Kabul by bicycle agree with Habibullah. Hamed, a 40-year-old man who cycles daily between Darul Aman and the Sarabsazi intersection, told Khaama Press, “I earn six thousand salary, and if I spend it on taxi fares, nothing will be left for me.”

Habibullah says he earns 200 Afghanis some days and 400 Afghanis on others, but a significant portion of this money again goes towards vehicle taxes. He likens his taxi-driving job to a bird endlessly wandering an unknown path.

He has parked his vehicle in a corner and is talking about his health issues. Diabetes and heart problems are among Habibullah’s health concerns. Beside him is a pot of tea and a piece of flatbread, part of which he eats in the morning and the rest around 12:00 PM if he gets the chance.

He says he currently has a debt of 25,000. To change the color of his taxi from the previous color to blue, he borrowed money and has not been able to pay it back yet.

## Afghan Minister visits Mes Aynak copper mine

LOGAR (Ariana News): Shahabuddin Delawar, Acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum, visited the Mes Aynak copper mine area during a trip to Logar province.

According to the ministry, Delawar was accompanied by Khairullah Khairkhaw, Acting Minister of Information and Culture; Zhao Xing, Chinese Ambassador to Kabul; Ziaul Rahman Madani, Governor of Logar; and the deputy minister of energy and water.

The ministry said Delawar and his accompanying delegation visited various areas of Mes Aynak copper mine and Mes Aynak archaeological sites to evaluate progress of work being done on the mine.

Officials of MCC, the company with the contract to mine the copper, also provided an update on work being carried out including an update on the road that will soon be built.



“Most of the problems of the project have been solved and we are ready to start the practical work of the project, and with the practical start of the [Mes] Aynak copper mine project, there will be no damage to the ancient monuments in the area.”

The Acting Minister of Information and Culture also discussed the need to preserve and protect relics at the archeological site and assured the delegation of the ministry’s cooperation.

The deputy minister of energy and water also assured all present of a consistent supply of electricity and water for the mine.

Mes Aynak is the location of Afghanistan’s largest copper deposit, however it also contains artifacts recovered from the Bronze Age, and some of the artifacts recovered have dated back over 3000 years.

## First flight of pilgrims leaves for Saudi Arabia



KABUL (Ariana News): The Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs says that the process of transferring Hajj pilgrims from Afghanistan to Saudi Arabia has started. According to the ministry, about 230 Hajj pilgrims left, on the first flight to Medina.

The acting minister Noor Mohammad Saqib, said at a departure ceremony for the Afghan pilgrims that this year, in order to provide bet-

ter services to Hajj pilgrims, the employees of the working committees have been sent to Saudi Arabia earlier than in previous years.

At the same time, Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs Abdul Salam Hanafi, said to the pilgrims during the ceremony: “Dear pilgrims, you are the representatives of the Afghan people in Saudi Arabia, so do this representation well.”

Hanafi added that with the efforts of the Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs, as in previous years, all Hajj activities this year have been prepared in an orderly manner.

Earlier, the acting minister announced that this year’s quota for Afghan pilgrims will be 30,000.

Ariana Afghan Airlines and Kam Air are the official carriers of pilgrims this year.

## Relocation of internally displaced people ongoing

KABUL (TOLONews): The deputy minister of Refugees and Repatriation, Abdul Rahman Rashid, told TOLONews that there are more than 380,000 internally displaced people in the country.

Rashid said that the highest numbers of displaced people are from the provinces of Herat, Nangarhar, Kunduz, Baghlan, Takhar, and Balkh.

Abdul Rahman Rashid added: “The Islamic Emirate has decided to voluntarily repatriate them to their original provinces, and their needs and problems will be addressed.

We intend to provide them with accommodation.”

At the same time, a number of internally displaced people whose houses were demolished by the Kabul Municipality asked the Islamic Emirate to build shelters for them.

Saleh Mohammad, 42, who has been displaced from Nangarhar to Kabul, said: “I am now going to my village, but I do not have the ability to take the wood and household items to the village. I am forced to sell this wood at half price.”

“I am disabled and have a widow and

orphans who are dependent on me. What should I do now?” said Awaz Khan, another internally displaced person.

“The problem is that this place has been destroyed, and now there is neither money nor a place to move the house and family elsewhere,” said Zar Wali, another internally displaced person.

According to the information from the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, during the past year, more than 7,000 families have been relocated to their original provinces.

## Two schools reopen in Kunar province after eight years

KUNAR (TOLONews): Two schools in the Sarkano district of Kunar province, which had been closed due to rocket fire from Pakistani forces and past conflicts, have been reopened after eight years.

Officials from the Kunar Directorate of Education state that with the return of the local residents, these schools have been reactivated, and they assure the provision of more facilities in the educational sector.

Khan Gul Obaid, the education director of the Sarkano district, said, “More families are coming back; currently, 70 stu-

dents are being educated in the Nawah middle school and 30 in the Kamar village primary school.”

Mohibullah Heidari, the head of Kunar’s Education Department, explained, “When families migrate, their children go with them; if there are no children, our schools must close. The major problem was the extensive shelling from Pakistan; during conflicts, even the rear areas were shelled, leading to the closure of our schools.”

Local residents have expressed happiness about the activation of these two schools but are urging officials to address their ongoing challenges.

Hazratullah, a teacher, mentioned, “Other families are also returning, and the number of students is increasing. Our problem is the lack of paper and books; we hope the government will help us solve this issue with books and paper supplies.”

Habibullah, a local resident, stated, “We need more teachers here, and books and pens should be provided to the students.”

Ziaur Rahman, a 35-year-old local who missed out on education, brings his children to school every morning for a brighter future. He says his

only hope is the education of his children.

Zia Rahman, another local resident, said, “I brought my children from that high area to get an education here.”

Hosai, a local resident, added, “There were girls there who went to school. I was very upset, but now that our school has been built, I am very happy. I want to become a doctor in the future.”

According to statistics from the Kunar Directorate of Education, there are currently 440 active schools in the province, with 229,000 students engaged in learning.

## Modern sciences essential for society, says Governor Nimroz

NIMROZ (TOLONews): Mohammad Qasem Khalid, the Governor of Nimroz, has called the acquisition of modern education a serious necessity in the country.

Khalid, during a program introducing elite students from public and private schools, stated that

there is a need to provide standard educational opportunities to students in schools.

The Governor of Nimroz said, “Mastering all modern sciences is a fundamental need for our society, enabling us to acquire sufficient knowledge about the Quran through modern science, and it is essential to provide the opportunity for students to learn standard sciences in schools.”

Meanwhile, several students in Nimroz have urged the interim government to urgently reopen schools for girls.

Rahimullah, a student, expressed, “I am pleased to be recognized today and I want the interim government to reopen girls’ schools because they also need the opportunity to learn modern sciences just like boys.”

Abdul Hakim, another student, added, “I ask the interim government to open the doors of schools and universities to girls as well, as they have the right



to participate in the country’s development just like us.”

Local authorities in Nimroz have stated that opportunities for modern education have been provided to a number of youths in the province.

According to them, courses in computer and English language have been launched for interested youths by the Department of Information and Culture free of charge.

Habibullah Elham, the head of Nimroz’s Department of Information and Culture, said, “Last

year, we were able to provide the opportunity for many youths in Nimroz to learn modern sciences. The Department of Information and Culture in Nimroz has launched free courses in computer science, English language, and other areas.

We encourage youths to make greater efforts for societal growth.”

As the Governor of Nimroz advocates for providing opportunities for modern education in schools, it has been approximately two and a half years since girls’ schools were closed.

## Shewaki Stupa: A masterpiece from Kushan era in Heart

HERAT (TOLONews): The Shewaki Stupa in Kabul is considered one of the ancient parts of the capital, which was once a Buddhist place of worship.

Spanning over twenty meters in width, the Shewaki Stupa was discovered by archaeologists from various countries between the 1st and 3rd centuries AD, and excavations began in 1820.

Abdul Qadir Timouri, an employee of the Department of Historical Relics at the Ministry of Information and Culture, said, “Stupas of this size were typically built for several purposes: firstly, for religious purposes and Buddhist worship; and secondly, as high places along caravan routes to attract pilgrims or caravans coming from other paths.”

The architectural style of this Buddhist temple encompasses both Kushan and Hellenistic periods, and its construction primarily used fieldstones, mud, and plaster.

Timouri added, “This stupa is one of the very valuable Buddhist-era artifacts that date back to the 1st and 3rd centuries AD,



namely the Kushan period, and is located in this area. Indeed, prior to the 18th century, there was no precise information about ancient sites and historical relics in Afghanistan.”

The residents of Shewaki in Kabul are urging the interim government to protect the country’s historical relics.

Hamed, a resident of

Shewaki, said, “I have been responsible here for almost three years. We request the ministry to appoint a specific person for this place.”

But what does ‘Shewaki’ mean and why is this area named so?

Khairkhwa, a resident of the village of Shewaki, explained, “The term Shewaki is derived from

‘shiveh,’ which means method, manner, and masculinity. Everyone has their own style.”

Decades of conflict in the country have damaged the Shewaki Stupa, and between 2020 and 2022, the Department of Historical Relics, in collaboration with the Hajj Mountain Institution, conducted restoration work.

## Nangarhar flood-affected farmers seek govt’s help

JALALABAD (Pajhwok): Farmers, who lost their crops and gardens to recent rains and floods in eastern Nangarhar province, say the government should assist them.

The Department of Agriculture says recent heavy rains and floods damaged crops on about 8,000 acres of land and swept away hundreds of animals.

Agriculture officials say talks are ongoing with relevant aid agencies to assist the affected farmers and in this regard a survey has been conducted.

Mohammad Khan, a farmer in ??Batikot district, told Pajhwok recent rains and floods destroyed his wheat and watermelon crops.

“The Department of

Agriculture should help us by constructing retaining walls to prevent floods and providing fertilizers and improvised seeds to us.”

A farmer in ??Khogyani district, Bismillah, said he suffered financial losses due to recent floods that damaged his wheat crop.

Farmers say several days have passed since the disaster, but the Department of Agriculture is yet to help them.

Sahib Gul, a farmer and resident of Ata Khan village of Kot district, said they had spent enough money on cultivating the crops washed away by recent floods.

Nangarhar Department of Agriculture officials also acknowledge farmers affected by recent floods and rains have not yet

received assistance.

Agriculture Department spokesman Ajmal Subhani told Pajhwok recent rains and floods damaged wheat and watermelon crops thousands of acres of agricultural land in 22 districts.

He said the floods damaged 507 fruit-bearing and 2085 fruitless trees, 83 dams, 13,524 meters of canals and swept away 30 honey bee boxes and 1134 animals including cows, goats and sheep.

He said the flood-affected farmers were yet to be assisted, but efforts were ongoing to help them through aid agencies.

Recently, heavy rains lashed many provinces including Nangarhar, triggering floods that caused financial and life losses to many people.





ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan, Bakhtiyor Saidov, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## May 9 a black day in country's history: Talpur

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan People's Party Central Leader and President of the Women's Wing, Faryal Talpur, has stated that May 9th is a black day in Pakistan's history. Every Pakistani should condemn it, and those involved, as well as the instigators, should be punished.

Speaking in the Sindh Assembly, Ms. Faryal Talpur said, "We all agree that the events that occurred on May 9 should not have happened. I want to ask these people, how would you feel if a group entered your house and set it on fire in the presence of your family? Does our culture, our religion allow such actions?"

She said, "We talk about our pains because we have experienced them. When my brother, Asif Ali Zardari, was picked up, and I submitted a petition for habeas corpus in court, I remember the days when we went from court to court. I still remember the day when Bibi was martyred, and I was the District Nazim of Shaheed Benazirabad. We went to Garhi Khuda Baksh, and there was fire everywhere and tears in our eyes."

Ms. Faryal Talpur said, "I ask, how would you feel if your sister was taken away on the holy night of Eid? My only crime is that I am Asif Ali Zardari's sister and a humble worker of the Pakistan People's Party."

She said, "When your sister is dragged through



the streets of Adiala, and people watch as a woman is taken in an armored vehicle, how would you feel? That act was done only with the intention of humiliating someone, to show that we have your sister and daughter in an armored vehicle."

Faryal Talpur said, "PTI is not a political party but a cult. People's minds have been poisoned, and the minds of our new generation have been corrupted. The person who did all this should be released from jail. There has been a lot of injustice done to me."

She said, "Our leaders and all of us went to jail, and we never complained. We only supported the lawyers and remained steadfast. We instructed the workers not to create a disturbance as it might anger the judge. It is our culture to show patience. We didn't resort to arson, we didn't

gather crowds, we didn't provoke people, and we didn't poison their minds."

Faryal Talpur said, "What will these people respond to this soldier or the soldier in front of whom the Jinnah House, GHQ, and the whole country are being burnt?" She said that PTI people will have to admit their mistake, they will also have to admit that they have destroyed the economy of this country. We are born in this country and we have to die in this country, this country is what we are, otherwise our identity is nothing.

She said, "PTI will have to admit its mistake. They will also have to acknowledge that they have destroyed the economy of this country. We were born in this country, and we will die in this country. This country is who we are; otherwise, our identity is nothing."

## Asad rejects violence in PTI's struggle

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The central leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and former speaker, Asad Qaiser, addressed a gathering emphasizing the importance of peaceful resolution amidst the prevailing sense of despair in the country.

Qaiser reiterated PTI's stance against violence, stating, "We are in no way supporters of violence. We seek a judicial inquiry into the allegations leveled against PTI, adhering to the principles outlined in the Constitution." The seminar, attended by participants from various schools of thought, aimed to address national issues and underscored the imperative for all institutions to uphold their responsibilities within the confines of the law. Qaiser stressed the need for collective effort in establishing peace, expressing concern over the current state of despair prevailing in the nation.

Highlighting PTI's commitment to peaceful struggle within the framework of the constitution and law, Qaiser announced plans to hold similar seminars in other cities across the country. "We demand a fair judicial inquiry into the allegations against us, reaffirming our commitment to the rule of law and the supremacy of the constitution," he stated.

## Parvez Elahi transferred to Lahore jail

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Former Punjab chief minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi has been transferred from Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail to Kot Lakhpat Jail in Lahore. According to prison sources, the president of PTI Punjab chapter was shifted to Kot Lakhpat Jail in connection with an upcoming hearing of corruption cases instituted by the Anti-Corruption Establishment. Elahi has been kept in a B-Class cell in Kot Lakhpat Jail.

An anti-corruption court in Lahore has summoned Parvez Elahi and other accused persons to face indictment in the illegal recruitments in Punjab Assembly case during next hearing on May 13. During the proceedings On May 1, the former chief minister was not brought before the court. Instead, a medical certificate was submitted.

According to the medical report, Parvez Elahi was unable to attend the proceedings due to an unhealed bone fracture sustained from a fall in the washroom. The report stated that the former CM had been advised three weeks of bed rest and could not travel during this period.

# Israel strikes Rafah as truce talks end with no deal

CAIRO/RAFAH/WASHINGTON (Reuters): Israeli tanks and warplanes bombarded areas of Rafah on Thursday, Palestinian residents said, after President Joe Biden said the United States would withhold weapons from Israel if its forces mount a major invasion of the southern Gaza city.

A senior Israeli official said that the latest round of indirect negotiations in Cairo to halt hostilities had ended and Israel would proceed with its operation in Rafah and other parts of the Gaza Strip as planned. Israel has submitted to mediators its reservations about a Hamas proposal for a hostage release deal and the Israeli delegation was returning from the Egyptian capital, the official added.

In Gaza, Palestinian militant groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad said their fighters fired anti-tank rockets and mortars at Israeli tanks massed on the eastern outskirts of the city. Residents and medics in Rafah, the biggest urban area in Gaza not yet overrun by Israeli ground forces, said an Israeli attack by a mosque killed at least three people and wounded others in the eastern Brazil neighborhood.

Video footage from the scene showed the minaret lying in the rubble, two bodies wrapped in blankets and a wounded man being carried away. On the city's eastern edge, residents said a helicopter opened fire, while drones hovered above houses in several areas, some close to rooftops.

Israel says Hamas militants are hiding in Rafah, where the population has been swelled by hundreds of thousands of Gazans seeking refuge from bombardments elsewhere in the coastal enclave, and it needs to eliminate them for its own security. One of the displaced, Mohammad Abder-Rahman, said he feared the Israeli bombardments presaged an invasion of the city.

"It reminds me of what happened before Israeli tanks stormed our residential areas in Gaza City, heavy bombardment usually allows tanks to roll toward places they intend to invade," the 42-year-old told Reuters

via a messaging app. Ceasefire talks in Egypt's capital made some headway but no deal was reached, according to two Egyptian security sources.

The Hamas delegation left for Doha for consultations, blaming Israel for the lack of agreement so far. Israel has said it is open to a truce, but has rejected demands for an end to the war as it has vowed to demolish Hamas. Biden, who says Israel has not produced a convincing plan to safeguard civilians in Rafah, issued his starkest warning yet against a full ground invasion.

"I made it clear that if they go into Rafah, ... I'm not supplying the weapons," Biden told CNN in an interview on Wednesday. Israel's assault on Gaza has killed nearly 35,000 Palestinians and wounded nearly 80,000, most of them civilians, the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said. It launched its offensive in response to a cross-border attack by Hamas militants on Israel on Oct. 7 in which they killed about 1,200 people and abducted 252. Some 128 hostages remain in Gaza and 36 have been declared dead, according to the latest Israeli figures.

On Tuesday, Israeli tanks seized the Gaza side of the Rafah border crossing with Egypt on Tuesday, cutting off a vital aid route and forcing 80,000 people to flee the city this week, according to the United Nations. "The toll on these families is unbearable. Nowhere is safe," the UN agency for Palestinian refugees said in a post on X.

An Israeli military statement on Gaza operations on Thursday morning did not refer to Rafah. The United States is by far the biggest supplier of weapons to Israel, and it accelerated deliveries after the Hamas attacks on Oct. 7 that triggered Israel's offensive in Gaza. Biden acknowledged that US bombs have killed Palestinian civilians in the seven-month-old offensive.

US officials have said Washington paused delivery of a shipment of 1,800 2,000-pound bombs and 1,700 500-pound bombs to Israel because of the risk to civilians in Gaza. Israel's United Nations ambassador

Gilad Erdan said the US decision to pause some weapons deliveries to Israel would significantly impair the country's ability to neutralize Hamas' power, according to Israeli public radio.

But Defense Minister Yoav Gallant told Israel's "enemies and friends" it would do whatever necessary achieve its war aims in Gaza, underlining the scale of the standoff. Israel kept up tank and aerial strikes across Gaza and tanks advanced in the Zeitoun neighborhood of Gaza City in the north, forcing hundreds of families to flee, residents said. The Israeli military said it was securing Zeitoun, starting with a series of intelligence-based aerial strikes on approximately 25 "terror targets."

Deir Al-Balah in central Gaza was heaving with people who had fled Rafah in recent days. Palestinian medics said two people, including a woman, were killed when a drone fired a missile at a group of people there.

In Cairo, delegations from Hamas, Israel, the US, Egypt and Qatar had been meeting since Tuesday. CIA Director William Burns has shuttled between Cairo and Jerusalem, meeting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday. Izzat El-Risheq, a member of Hamas' political office in Qatar, said the Hamas delegation had left Cairo, having reaffirmed its approval the mediators' ceasefire proposal. The plan entails the release of Israeli hostages held captive in Gaza and a number of Palestinians jailed by Israel.

The closure of the Rafah crossing with Egypt has prevented the evacuation of the wounded and sick and the entry of medical supplies, food trucks and fuel needed to operate hospitals, the Gaza health ministry said on Thursday. The only kidney dialysis center in the Rafah area had stopped operating due to the shelling. "There used to be medical aid coming in, and now there is no medical aid," said Ali Abu Khurma, a Jordanian surgeon volunteering at Al Aqsa hospital in Deir Al-Balah. "The entire medical sector has collapsed."

## Lawyers observe strike against arrests

F.P. Report

LAHORE: On the call of different bar associations, lawyers' fraternity is observing countrywide strike against arrests and police torture. The Lahore High Court Bar lawyers will hold a sitting of its general body to condemn the arrests and police torture. Security has been beefed up at Lahore High Court (LHC) in view of possible protests by lawyers.

Entry of lawyers vehicles has been banned. A security officer said no lawyer's car will be parked inside the Lahore High Court. Water cannon has been stationed outside the Lahore High Court. Additional police force is deployed inside and outside the high court. Moreover, in other cities across the country, black coats are boycotting the court proceedings to protest police torture.

Karachi Bar Association officials have locked all the entry points of the city courts. All shops and cafeterias inside the court are closed. The president of the Karachi Bar Association has written a letter to the four district judges to suspend judicial affairs against the incident. However, Malir District and other courts were working as per routine. The Gujranwala Bar is also observing strike on the call of Pakistan Bar Council. Bar

President Amir Munir said lawyers strongly condemned police torture and shelling of teargas on black coats. Meanwhile, lawyers did not appear in courts across

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on the call of Peshawar High Court Bar Association.

## SBP reserves rise over \$9b on IMF inflow

F.P. Report

July 2022.

KARACHI: Foreign reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) have increased to \$9.12 billion after the disbursement of the last tranche of \$1.1 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) under the short-term deal.

The SBP issued a statement on Thursday on the current position of the country's liquid foreign reserves post-IMF inflow, confirming the central bank's reserves stood at \$9.12 billion in the week ending May 3.

Meanwhile, the net foreign reserves held by commercial banks stood at \$5.3 billion, bringing the country's total forex reserves to \$14.45 billion — a nearly two-year high which was last recorded above \$9 billion in mid-

increased by \$1.114 billion to \$9.1203 billion "mainly due to receipt of \$1.1 billion from the global lender as final tranche" under the loan programme, the statement added.

Although, the central bank had received SDR 828 million (around \$1.1 billion) from the global lender last month, the SBP made it clear that the amount would be reflected in the foreign exchange reserves for week ending on May 3. The fresh tranche was the third and final of \$3 billion Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) that the country reached with global lender last summer to avert default threat.

"Amount would be reflected in SBP's foreign exchange reserves for week ending on May 3," the central bank had said a

day after the global lender approved the last tranche of Pakistan under the \$3 billion Stand-By Arrangement (SBA).

Elaborating on the reserves' position after the monetary policy meeting on May 2, the central bank's governor, Jameel Ahmad, informed analysts that the forex deposits are currently in a comfortable position. The SBP has paid off its commercial loans and now its debt profile consists of bilateral and multilateral loans, which has resulted in an improvement in the maturity profile of the debt, Ahmad said. Despite weak financial inflows, the reduction in the current account deficit has enabled the central bank to make significant debt repayments, including the repayment of a \$1 billion Eurobond.



RAWALPINDI: Policemen arresting a supporter of PTI during a protest rally.

# Perpetrators of May 9 incidents would be brought to justice: PM

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Earlier, Inspector General of Police Islamabad Ali Nasir Rizvi said he had been the DIG Operations Lahore on the fateful day last year and supervised the operation against rioters with the bleeding eye injuries for two and a half hours. He said he could not forget the day when the miscreants resorted to full violence, brazenly using weapons, petrol bombs, iron rods and stones against the personnel, causing serious injuries to some 92 security officials.

The family members of the martyrs also expressed their feeling and shared memories of their loved ones. They said they were proud of their brave near and dear ones who had embraced martyrdom for the motherland. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq, cabinet members, and political figures also attended the event.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, calling May 9 incidents a revolt against the State and its institutions, said the real objective of the onslaught was to topple democracy, bury the Constitution, and bring dictatorship in the country besides undermining the national unity to cause social unrest.

The prime minister, chairing a special meeting of the federal cabinet at the Parliament House, said May 9 was a black day in Pakistan's history when the rioters attacked the defense institutions and the monuments of martyrs and Ghazis. The sinister plan of May 9 was not just a conspiracy against Pakistan but also the State, Pakistan Army, and Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, he said. "But thanks to Allah Almighty that evil design was thwarted. However, the nation wants to know as why despite a year, the culprits have not been yet punished," he remarked.

He said holding the cabinet meeting at the Parliament House was

aimed at delivering a message of unity and unison, in addition to expressing solidarity with the nation's martyrs and heroes. The prime minister viewed that the May 9 onslaught was carried out to undermine, at that time, PDM government's efforts to stabilise the economy, impede normalisation of strained ties with friendly countries, and cover up the foreign funding, Toshakhana, and 190 million pound corruption scams, and ensure the appointments on key posts without merit.

Exemplifying the riots in the UK and USA, the prime minister said no country would tolerate such heinous crimes against the State institutions. He said except May 9, the politicians in the country's history, despite facing tough circumstances, played role in pacifying the situation either through the slogan of "Pakistan Khappay" or tolerated the hardships without uttering a single word against the country.

He said those behind the May 9 attacks had also hurled the allegations

of "35 punctures" (a reference to the allegation of polls rigging) and made contradictory statements in cipher case, besides undermining Pakistan's ties with the United States which the incumbent government was trying to improve. He said the nation had witnessed the May 9 riots and also those who orchestrated and executed the anti-state conspiracy with some people also confessing the same in videos.

He said even today, the anti-Pakistan propaganda was being carried out from abroad, and letters were written by some elements to destabilise the national economy. He told the cabinet members that the government had already put the country's economy on the course to stability and thanked the political parties for extending their support. He also expressed gratitude to the Chief Justice of Pakistan for assuring his support to expedite the disposal of tax-related cases involving Rs 2700 billion. Apprising the members of his recent Saudi visit, he called it the "most

productive and useful" one during his life.

In his remarks at the special cabinet meeting, Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar said the Ma 9 incidents were tragic and emphasised that the nation always needed to find a corrective course. He lauded Prime Minister Shehbaz for taking immediate action and overseeing the probe into the May 9 attacks. The law minister presented before the cabinet a report of a committee formed by the caretaker government under the Interim Law Minister Ahmed Irfan on the May 9 incident which clearly termed the PTI leadership responsible for the riots.

He said the PTI leadership called the no-confidence motion against its government a foreign conspiracy and the party leadership had also called for playing up the narrative. The committee also suggested multiple actions like awareness among youth, creating national harmony and legislation on provincial and federal levels to ensure effective prosecution.

Minister for Privatisation Abdul Aleem Khan said the freedom of expression and protest were people's right but there was always a line for the country. He said the rioters of the Capitol Hill were convicted as no one could be given a free hand in the name of freedom of expression. In his remarks, Pakistan Peoples Party leader Syed Naveed Qamar said the May 9 incidents showed the perpetrators' animosity against the State.

However, he called for moving ahead of the condemnations by exposing the real culprits and exonerating the innocent. Pakistan Muslim League-Zia leader Ajazul Haq said that during his 35-year political career marking many ups and downs and agitations, no one ever fought against the country's institutions. "This was unfortunate and on the same day, I had called it a Black Day in the history. The perpetrators should be punished," he said and called for uniting the whole nation on a minimum agenda for the betterment of Pakistan.