

**Bugti's close aide shot dead**  
**F.P. Report**

QUETTA: Rakia Khan Bugti, a close political aide of Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti, was gunned down by unidentified assailants in Sui area of district Dera Bugti in Balochistan province on Tuesday. According to rescue sources, unidentified assailants shot dead Rakia Khan Bugti in Sui area. The assailants managed to escape after committing the crime.



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**IED blast kills five**  
**F.P. Report**

WANA: At least five people from the same family including women were killed when a blast occurred inside a house in South Waziristan on Tuesday morning. Police said the incident took place in Tangi Badinzai area of Laddha tehsil in South Waziristan where the blast of an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) killed five family members.

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# PM announces to privatise all SOEs

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday announced that the government would privatise all state-owned enterprises (SOEs), excluding the strategic ones, regardless of their profitability or financial losses.

The prime minister, chairing a high-level meeting to review the matters related to the Ministry of Privatisation and Privatisation Commission, directed all the federal ministries to carry out the necessary procedures and extend their cooperation with the Privatisation Commission for the purpose. In the meeting, the privatisation ministry and the Privatisation Commission presented a roadmap for the Privatisation Programme 2024-29.

The prime minister said the government had nothing to do with running the businesses but was mandated to facilitate the investors. He viewed that the privatisation of SOEs would save the taxpayers' money to help the government provide quality services to the people. Reiterating the government's commitment to a transparent process, the prime minister directed to live telecast the bidding and other procedures of the privatisation of Pakistan International Airlines and other entities.

During the briefing on the progress in the SOEs' privatisation, the participants were told that the pre-qualification process for PIA privatisation would be completed by the end of this month. The consultation for privatisation of Roosevelt Hotel was underway and the government-to-government transaction of the First Women Bank was in process with the United Arab Emirates.

It was told that the power distribution companies had been included in the 2024-29 Privatisation Program and the privatisation of loss-making SOEs would be prioritised. The participants were told that a pre-qualified panel of experts would be appointed at the Planning Commission for a swift and transparent privatisation process.

Federal ministers Khawaja Asif, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Jam Kamal Khan,

Awais Ahmed Leghari, Abdul Aleem Khan, Dr Musaddik Malik and Ahad Khan Cheema, PM's Coordinator Rana Ehsan Afzal, and relevant senior officers attended the meeting.

**Shehbaz directs routing proportion of country's imports through Gwadar Port:** Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed the authorities concerned to ensure routing a proportion of country's imports, particularly related to the government, through the Gwadar Port.

The prime minister made this landmark decision with a view to fully operationalise the Gwadar Port. He was chairing a high level meeting on the projects under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor and Chinese investment. The prime minister instructed all the ministries to enhance collaboration for swift execution of the CPEC's second phase and warned against any laxity by the ministries and government departments.

Instructing the provision of foolproof security to the Chinese workers, he said the promotion of trade and commerce ties with time-tested friend China was welcoming. He told the meeting that Pakistan-China partnership was on the highest ever level, so the relevant officers and departments should strive for the positive outcomes of this relationship.

Federal ministers Ahsan Iqbal, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Jam Kamal Khan, Ahad Khan Cheema, Rana Tanveer Hussain, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, Sardar Awais Khan Leghari, Dr Musaddik Malik, and Abdul Aleem Khan, SAPM Tariq Fatemi, PM's Coordinator Rana Ehsan Afzal and relevant senior officers attended the meeting. The provincial chief secretaries joined the meeting via video link.

Meanwhile, Governor Balochistan Jafar Khan Mandokhel on Tuesday called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

During the meeting, the prime minister congratulated the governor on assuming the office and expressed best wishes, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. They also discussed issues pertaining to Balochistan province.

## Cabinet approves Appellate Tribunals Inland Revenue Rules

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Cabinet in its meeting on Tuesday with Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, in the chair, approved Appellate Tribunals Inland Revenue (Conditions of Service) Rules 2024 under which the appointment of members of Appellate Tribunals would be made.

The main purpose of the Appellate Tribunals was to dispose of pending cases related to tax matters, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The federal cabinet accorded its approval to Conditions of Service Rules 2024 on the recommendations of Ministry of Law and Justice.

The meeting also approved amendments in the laws related to Toshakhana gifts. Under the amended provisions, the recipients of shields, souvenirs and other such like gifts would not hold them but these gifts would be displayed at a prominent place within the premises of the recipients' institutions or organizations, besides maintaining of a record in this regard.

With regard to gifts of books, the recipients would

not keep them with themselves rather it would be displayed in their offices or in public libraries while a catalog would be maintained. Whereas those gifts deemed prohibited under the local laws would be wasted under the presence of committee constituted by the Cabinet Division. Similarly, the honorarium for the expert from private sector evaluating Toshakhana gifts would be enhanced.

During the previous PDM government, the then federal cabinet had approved Toshakhana Policy 2023 which imposed restrictions on President, Prime Minister, cabinet members and government officials from receiving gifts valued more than US\$300. As per policy, no public holder could keep a gift worth the same value while the gift below US\$300 value could be obtained after due payment under the relevant mechanism.

The cabinet ratified decisions of May 7 taken by Cabinet Committee for Legislative Cases. However, it directed for constitution of a special committee to hold consultations over amendments in Pakistan Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2016.

The committee would comprise representatives from the coalition parties and headed by Adviser to PM on Political Affairs Rana Sanaulah. The cabinet, on the recommendation of Ministry of Health, approved tax and duty exemption on 1 million bottles of Multi-Micro Nutrients for the pregnant women, donated by Kirk Humanitarian USA and Junaid Family Foundation USA.

It also granted approval for amendment in section 3 (1) of the laws related to Appointment of Investment Mohtasib (Ombudsman) on the recommendation of Ministry of Law and Justice which made the holding of degree in commerce, finance and related sector as mandatory for the post of Mohtasib. The cabinet gave nod to the decisions taken by its Economic Coordination Committee on May 7 in its meeting.

The Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also expressed his deep grief and sorrow over loss of lives during the protest incidents in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and announced that he would visit Muzaffarabad within few days to hold further consultations over the issue.

## No compromise on national security issues: Tarar

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Tuesday said there would be no compromise on national security issues that needed to be discussed at appropriate forums through proper procedure.

Addressing a news conference along with Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar, he said the Attorney General of Pakistan was the representative of State and his request for in-camera briefing on a specific national security issue, had been taken out of context.

He pointed out the

Attorney General had made the request just for the sake of national security. Atta Tarar underlined the need of fully understanding the sensitivity of national interest, adding that the Attorney General had already clarified his position on the issue.

He said the national security issues should be discussed at the appropriate forums. "If a matter needs discussion, the chief justice has the authority to call a full-court," he added. The minister expressed the optimism that the institutions would collectively work for the national interests of the country.

Attaullah Tarar said that

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's decision to resolve the ongoing crisis in Azad Jammu and Kashmir had averted a tragedy. He said that the conspiracy of the inimical forces was foiled who faced humiliation due to the Prime Minister's timely actions.

Terming Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf as "Tehreek-e-Intishar", he said its dreams of creation of chaos and anarchy had also been shattered. "Along with the enemy, the 'Tehreek-e-Intishar' also thought that in some way or the other, chaos would spread and there would be anarchy" as its leadership wanted to benefit from the sad situation.

## Non-tax payers' Court stops govt from blocking SIM cards

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) Tuesday issued a significant ruling barring the federal government from blocking the SIM cards of non-tax filers, a move aimed at enhancing tax compliance.

Chief Justice Aamir Farooq issued the order in response to a writ petition filed by a telecom operator, challenging Clause 114-B of the Income Tax Ordinance and the Federal Board of Revenue's (FBR) Income Tax General Orders targeting non-filers. The court's decision, scheduled for a further hearing on May 27, 2024, comes amidst a broader legal debate over the balance between tax enforcement measures and individual rights. The petitioner argued that the government's newfound authority infringing upon the fundamental right to freedom of business as guaranteed by Article 18 of the Constitution.

The FBR's initiative aimed to block the SIM cards of over 506,000 identified non-compliant taxpayers across the nation, with the goal of increasing tax revenue. However, telecom companies raised concerns over technical and operational obstacles in implementing the FBR's directives, leading to legal complexities.

The outcome of the upcoming hearing is expected to shape the trajectory of this debate, determining the extent to which the government can enforce tax compliance through measures impacting individual liberties.

## Army major martyred, 3 terrorists killed

**F.P. Report**

RAWALPINDI: Security forces conducted an intelligence based operation in general area Sambaza, Zhob District of Balochistan. During the conduct of operation, own troops effectively engaged the terrorists location, as result of which three terrorists were sent to hell. Weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from the killed terrorists.

However, during the intense exchange of fire, leading his troops from the front, Major Babar Khan (age: 33 years, resident of District Mianwali) having fought gallantly, paid the ultimate sacrifice and embraced Shahadat.

Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other terrorist present in the area. Security forces of Pakistan, in step with the Nation, remain determined to thwart attempts of sabotaging peace, stability and progress of Balochistan, and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve.

## AJK protest committee ends strike

**F.P. Report**

MUZAFFARABAD: After several days of intense protests, the Awami Joint Action Committee on Tuesday announced to end ongoing protests in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) against soaring inflation a day after the government accepted their demands.

The committee, which had been spearheading demonstrations, called off protes after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced Rs23 billion subsidy package for the people of AJK.

"The government accepted all the demands of the protesters yesterday," the AAC said in a statement. However, the AAC said a state-wide shutter down will be observed till 3pm today to honour the people who were killed in the protests.



ISLAMABAD: JUI-F delegation led by Maulana Abdul Ghaffar Haideri called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

## Pakistanis own property worth \$11b in Dubai

DUBAI: A global collaborative investigative journalism project has revealed the ownership of properties of the global elite in Dubai. The list includes political figures, globally sanctioned individuals, alleged money launderers and criminals. Pakistanis have also been identified on the list and their combined value has been estimated at around \$11 billion.

The project — 'Dubai Unlocked' — is based on data that provides a detailed overview of hundreds of thousands of properties in Dubai and information about their ownership or usage, largely from 2020 and 2022. Properties purchased in the name of companies and those that are in commercial areas are not part of this analysis.

The data was obtained by the Centre for Advanced Defence Studies (C4ADS), a non-profit organisation based in Washington, DC. It was then shared with Norwegian financial outlet E24 and the Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), which coordinated a six-month investigative project with reporters from 74 media outlets in 58 countries, uncovering scores of convicted criminals, fugitives, and political figures who have recently owned at least one piece of real estate in Dubai. The News and Dawn were partners from Pakistan.

Among the Pakistanis listed in the Property Leaks are President Asif Ali Zardari's three children, Hussain Nawaz Sharif, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi's wife, Sharjeel Memon and family members, Senator Faisal Vawda, Farah Gogi, Sher Afzal Marwat, four MNAs and half a dozen MPAs from the Sindh and Balochistan assemblies. The Pakistani list also features the late Gen Pervez Musharraf, former prime minister Shaukat Aziz and more than a dozen retired generals as well as a police chief, an ambassador and a scientist — all of whom owned properties either directly or through their spouses and children.

In 2014, President Asif Ali Zardari had received foreign property as a gift. By the time he declared it in 2018, he had gifted it to someone. In 2014, a business tycoon co-accused with Zardari in the fake accounts case, Abdul Ghani Majid, declared in his wealth statement that he had

granted a gift of Rs329m but neither mentioned its type nor the recipient. The JIT however recovered a memo about the purchase in March 2014 of a penthouse in Dubai. The Property Leaks data has now unveiled that Ghani had gifted this property to Zardari who gifted it to his daughter.

Chief Financial Officer of Omni Group Aslam Masood along with his wife is also shown as a listed owner of several properties in the data. The News checked the value of one of them and found out that it was purchased at AED1,060,626 (Rs80m) in March 2013. Sohrab Dinshaw is also a property owner in Dubai. A villa he purchased in 2015 carried a purchase price of AED 1271888 (Rs 96m). All of the individuals mentioned were sent questions (except Aslam Masood who is deceased). None responded. The Altaf Khanani network which was sanctioned by the US for involvement in money laundering has also surfaced on the list. His son, daughter, brother, and nephew are listed owners of several properties in Dubai.

(Continued on Back Page)



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# Maryam reviews facilities at Mayo Hospital Children’s Emergency Block

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has said that the provision of advanced and improved medical facilities to the people is the government’s top priority, considering it as the inherent right of every citizen.

Visiting the Mayo Hospital Children’s Emergency Block, along with PML-N Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, here on Tuesday, she stressed the need for effective monitoring in hospitals, especially in emergencies. The CM directed the hospital authorities to improve their work ethics.

Both Maryam Nawaz and Muhammad Nawaz Sharif inspected different sections of the emergency, including step down care unit, nursing room, neonatal block and pharmacy. They interacted with the parents of sick children in the triage area.

The CM and Muhammad Nawaz Sharif were briefed about the emergency block, being managed by Child Life Foundation. Administrator Child Life Foundation, Bushra Abbas apprised them about the procedure of patients’ admission, diagnosis and treatment.

Maryam Nawaz lamented that no stone was left unturned in the destruction of health sector during the previous regime, adding, “Had there been no privatization in the past, we would have been ahead of India in every field today.”

The CM called a meeting of the authorities concerned immediately after visiting Mayo Hospital Children’s Emergency Ward. She co-chaired the meeting along with PML-N Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif for the improvement of child emergencies across Punjab.

Child Life Foundation CEO Ahsan Rabbani briefed the participants of the meeting that in every child emergency, life of a sick child can be saved with the fastest automation system.

It was briefed that the telemedicine program has become functional in the emergency wards of 153 hospitals across Punjab. He apprised the participants that Telemedicine control rooms have been established in Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore.

Moreover, he said, “State-of-the-art child emergency blocks will be established in 18 hospitals across Punjab.”

A proposal to open OPDs till 10 PM in Punjab hospitals was also reviewed in the meeting. The CM directed the authorities concerned to ensure availability of dog bite vaccine in hospitals.

Senator Pervaiz Rashid, Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Information & Culture Minister Azma Zahid Bukhari, Health Ministers Khawaja Imran Nazir, Khawaja Salman Rafique and MNA Bilal Azhar Kayani attended the meeting. Dr. Azhar Kayani, Dr. Adnan Khan, Dr. Mehmood Ayaz and others were also present.



PESHAWAR: Youngster enjoying a bath in a stream to get some relief from hot weather at Musazai Inqilab road. — APP photo

## Child marriage case LHC directs prosecution of Nikkah Khawan

LAHORE (INP): The Lahore High Court on Tuesday has taken a firm stand against underage marriage, issuing orders for the prosecution of the Nikkah Khawan involved.

Justice Anwar-ul-Haq Pannu presided over a case concerning the marriage of a minor girl.

During the court session, the girl, who was brought from Darul Aman, testified that she was forced into marriage at the age of 15.

Despite her initial claim of consenting to the marriage, further inquiry revealed her age to be between 15 and 16 years.

Responding to this revelation, Justice Anwar-ul-Haq Pannu swiftly directed a judicial magistrate to handle the matter expeditiously.

## ‘Zero Period’ to combat smog, dengue

LAHORE (INP): The School Education Department Punjab has enforced the mandatory inclusion of a ‘zero period’ in all public and private educational institutions to tackle the dual threats of smog and dengue.

According to circular notification to concerned authorities, Principals failing to comply with the directive face repercussions, as 100% activity documentation is required.

Alongside, comprehensive cleanliness measures, including playgrounds, toilets, and water tanks, are mandated. Classroom awareness campaigns on smog and dengue are also underway, with strict adherence to cleanliness guidelines.

Meanwhile, amidst rising temperatures, demands for reduced school hours emerge from government teachers, citing health concerns for students.

The department is actively assessing the heat severity across districts, consulting CEOs via Zoom meetings to determine appropriate adjustments to school timings.

## Six held for illegal hunting

GUIJRANWALA (INP): The Wildlife and Parks Department of Punjab on Tuesday executed a successful operation resulting in the arrest of six hunters across Gujranwala, Kolorkot and Cholistan.

The operation led to the recovery of five live and seven slaughtered pheasants, along with the confiscation of four hunting dogs. Each offender was fined 200,000 rupees for their unlawful activities.

Deputy Director Wildlife Asim Bashir Cheema of the Gujranwala Region initiated the crackdown after receiving confidential information via WhatsApp about illegal hunting activities in the Gujranwala Cantt area. A case was settled with a fine of Rs. 60,000.

In Bhakkar, Assistant Director Wildlife Muhammad Naem Tahir and his team seized five brown pheasants, subsequently transferring them to Mini Zoo Bhakkar as per court order.

# Tragic demise of medical student PM&DC conducts disciplinary hearing

**F.P. Report**

Committee Hearing at PM&DC.

The hearing was chaired by President PM&DC whereas other members of the committee also attended the meeting. The Disciplinary committee aims to establish a clear timeline and identify any lapses in protocol or support systems that may have contributed to the student's demise followed by determining the extent of the college's responsibility in providing a safe and supportive environment for its students, to evaluate the existing policies and procedures at Avicenna Medical College regarding student mental health services and campus safety, and to recommend necessary improvements, to hold accountable any individuals or entities found to be negligent in their duties, and to implement corrective measures to prevent future incidents. PM&DC President, Dr. Prof Dr. Rizwan Taj stated, "The loss of a young life is a tragedy beyond words.

We are committed to ensuring that all medical institutions in Pakistan uphold the highest standards of care and support for their students.

This hearing is a crucial step in addressing the concerns raised by this unfortunate event and in preventing such incidents in the future." PM&DC has requested the students of Avicenna Medical College to also appear in front of the disciplinary committee so that the matter can be investigated further in a more transparent manner.

# POWA ends pen-down strike

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Prosecution Officers Welfare Association (POWA) has ended pen-down strike after getting assurances from the Additional Chief Secretary Abid Majid and a special committee constituted for redressal of the grievances, on Tuesday.

POWA President Sangin Shah and General Secretary Javed Ali Mohmand meet with the committee while the they agreed to consider their demands.

The demands include a 1.5 basic pay scale for prosecutors, establishment of a separate prosecution department and prosecutor general's office, provision of separate offices and basic facilities for female prosecutors in all courts, allocation of vehicles to district prosecutors, and utility allowances for prosecutors working in anti-terrorism courts.

The committee asked for two days to resolve the issues, and the Additional Chief Secretary also issued instructions to address the demands. After getting assurances, the Prosecution Officers Welfare Association ended its strike, which had started on Tuesday, causing severe disruption to court proceedings and police investigations.

### نوٹس (مشتری ہوشیار باش)

بزرگداشت ہذا مشیر کا نام ہے کہ کان نمبر 02 (کراؤن فلوئر تیری منزل)، برقی 250.167 مربع فٹ، آؤٹ آف جانا ڈیڑھ 2728273 نمبر 542/320 واقع ٹیپ سلطان روڈ پشاور کیلئے۔ جو کہ کھولت ہوڑ کے کہ پڑائیں مسماہ پھر ان پیکر زوجہ شریل کے نام پر موجود ہے۔ یہ کہ مسماہ پھر ان پیکر زوجہ شریل نے مذکورہ بالا مکان کی ٹیکل ارجمان باہر فضل ارجمان باہر پر بزرگداشت شدہ دستاویز نمبر 2723 بجلی نمبر 01۔ جلد نمبر 375 نومبر 02-11-2023 کو فروخت کردی ہے۔ سب سبھی ٹیکل ارجمان باہر و فضل ارجمان باہر کے مذکورہ بالا مکان اپنے نام پر منتقل کرنے کے لئے ایک عدد درخواست بمورد رجسٹری دفتر پشاور کی گزاری ہے۔ سہاگرمی، پیگ یا ادارہ کو مذکورہ بالا مکان کی منتقلی پر کوئی اعتراض ہو یا اشتہار حد کی اشاعت کے پندرہ (15) دن کے اندر اندر اپنا اعتراض نمودہ جوت پیش کریں۔ بعد ازاں منتقلی کی کارروائی مندرجہ بالا درخواست گزار کے نام پر عمل میں لائی جائے گی اور کوئی تدار قابل قبول نہ ہوگا۔

اشیر: کیکو نمٹ ایگریٹیکلورا ٹیپر پشاور

# Spiritual personalities always taught lesson of peace: Saleem

RAWALPINDI (INP): Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan has said that the spiritual personalities of the country have always taught the lesson of peace and brotherhood due to which patience and tolerance exist in our societies.

He stated this while talking to media persons on the occasion of his visits to Durbar e Aliya Golra Sharif and Bari Imam. He laid floral wreaths on the graves of spiritual personalities and religious elders, and offered Fatiha.

Pir Syed Nizamuddin Jami Geelani, the Sajada

Nasheen of Darbar Aliya Golra Sharif, welcomed Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan.

Speaking on the occasion, Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said that those who sacrificed their lives for the sake of the country are the real heroes of the country and every Pakistani is proud of their martyrs.

He said that the soldiers of Pakistan protect the borders of the country even in the dark of night and are always ready to sacrifice their lives and we pay our respects to all of them. He said that he

assures his armed forces that the people of Pakistan stand side by side with them.

He said that the country was going through a difficult situation regarding inflation and terrorism, but to face all these challenges we have to unite and take the country on the path of development with mutual trust and tolerance.

He said that we should make efforts for the survival and development of this country keeping all our political, religious and social affiliations aside.

The Governor Punjab said that political parties



QUETTA: German Council General in Karachi Dr Rudiger Lotz visiting Mehrgarh Museum.

# Autonomy of Pakistan’s economy, FBR interlinked: Murtaza

LAHORE (INP): President Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW), Dr. Murtaza Mughal has said that autonomy of Pakistan’s economy and the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) are interlinked.

In a statement issued here on Tuesday, he said that the FBR should have independence in order to boost the nation’s limping economy.

Dr. Murtaza Mughal was of the view that one of the most important institutions, like FBR, should be liberated from the control of members of the political elite.

As long as FBR remains the slave of politicians, Pakistan will have to accept dictates, continue borrowing, and never achieve economic freedom, he added.

The President PEW further stated that if FBR becomes independent, the country will have economic freedom and not have to take dictation from any other country or institution.

“Every patriot wants to see a significant increase in the tax net. Still, certain influential sections reaping the benefits of tax concessions and exemptions do not want it,” he added.

Dr Murtaza Mughal said that international institutions have tried hard to improve the FBR, but those who benefit from the weakness of FBR have frustrated all such efforts.

To improve the economy, it was necessary to widen the scope of the tax net and remove the loopholes in the tax system, he noted.

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# Journalists experience a spectacular parade and historical insights at Shabqadar Fort



Shah Faisal

PESHAWAR: A delegation of journalists embarked on a visit to Shabqadar Fort, comprising both print and electronic media representatives. The delegation was led by Arshad Aziz Malik, the President of Peshawar Press Club. The arrangements for the tour were overseen by Shahzad Ahmad, the Chairman of the Tour Committee.

The delegation set out from Peshawar Press Club at approximately 9 o'clock in the morning and arrived at the fort around 10 o'clock. Upon arrival, the personnel of Frontier Constabulary (FC) warmly welcomed the delegation, showering

them with flower petals. Arshad Aziz Malik, the President of Peshawar Press Club, introduced the journalists one by one to Commandant FC, Muazam Jah Ansari. After introduction, FC Commandant and PPC President laid flowers on Shuhada e Yadagar and paid a tribute to the martyrs, and offered prayer for their souls.

After paying tribute at Shuhada-e-Yadgar, the journalists were taken to the parade ground, where various units of the FC personnel presented an impressive parade. Subsequently, the youth showcased their skills. A young man named Noorullah demonstrated exceptional talented while

Lying down on his back and skilfully targeted his target with Kalashnikov, which was highly appreciated by his Commander. After the splendid parade and demonstrations, the journalists were taken to different sections of the fort, where Commandant FC, Muazam Jah Ansari, briefed them about the historical significance of the fort. Muazam Jah Ansari explained about the old gate of the fort, which was imprisonment in chains by the Sikhs.

He mentioned that in 1840, the fort was attacked by Mohmand tribes after heavy fight between Sikh Army and Mohmand fighters, eventually the Mohmand fight-



ers breached the gate and entered the fort. However, the Sikh army led by a French general managed to push back the tribesmen and foiled their attempt. This incident brought great embarrassment to the French general and the Sikh ruler.

Therefore, the next morning, they initiated a court martial to investigate the reasons for the breach of the fort's defenses. It was revealed during the court martial

that the fault was neither of the French general nor of the soldiers but of the gate, which proved to be very weak, allowing the attackers to enter.

After this, the gate was completely removed and tied with a pillar, and imprisoned for life. The purpose of imprisoning the gate was to maintain the confidence of the soldiers and the general and to keep them vigilant. Commandant FC stated that as long as this gate is not completely removed, it will remain in custody.

After this, the journalists were taken to the museum where various items from that era were displayed, including military uniforms, rifles, and other artifacts. Then the journalists were taken to Churchill Hut, where Winston Churchill had stayed for a while as a young subaltern. After visiting Churchill Hut, the FC band played various tunes, which were greatly enjoyed by the journalists and the FC officials present there. After having a food and beautiful moments with FC jawans, Commandant FC, Muazam Jah Ansari, dropped the journalists to their vehicles by himself, bidding them farewell.

## Stay of VIPs and families in govt rest houses banned

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Accommodation expenses of VIPs and their families in govt rest houses, cottages and camping pods to borne by VIPs themselves in future. Zahid Chanzeb's instruction to heads of provincial and regional tourism development authorities

Zahid Chanzeb, Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism, Culture, Archeology and Museums, has immediately imposed ban on the free stay of VIPs and families in government rest houses managed by the

Department of Tourism and Culture and Tourism Authorities across the province. A written order has also been issued in this regard.

The Tourism Advisor has taken this step in the light of certain public complaints that he received for the last some days.

He was constantly receiving complaints from the public that ordinary tourists sometimes do not get accommodation in government rest houses, cottages and camping pods managed by the Department of Tourism and Culture, while VIPs and their families stay in them,

get free facilities and stay there for many days.

Zahid Chanzeb also issued instructions to all relevant authorities including the DGs of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cultural and Tourism Authority, Kalash Development Authority, Galyat Development Authority, Kaghan Development Authority, Upper Swat Development Authority and Kurnat Development Authority that wether the VIPs including himself or their families stay in these rest houses according to the capacity, they should also be charged with full dues as per law.

## PM telephones Governor I will work for prosperti of KP: Kundi

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif congratulated Faisal Karim Kundi on his appointment as the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa via telephone.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif extended felicitations to Faisal Karim Kundi for assuming the constitutional

responsibilities of the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The Prime Minister expressed his best wishes for efficiently fulfilling the constitutional responsibilities of the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Governor Faisal Karim Kundi expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif for the congratulatory message.

"I am determined to work diligently, including the development and prosperity of the province, as a representative of the federal government," said Faisal Karim Kundi.

"I will ensure the effective implementation of constitutional duties for the welfare and well-being of the people of the province," Faisal Karim Kundi added.

## KPCVE signs MoU to promote peace initiative

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Centre of Excellence on Countering Violent Extremism (CECVE), Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PIL-DAT) and Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, Islamabad which aims to develop joint projects and activities that contribute to effective CECVE measures and strengthen local communities' capacity to prevent and counter violent extremism.

Developing and implementing resilience building projects that communities reject violent extremism and promote alternative narratives on peace in society.

The MoU was signed by the Chief Coordination Officer of KPCECVE Dr. Ayaz Khan, President (PIADAT) Ahmad Bilal Mehboob and Pro. Zia Ul Haq DG Islamic Research Institute, IIU, Islamabad (IRIIUI) during a well-attended ceremony held at Islamabad. Senior officials of KPCVE, PILDAT, and IRI also attended the ceremony.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Ayaz Khan highlighted the role and efforts of KPCECVE for the promotion of peace and tolerance in society. "PIADAT and IRIIUI will collaborate with KPCVE to develop a comprehensive programmatic strategy titled "Paigham E Pakistan".

This strategy will be based on promoting and exchange expertise, best practices, and lessons learned in community engagement, and resilience building efforts.

Workshops and community engagement will be conducted to promote peace and initiate consensus within the community where all stakeholders and participants exchange their ideas and thoughts effectively for preventing violent extremism.

PILDAT President Ahmad Bilal Mehboob lauded the efforts of KPCVE for the promotion of peace and harmony.

We will provide all possible support and cooperation to KPCVE to work together to promote good governance, transparency and accountability in the public sector and conduct joint research, advocacy and capacity building programs on preventing and countering violent extremism anti-corruption, public procurement and service delivery.

## PL acquisition by Canadian Firm in mineral sector discussed

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Industries, Commerce & Technical Education Abdul Karim Tordher chaired a meeting regarding Prospecting License (PL) acquisition of a Canadian Firm Tytan Copper and Pana Copper in Minerals sector of KP held in the office of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment & Trade (KP-BOIT). Nabeel Saqib, Country CEO Tytan Copper gave a detailed presentation regarding investment Plan, leases acquisition status and hurdles pertain-

ing to PL lease acquisition.

The Minister directed KP-BOIT to facilitate FDI worth 50m USD by Tytan Copper and Pana Copper with enthusiasm as the order of the day.

The Minister requested the Canadian firm to suggest international best practices to be adopted here in KP (Specifically adopted in neighboring countries) which causes delay and not time bound.

The Minister also directed KP-BOIT to point out issues, regulation and laws related to overlapping in mining leases in different area of KP that mostly causes stumbling of economic activity in the region.

The Minister also stated that KP-BOIT team and representatives of Minerals Development Department (MDD) to ensure progress updates of each Lease title applied by the Canadian Firms, issues therein, and a way forward be drawn to present the case to the Apex committee of Government for issuance of work order and committed lifting ban on conventional lease titles as a special case for FDI. The Chair also assured full support in facilitation to be provided by the Government Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and also appreciated KP-BOIT performance and assured of all possible cooperation from this platform.

## Police held four alleged criminals

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Police has arrested four alleged culprits from different areas of Peshawar and recovered various weapons from their possession, on Tuesday.

According to details, Superintendent of Police Rural Division, Inam Jan ordered crackdown against outlawed under the supervision of DSP Asif Sharif while SHO Dawoodzai Nasser Farid Khattak along with other police personnel conducted crackdown on criminals involved in various crimes, including arms display, illegal activities, and other offenses.

The culprits confessed to their involvement in various crimes during initial investigation.

The police recovered two Kalashnikovs, eight pistols, and multiple cartridges of different bores from the possession of the arrested individuals. Cases have been registered against the arrested individuals, and further investigation is underway.

## Wheat procurement Action against two officials taken for misconduct

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In response to directives from the provincial Minister of Food, the Food Department has taken action against misconduct in the wheat procurement process by two officials.

The provincial government considers wheat procurement from local farmers to be a farmer-friendly initiative. However, any misconduct is intolerable, stated Zahoor Shah Toru.

To ensure transparency in wheat procurement operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Chief Minister Zahoor Shah Toru and Food Minister have instructed the Food Department to take action. In this regard, the Food Department has initiated legal proceedings against the District Food Controller Malakand and Assistant Food Controller based on complaints regarding wheat procurement.

Immediate reports have been submitted to the Food Directorate, while the wheat storage at the accused godown has been halted.

The Food Department has also issued a formal notification in this regard, stating that action against both officers was taken based on monitoring reports and public complaints.

## Procurement of wheat Online application to help local farmers introduced

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has introduced an online application aimed at aiding local farmers and suppliers, ensuring fairness and transparency in the procurement of wheat.

According to the Provincial Minister for Food, Zahir Shah Toru, joint efforts are underway to uphold fairness and transparency in the provincial government's wheat procurement initiative.

The Food Department KP has rolled out this online application to offer convenient services to local farmers and suppliers along with other provinces, enabling them

to furnish information about their available wheat to the Food Department.

These points were underscored by the Minister in a video statement released detailing about the app.

The minister elaborated that the online application clearly delineates all the requisites for wheat procurement for both farmers and suppliers.

Furthermore, Zahir Shah indicated that starting from May 18, farmers and suppliers from other provinces will be required to supply standard wheat to the relevant procurement centers in accordance with the standard operating procedures (SOPs) and Terms and conditions (ToRs) of the

Food Department. Prior to this, wheat procurement would be conducted based on a quota system by purchasing centers.

Additionally, it was stated that wheat procurement has been initially started from local farmers in KP since May 7 of this month which will continue till May 17, with subsequent procurement extending to farmers and suppliers from other provinces.

Moreover, the provincial minister highlighted that Federal and Punjab Government are replicating their application as per the directives of Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, a move that is laudable and a source of pride for the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

## Seminar on Right to Public Services arranged

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Commissioner Muhammad Asim Imam, under the auspices of the Right to Public Services Commission, delivered a comprehensive lecture on the objectives and legal regulations of the commission. Hundreds of students and faculty members participated in the seminar.

Commissioner Imam addressed the questions raised by the participants.

"We are all committed to

serving the nation and the country together. Lawyers are the only class who face the daily struggles of the common people, who often face difficulties in accessing basic services," said Commissioner Imam.

He urged lawyers to educate people about this law. Familiarity with this act can empower lawyers to challenge the inefficiency, corruption, and misconduct that hinder citizens' access to public services.

Dr. Anayat, the Principal of Khyber Law

College, thanked the participants and representatives of the commission. Commissioner Muhammad Asim Imam, in his concluding remarks, emphasized that good governance laws are the guarantors of fundamental human rights, and lawyers benefit from access to services through the law. He highlighted that without the Right to Public Services Commission, people would not be as aware of their fundamental rights today.



PESHAWAR: KP Advisor to Chief Minister on Finance Muzamil Aslam meeting with US Consul General Shante Moore in his office.

## Girls outperform boys in KP NAT 2023 results

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Elementary and Secondary Education Department and Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE) have announced the results of the National Achievement Test (NAT) 2023 on Tuesday here, which included an assessment of English, Urdu, Mathematics, and Science subjects for class IV and VIII students of KP,

including the merged districts.

Girls outperformed boys in all grades, and the performance of KP rural students remained stable compared to urban students.

A ceremony to release the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa BAT 2023 results was held here on Tuesday. Secretary Education, Masood Ahmad said that collaboration within education depart-

ments, PIE, and Federal Ministry is key to fostering a positive educational environment that empowers future generations.

By working together with our dedicated teachers, we can instill integrity and a passion for learning in our students. This investment in their education will yield long-term benefits, eliminating the need for external measures in the future.



## In brief

### Father, daughter & son drowned F.P. Report

**HAFIZABAD:** In Hafizabad, a speedy car went out of control and plunged into the Jhang Branch Canal, due to which three members of a family drowned, while the rescue teams of Rescue-1122 rescued the woman in the car alive. According to rescue sources, Fiaz Ahmad, a local landlord of village Gigay, along with his wife Zainab, 12-year-old son Faizan and 15-year-old daughter Kainat, was riding a car from the city to the village when their car overturned near Bhoon Kalan. Due to this, the car went out of control and fell into the Jhang Branch Canal. Due to which Fiaz Ahmad, his son Faizan and daughter Kainat drowned in the canal. The rescue teams of Rescue-1122 took timely action under the leadership of District Officer Adnan Nawaz and transferred the injured Zainab, wife of Fiaz Ahmad, to the hospital.

### Political activist commits suicide F.P. Report

**LARKANA:** A 40-year-old Nisar Hussain Ansari, a member of the Pakistan People's Party, committed suicide by shooting himself with a pistol in Ali Goharabad area of Ali Goharabad police station in Larkana city. The dead body was transferred to Chandka Hospital for post-mortem, on this occasion the family members of PPP member youth who allegedly committed suicide said that our youth Nisar Hussain Ansari was worried about continuous unemployment due to which he shot himself in the living room today. On this occasion, while talking to the media, the staff of Willis station Ali Goharabad said that the young man was unmarried. In the initial investigation, the relatives say that the young man did this because he was tired of unemployment. A step was taken, after which the post-mortem of the dead body was conducted and the investigation was started.

### WUS holds seminar F.P. Report

**SWABI:** Women University Swabi hosted an informative seminar on the occasion of World Thalassaemia Day, which saw participation from health experts and social work professionals from across the country. The event was hosted by the Department of Social Work, Department of Public Health, and Department of Diagnostic Sonography, with collaboration from the Youth Development Center and JZT, said a press release on Tuesday. The esteemed guest speaker, Dr. Huseen Azad, associated with the Department of Sociology at Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, illuminated the disease of thalassemia, its diagnosis, and its societal impacts. Other speakers, including Dr. Raeesa Bano, Dr. Quratulain, Ms. Eram, and Ms. Fatima and Muhammad Ishaq of JZT also shared their scholarly experiences on the topic. A special feature of the event was a drama presented by the Dramatics Society, which beautifully depicted the challenges faced by thalassemia patients and the impacts on their lives.

### Classified Lost

I have lost my original file and registration of my vehicle No. M-6811. Model 1978, Chesses No. 003543. If anyone found please dispatch on my postal address: Muhammad Usman S/O Liaquat Ali, Mohallah Gulzar, Village Anwar Garh, District Nowshera, Cell No. 0348-1908159.

# Governor resolves to forge collaboration with KP govt for masses' welfare

## F.P. Report

**MULTAN:** Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Faisal Karim Kundi Tuesday reaffirmed his commitment to safeguarding the rights of the masses through collaborative efforts with the KP government.

The Governor extended an open invitation to all political parties, stating that the doors of the Governor House KP were accessible to workers from across the political spectrum.

In "Meet the Press" program at Multan, the Governor KP said "I assure the people of KP that I will spare no effort to ensure that their rights are protected," adding that his intention is to prevent the masses from enduring hardships stemming from political discord with the KP govt.

Responding to the issue of law and order in KP, Governor Kundi highlighted the resource constraints faced by the KP police,

pointing out disparities in salaries compared to their counterparts in other provinces. He expressed determination to secure maximum support from the federal govt to address problems.

In response to queries regarding political differences with CM KP, Governor Kundi emphasized his primary focus on forging coordination and collaboration with the provincial govt for the welfare of KP's masses. He extended a goodwill gesture to the Chief Minister of KP, inviting him to the Governor's office to prioritize the uplift of the province, and setting aside political differences.

Acknowledging his political mentors, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto and Asif Ali Zardari, Governor Kundi expressed his respect for politicians and showed readiness to engage in dialogue with CM KP for the betterment of KP. To a query, Governor Kundi urged all

provincial governments to address the ongoing wheat crisis, recognizing the plight of the farming community. He underscored the importance of acknowledging positive developments in each province and fostering healthy competition for progress instead of political differences and point scoring.

To another question about the imposition of Governor's Rule, Governor Kundi stated that they were political persons and committed to democratic principles.

On the issues of "Seraiki Waseeb", Governor Kundi commended the Pakistan People's Party for their consistent efforts in providing relief to the region. Responding to a question on law and order situation in KP, the Governor asserted the state's resolve to engage with those abiding by the country's constitution while sternly dealing with those who challenge constitution's sanctity.

# Ex-Khasadar, Levies body lock DPO office

## F.P. Report

**JAMRUD:** Offices of District Police Officer (DPO), Khyber and Superintendent Police (SP) investigation were forcibly locked down against lack of provision of privileges here in Shahkas, Jamrud on Tuesday.

It is to be stated here that under the banner of All FATA ex-Khasadar and Levies Force Committee, a protest camp has been organized at Bab-e-Khyber that has been attended by scores of former Khasadar and Levies personnel demanding incentives and regular service structure for approximately 35000 ex-Khasadar and Levies.

Former Khasadar and presently the senior officials of police force visited the concerned offices and locked it down. Jahangir Afridi, Deputy Superintendent traffic police and a leader of the committee said that until acceptance of their 22 points demands, they will not allow any to operate the prevailed system.

They went on that offices of the district police highups will also be suspended across the merged districts. Khasadar and Levies had rendered matchless sacrifices for the sack of the country, although it was ignored, he added. When DPO Khyber was contacted on the matter he said that he could not resolve the issue as it was not his mandate. Those who had promised the ex-Khasadar and Levies forces



at the time of merging should address it, he added.

**Tribal traders reject taxes:** The local traders and businessmen in Jamrud observed a shutdown on Tuesday in protest against the taxes, planned by the government to be imposed in the tribal region.

Shopkeepers suspended their business centers and under the banner of Anjuman-e-Tajeran, Jamrud took out a protest rally to Bab-e-Khyber where it turned into a public gathering. The participants included volunteers of various political parties while carrying placards, inscribed with slogans against implantation of taxes.

Speaking on the occasion Head of the Trade Unions of Jamrud and Sakhi Pul Kashef Iqbal Afridi and Arbab Afridi, General Secretary Abdul Aziz, local leader of Jamiat Ullema-e-Islam Fazal(JUI-F) Said Kabeer Afridi, President of Zawan Koki Khel Ittehad Sanullah

Afridi, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and others categorically rejected the taxes and said it was equivalent to discourage business activities in the ex-tribal agencies. The local traders had suffered a lot in the decades long militancy and forces operations and imposing of taxes is injustice to them, they remarked.

The government, they maintained, should redress the affected shopkeepers rather than to impose taxes on them, they added and said it would dishearten the businessmen. They demanded the government to reconsider its decision of imposition of taxes on tribal traders and formulate pro-business policy in the merged tribal districts. They threatened that if their demands were not addressed then they would jointly with traders of Malakand would initiate protest sit-in in front of Provincial Assembly Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and in Islamabad.

# Uninterrupted internet services demanded

## F.P. Report

**MARDAN:** Internet and mobile users are facing serious problems due to poor service of Tehsil Takhtbhai mobile companies. Instead of fixing the problem of poor service for several weeks, mobile companies are robbing the people with both hands.

The service of Mobile Zong, Telenor and other companies has been extremely weak and poor in Tehsil Takhtbhai for the past three weeks. Despite repeated complaints from the public, the government and the relevant mobile companies have kept a criminal silence. Due to which internet and mobile users are facing serious problems.

The public and social circles and students have expressed their deep regret and anger over the intransigence and criminal negligence of the mobile companies and threatened that if the mobile companies do not immediately correct their poor service, they will boycott them and take direct action.

**DPO reshuffles Muharars:** In Mardan police change of muharar of fourteen police stations, letter issued. According to details, On Tuesday DPO Mardan Zahoor Babar Afridi issued orders to change the muharar of fourteen police stations.

According to the statement, Adnan Khan Police Station City, Anwar Syed Police Station Sadar, Muhammad Sohail Police Station Takhtbhai, Nahar Khan Police Station Toru, Zawar Hussain Police Station Garhi Kapura, Shad Ali Police Station Shergarh, Akbar Hussain Police Station Lundkhar, Muhammad Wakeel Police Station Kharki, Sabir Hussain Police Station Shabbazgarhi, Muzmal muharar police station Choura, Ittikhar Ali muharar Katling Police Station, Rooh ul Amin muharar Baizai Police Station, Durkamal muharar Saroshah Police Station and Pazeer Ahmad muharar Chowki Sawaltheer of Jabr Police Station have been appointed.

DPO Mardan while giving instructions to all the newly appointed editors said that they should perform their duties with diligence and honesty, treat the citizens who come to the police stations for legal assistance with good manners and ensure their prompt legal proceedings. Negligence and corruption in official duties will not be tolerated, the process of punishment will continue. Police officers and men who carry out the departmental rules and regulations in a good manner will be encouraged the protection of life and property of the people is the first pri-

ority.

**TMA employees elected cabinet:** The unopposed election of Munir Khan President, Sulaiman Khan Hoti General Secretary and other newly elected officials in the union elections of Tehsil Municipal Administration Mardan is proof of the political and intellectual maturity of the employees of Municipality.

Local Government Employees Federation Khyber Pukhtunkhwa Patron General Shaukat Kayani, President Haji Anwar Kamal Khan, Chairman Shaukat Ali Anjum, Senior Vice President Haji Niaz Ali Khan, Finance Secretary Mehboob Ullah, Press Secretary Raheel Ahmed and other provincial and divisional officials expressed these views in a joint statement. He said that the Local Government Employees Federation of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa congratulates the newly elected officials of Tehsil Municipal Administration Mardan uncontested and also congratulates the employees of TMA for upholding democratic values and peaceful elections. By doing and paying tribute to their consensus and unity and the newly elected officials express the expectation of the union that they will not leave any minute in the full service of the employees as before.

## KKKU to ensure assess facilities for persons with disabilities F.P. Report

**KARAK:** The Accessibility Committee at Khushal Khan Khattak University (KKKU) Karak conducted a visit on Tuesday to main campus to evaluate existing facilities and identify needs of disabled students.

According to details, the Committee led by Dr. Hassan Ahmad Shah Lecturer in Management Sciences and Fasih ur Rehman, Lecturer in English along with Naveed Gul Bukhari, Assistant Director Planning and Development, and student representative Zunain made recommendations. The committee recommended the construction of ramps to facilitate physically disabled students and arrangements for special front-line seating to accommodate visually impaired students.

The Committee also opted for establishment of a dedicated support center for disabled students and the publication of banners to raise awareness and get support for disabled students. The Committee recommended the university's commitment to ensure equal opportunities for all students. The Accessibility Committee KKKU aims to work for ensuring supportive environment for disabled students to foster their academic success.

The traders' bodies, chemists and druggists association, bar councils, butchers, private schools network, hairdressers association, petroleum dealers' association and civil society organizations observed a complete shutter down strike. The Dir Qaumi Pasoon, a citizens' body also arranged a protest rally at Timergara against the government for its decision to impose taxes in Malakand Division.

The rally was addressed by the DQS deputy chief Malik Shah Naseem and others. They rejected the imposition of taxes in Malakand division and said not only the business community but all the residents were opposing the government's decision. The

## Legal fraternity stands with people of Malakand F.P. Report

**MINGORA:** Peshawar High Court Bar Association (PHCBA) Mingora Bench has announced its support for the traders and civil society against the imposition of taxes in Malakand Division. PHCBA Mingora Bench president Shamsul Hadi and general secretary Shah Faisal Khan stated that the lawyers will stand with the people and civil society against imposition of customs and income tax laws.

PHCBA Mingora argued the federal government for didn't imposing these taxes in Malakand Division, as the area has been severely affected by terrorism and natural disasters, and the people cannot bear the burden of additional taxes. The people of Malakand Division are already paying taxes in various forms, and the imposition of new taxes would be a double burden, they stated.

The lawyers vowed to play their role in protecting the rights of the people, civil society, and traders of Malakand. They also expressed their opposition to the repeal of the 25th Amendment, which was made to address the sense of deprivation among the people.

## Mother, daughter killed

**BAHAWALPUR (INP):** Two including mother and daughter were killed and son injured in firing of armed men over property dispute here on Tuesday, police said.

The incident took place in suburban area of Bahawalpur where a father and his son barged into house of a man with whom they were in property dispute.

# Shutter down strike observed Markets and roads in Dir present deserted look



## F.P. Report

**LOWER DIR:** All markets, private schools and businesses remained closed on the shutter-down call by the traders' organization in parts of the Lower Dir district on Tuesday against the government's plan to impose taxes in Malakand division from July 1st.

Traffic on the roads also remained thin. Rallies and walks were held at Chakdara, Talash, Timergara, Khall, Munda, Samarbagh, Lal Qila and Mayar.

The traders' bodies, chemists and druggists association, bar councils, butchers, private schools network, hairdressers association, petroleum dealers' association and civil society organizations observed a complete shutter down strike. The Dir Qaumi Pasoon, a citizens' body also arranged a protest rally at Timergara against the government for its decision to impose taxes in Malakand Division.

The rally was addressed by the DQS deputy chief Malik Shah Naseem and others. They rejected the imposition of taxes in Malakand division and said not only the business community but all the residents were opposing the government's decision. The

Chakdara rally was addressed by president Anjuman Tajiran Adenzai Khwaja Faizul Ghafoor and others. They rejected the imposition of taxes and warned to march on Islamabad if the decision was not reversed.

The traders' body and political parties held a joint rally at the Timergara Gorgorai Chowk which was addressed by the PPP district president Mahmood Zeb Khan, JUI-F district chief Sirajud Din, Timergara tehsil chairman Mufti Irfanud Din, ANP's district vice president Sajjad Khan Yousafzai, JI's secretary information Shuiab Ahmad, PTI's Kashif Kamal, President Anjuman Tajiran Timergara Haji Anwarud Din, Mian Ali Jan and others.

They demanded the government to immediately reverse the decision to impose taxes in Malakand division and announce special packages for its residents as the region had been affected by militancy, earthquakes, flash floods and other disasters. The speakers said the government was already collecting indirect taxes from the people in utility bills, edibles and petroleum products. They asked the government to announce tax exemption otherwise; the people

would be forced like the people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir to take to the streets. They said no one in the region would accept any form of tax.

The speakers demanded the government to provide relief to the people before collecting taxes from them. Some of the speakers said that their rejection was legal as governments in the past made agreements and promises with the people of Malakand during the merger of Dir, Swat and Chitral states. The traders' leaders threatened to march on Islamabad if the government did not reverse its decision of imposing taxes on the people of Malakand division.

Meanwhile the Pakistan Tahreek Insaf MPA Malik Shafiuallah Khan told this reporter on contact that the PTI MNAs Junaid Akbar, Sahibzada Sibghatullah, Asad Qaisar, Muhammad Iqbal Khan and Amjad Ali Khan had submitted a call attention motion in the national assembly against the government proposal to withdraw tax and duty exemptions for erstwhile FATA and PATA regions. He said the PTI lawmakers were fully supporting the people of Malakand division and they would also resist any such move from the government.

# Traders observe shutter down strike in Buner

## F.P. Report

**BUNER:** On the call of the Malakand Division Traders Federation against the government's decision to impose tax in the Malakand Division from July 1, 2024, like other districts of the Malakand Division, there was a complete shutter down in Buner district on Tuesday and major markets in Swari, Pir Baba and other areas remained closed. The business centers, private educational institutions and private health centers and medical stores across the district remained closed.

However, one or two medical stores in front of major hospitals i.e DHQ hospital Daggar and THQ hospitals remained open for emergency. This was just because of developed consensus and the decision of the organization's office bearers. According to this, meat, vegetable, fruit and small grocery shops also remained open throughout the district to provide basic human needs to the people.

The strike proved successful due to the good strategy of the associates with traders federation to make the shutter down

strike successful and the presence of the district president of the traders federation Fazal Rabi and Pacha Bazaar president Said Wahid increased the morale of the traders. In Pir Baba Bazaar, President Traders Said Wahid Muslim League Nawaz Tehsil Gadezai President Jihanbar Khan representing the youth, Ikram Bacha representing the minority community, Rajender Singh and others while talking to the media said that the implementation of tax by the government is a one sided decision adding they would not accept it.

They argued that prevailing situation and the legal position does permit to impose tax in Malakand Division. They added that there were formal agreements reached with Wali e Swat on the occasion of the merger of the state of Swat with the government of Pakistan, which included the promise of a package of 100 years of benefits for the people of Swat and making the region tax-free. They continued that retention was also a part of the agreement due to the poverty of the people here and the backwardness of the area.

They lamented that the past several years, the government of Pakistan has been adopting different ways to impose taxes here and to extend tax net which the people have repeatedly rejected. They added now the government is determined to implement the tax from July 1 this year after the extension ends, but the people and the business community are not ready for it at all.

They warned that the business community and people of Malakand division would protest against the government's decision to impose taxes and will not even accept the imposition of taxes in this division as worst affected by militancy. They warned if the government violates the agreement by imposing taxes on them who were badly affected by natural calamities and also hit by man-made disasters have ruined the businessmen and people of this worst affected Malakand Division by forced, they will have no option other than but to form a people's alliance like Kashmiris in Malakand division and take everyone together and protest like Kashmiris, they concluded.

# Villagers initiate work on a bridge on their own over a Dir stream

## F.P. Report

**LOWER DIR:** Disappointed by the government and local lawmakers, the residents of Amluk Dara village in Talash launched construction work on a bridge over a stream and announced to build it on their own. The area elder Malik Taj Muhammad Khan, DSP Bakht Jamal, Mufti Khalid Mehmood, engineer Murad Khan and village council chairman Rehman Zada formally launched the project during a function in the presence of hundreds of local residents on the site here the other day.

The speakers said that they had been requesting the lawmakers and government departments for the last 50 years for construction of the bridge over the stream on a link road to Amluk Dara village but to no avail. They said that local residents especially students, patients and women would suffer hard during rains due to lack of the bridge. They said the project would cost Rs 8.5 million and would be completed on a

self-help basis.

The area elders said the amount would be collected from the wealthy people and overseas. They said that it would be a model project and the residents would work free of cost to contribute to the project. The speakers also criticized the present and past lawmakers from the area for their failure to build the bridge despite repeated requests. They lauded the efforts of overseas Pakistanis for motivating them to start work on the project without any government's support.

**Kumrat road:** A major portion of the main road leading to the scenic Kumrat valley in Upper Dir suddenly caved in at Daba area here the other day, residents said. Talking to this reporter on phone the residents said that vehicular traffic to and from Kumrat was disrupted as the road totally collapsed. They said that dozens of tourists were stranded in the scenic valley due to road cutting.

However, the Jamaat-i-Islami former MPA from the area Muhammad

Ali said that huge traffic had disrupted while small vehicles like cars, Viggoes and jeeps could pass through the damaged portion. Talking to this reporter on phone from Peshawar, the former lawmaker confirmed the report and said that due to recent torrential rains and flooded streams the protection walls on both sides of the Kumrat road had weakened.

He said the road was blacktopped during the MMA led provincial government in 2006 with the financial support of the Asian Development Bank. The Upper Dir deputy commissioner Irfan Ali Khan told local journalists that restoration work on the road had been in progress and traffic on it would soon resume.

It merits mentioning that the Kumrat valley gained worldwide fame once the Pakistan Tahreek Insaf founder visited it and his footage went viral on social media. Since then thousands of local and outside tourists have been visiting to enjoy the natural beauty of the Kumrat valley.



## Palestinians flee as Israeli forces re-enter Jabalia

GAZA: Israeli forces have resumed ground and air attacks on northern Gaza's densely populated Jabalia refugee camp, while in the southern part of the besieged enclave, tanks and troops pushed across a highway into Rafah, where some 1.5 million displaced Palestinians are sheltering. Israel previously said it had pulled its troops out of the mostly devastated north, where famine has taken hold of the area, after claiming it had defeated Hamas months ago.

But, its forces and tanks re-entered northern Gaza and resumed shelling in Jabalia, where Hamas said its fighters were engaged in battles. Israel described its latest return to the north as part of a so-called "mop-up" stage of the war, but Palestinians say the need to return is proof Israel's military objectives are unattainable.

Hamas's armed wing, the Qassam Brigades, said its fighters were engaged in gun battles with Israeli forces in the east of Jabalia, and east of Rafah in southern Gaza. In a series of statements on its Telegram channel, the Qassam Brigades said one of its snipers shot an Israeli soldier in Jabalia. The group said its fighters "targeted" an Israeli army bulldozer with an Al-Yassin 105 shell, east of Jabalia. Earlier, the group said its fighters attacked a crowd of Israeli soldiers with mortar shells inside the Jabalia camp, the biggest refugee camp in northern Gaza. In Rafah, fighters with the brigades also attacked an "infiltration" of Israeli soldiers inside the vital border crossing with Egypt, it said. The armed wing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) said that its fighters

fired mortars at Israeli forces massing on the Palestinian side of the crossing.

Israeli forces seized the Palestinian side of the crossing last week, and have blocked the entry of essential humanitarian aid and supplies to desperate Palestinians in the enclave. With some of the most intense fighting for weeks taking place on both the northern and southern edges of Gaza, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have again taken flight, and aid groups warn that an already dire humanitarian crisis could sharply worsen. The attacks come as health officials in Gaza warn that the few remaining healthcare facilities are on the brink of total collapse. Residents fled their houses along rubble-strewn streets in Jabalia, carrying bags of belongings. Tank shells were landing in the centre of the camp and air raids had destroyed clusters of houses, they said. "We don't know where to go. We have been displaced from one place to the next ... We are running in the streets. I saw it with my own eyes. I saw the tank and the bulldozer. It is on that street," said one woman, who did not give her name.

More than 35,000 people, mostly women and children, have been killed in the Israeli war on Gaza since October, according to Palestinian health officials. The assault has laid waste to the coastal enclave and caused a deep humanitarian crisis, with the Gaza Health Ministry warning in a statement that the medical system is on the verge of collapse due to a shortage of fuel to power generators and ambulances. Israel launched its war on Gaza after Hamas led an attack

on southern Israel on October 7, killing at least 1,130 people, mostly civilians, according to an Al Jazeera tally based on Israeli statistics. Palestinian health officials said they recovered 20 bodies of Palestinians killed in overnight air raids on Jabalia, which injured dozens of others.

In Rafah, Israel stepped up aerial and ground bombardments on the eastern areas of the city, killing people in an air raid on a house in the Brazil neighbourhood. Israel ordered residents to evacuate from the east of the city last week, and extended that order to central areas in recent days, sending hundreds of thousands of people, most of whom are already displaced, fleeing for new shelters. Residents said Israeli air and ground bombardments were intensifying and tanks had cut off the main north-south Salah al-Din Street that divides the eastern part of the city from the central area. "The tanks cut the Salah al-Din Street east of the city, the forces are now in the south-east side, building up near the built-up area, the situation is dreadful and the sounds of explosions never stopped," said Bassam, 57, from the Shaboura neighbourhood in Rafah.

"People continue to leave Rafah ... no place looks safe now and people do not want to escape at the last minute should tanks make sudden incursions and moving out becomes too late," he told the Reuters news agency. UNRWA, the main United Nations aid agency in Gaza, estimated that about 360,000 people had fled the southern city since the Israeli military gave its first evacuation order a week ago. — Aljazeera

## Collapsing billboard kills 3 in Mumbai heavy rains

NEW DELHI (AP): A billboard has collapsed and killed three people and injured 59 in India's financial capital, Mumbai, in thunderstorms and heavy rain, the Press Trust of India reported. Scores of people were thought to be trapped after the collapse in the suburb of Ghatkopar, Mumbai police said on social media platform X.

At least 47 people had been rescued and were receiving hospital treatment, said Devendra Fadnavis, deputy chief minister of Maharashtra state. He said an investigation had been ordered into the accident. Rescue operations continued. India has heavy rain and severe floods during monsoon season between June and September, which brings most of South Asia's annual rainfall. The rains are crucial for rain-fed crops planted during the season but often cause extensive damage. India's weather department said lightning, rain and winds were likely to occur in parts of Mumbai in the coming hours, local media reported.

## Labour pledges support for Ukraine

LONDON (BBC): A Labour government would have an "iron-clad commitment" to supporting Ukraine against Putin, two shadow ministers have said. The pledge came as shadow foreign secretary David Lammy and shadow defence secretary John Healey visited the country's capital, Kyiv.

The pair visited to discuss a "new UK plan" to help ensure victory against Russia's "imperial invasion". Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said Labour would not match Tory defence spending. In a joint statement, Mr Lammy and Mr Healey said they visited together to show a united front against Mr Putin's attempts to divide the West. "Moscow's deepened cooperation with Beijing, Tehran and Pyongyang requires us to deepen our co-operation with Britain's allies to demonstrate that our commitment to Ukraine will outlast Vladimir Putin's imperial invasion," they said. "The next Labour government's commitment to Ukraine will be ironclad, and European security will be our first foreign and defence priority. 'Labour's action plan lays out a wide-ranging approach to stand with Ukraine, confront Russian aggression and pursue Putin for his war crimes. We will stand with Ukraine until it wins." The visit was intended to send a message that, should Labour win the next general election, there would be "no change in our military, diplomatic, financial and political support to Ukraine", they said. As Russian attacks on the Kharkiv region intensify, the Labour MPs met the head of the President's Office Andriy Yermak and Defence Minister Rustem Umerov, to discuss what a Labour government's priorities would be. The plan for Ukraine sets out five priorities: fast-tracking military support, deepening diplomatic efforts, targeting Russian aggression, boosting industrial production and supporting recovery and reconstruction. Mr Lammy and Mr Healey pledged that a Labour government would help to create "a clear path for Ukraine's Nato membership" and called for a renewed focus on co-operation between Nato nations leading up to the Nato75 Summit in July. The pair also set out a wide-ranging plan to back Ukraine in the long term, including action to isolate Russia.

Mr Sunak said the UK "stands at a crossroads" ahead of "some of the most dangerous years", in a pre-election pitch to voters. He said Labour would not match his pledges on defence including a commitment to boost defence spending to 2.5% of national income by 2030. Labour has said it would meet the same target when economic conditions allow.

## Russia says troops enter border town near Kharkiv

KHARKIV (BBC): Russia has said its forces have entered the north-eastern border town of Vovchansk, near Ukraine's second largest city Kharkiv. Ukraine's military said it had "pushed the enemy back" from the northern outskirts of the town, adding it had "tactical successes" in several areas.

Russia has intensified its attacks on the region following surprise incursions across the border, seizing at least nine villages and settlements in one of the most significant ground attacks since its full-scale invasion of Ukraine began in February 2022. Thousands of civilians have fled towards Kharkiv. There are concerns among Ukrainian commanders about what could happen if Russian troops get within artillery-range of the city. Ukraine's army has said that Russia has deployed "significant forces" - up to five battalions - in its latest offensive and has acknowledged Moscow's troops have had some "tactical success".

But in an evening statement, the army said Russia had lost more than 100 soldiers since the start of the day, adding that Ukrainian forces were restoring old positions. It said fighting was ongoing in 12 areas and had spread to the settlement of Staritsa, to the west of Vovchansk. Earlier, it had said reserve forces were being moved to the Kharkiv region to reinforce its defences. Separately, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky announced in his evening address that a new commander had taken charge of forces in Kharkiv.

He did not say when Brig Gen Mykhailo Drapatyti took over from his predecessor, Yuriy Halushkin. Vovchansk, located 74km (45 miles) from Kharkiv, has been heavily bombed in recent days and officials in the surrounding region say Russia is now targeting settlements with glide bombs. While it is a significant town in the region, Vovchansk is not of specific military importance, though its capture would be a blow to Ukrainian morale. Kharkiv regional head Oleh Syniuhubov said Russia was deliberately trying to stretch the front line by attacking in small groups in new directions. He told local TV that Ukrainian forces were holding Russian troops back but warned that fighting could spread to new settlements, according to Reuters. On Telegram he described the situation as "quite complicated" with Russia continuing to advance.



Nearly 6,000 people having already been evacuated, he said, adding that 30 settlements had been struck by mortar or artillery shelling. Some 200-300 people remain in Vovchansk itself, he added.

While it is thought this Russian cross-border incursion is unlikely to result in Kharkiv being captured, their gradual approach on this new, north-eastern front line only increases the anxiety for those living there. Residents fleeing towns and villages close to the fighting have been arriving in their hundreds at an aid hub in Kharkiv city.

They are being given food, and registering for shelter after leaving their homes. Veniamin, an 87-year-old resident of Vovchansk told the BBC he had left the besieged town by bicycle - cycling 15km to safety. He said as well as heavy shelling "machine gun fire could be heard from both sides". "I had to run because it was impossible to be there," he said, adding the town had been cut off from electricity and water supplies. Liuda, another resident of Vovchansk, fled the town with her family, who lived in a village nearby. "We escaped when we heard machine guns, the fire was coming close," she said. Liuda had remained in Vovchansk when the Russians first invaded in early 2022. "We survived and got used to it," she said.

Life improved when Ukrainian forces returned later that year, but she said this new Russian offensive "was very scary". Nadia, her husband and mother had fled the village of Liptyy - near to where Russian forces have also made another incursion across the border.

They packed their belongings, including two dogs, into an old rust-

ing Lada car and made the journey to Kharkiv. Her husband had wanted to stay "because everything we had would be lost" if they left. However, she said they were told by the local administration to leave or risk being stranded. Nadia said: "We lived under occupation in 2022, I don't want to be under occupation again." Kostyantyn Tymchenko, who has also left Vovchansk, said he was shocked by how close the fighting was. "On the one side [of the Vovcha River] are [Russians], on the other - ours," he said. "Tanks are constantly approaching, shooting back and then leaving. I thought it would be okay. I was shocked. I wish I had known in advance." Away from Kharkiv, two people were killed by shelling in the Russian-controlled city of Donetsk in eastern Ukraine, the Moscow-installed mayor has claimed. And at least three people were killed by a strike on an industrial zone in Krasnodon, known as Sorokyne in Ukrainian, a Russian-held part of eastern Ukraine, the Moscow-backed local governor said.

Separately, a Ukrainian security source said Ukrainian forces had struck an oil terminal and electrical substation in western Russia. Russia also said it had shot down 31 Ukrainian drones over several regions in annexed Crimea. In an update, US National Security adviser Jake Sullivan told reporters that some of the military aid provided after Congress approved a new multi-billion dollar package for Ukraine would be on the battlefield "this week". He added that the US was "doing everything humanly possible, both ourselves and our allies" to urgently get weapons to the country.

## Greek and Turkish leaders seek to stress thawing relations

ISTANBUL (AP): The leaders of Greece and Turkey met for talks aimed at underlining their efforts to put aside decades-old disputes, but they also revealed deep divisions over the Israel-Hamas war. Speaking at a news conference in Ankara following the two-hour face-to-face summit, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan jumped on comments by Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis in which he described Hamas as a terrorist organization.

"I do not see Hamas as a terror group," Erdogan said. "I see it as a group of people trying to protect their own land." He also revealed that Turkey was currently treating "more than 1,000 Hamas members" in its hospitals. Greece, like most Western states, considers Hamas a terrorist organization but Erdogan repeated his reference to the group as a "resistance organization." The leaders were meeting for the fourth time in the past year in a bid to strengthen a normalization process. Turkey and Greece, which are NATO members, have been at odds for decades over a series of issues, including

territorial claims in the Aegean Sea and drilling rights in the Mediterranean, and have come to the brink of war three times in the last half-century. A dispute over energy exploration rights in 2020 led to the two countries' warships facing off in the Mediterranean. They agreed last December to put their disputes aside and focus on areas where they can find consensus. The list of items on the so-called positive agenda includes trade, energy, education and cultural ties. Since that summit in Athens, the regional rivals have maintained regular high-level contacts to promote fence-mending initiatives, such as allowing Turkish citizens to visit 10 Greek islands without cumbersome visa procedures. Stressing the ties between the two countries, Mitsotakis said the deal allowed Turks and Greeks to "get to know each other, which is an important step." Similarly, Erdogan referred to the Turkish-Muslim minority in Greece's Thrace region as a "friendship bridge between the two communities." Earlier, he described the normalization process as beneficial to both countries and the

region. "The channels of dialogue are being kept open and we are focusing on the positive agenda," Erdogan said, adding that they were trying to increase trade volumes from \$6 billion to \$10 billion. The propensity for quarrels remains, however. The recent opening of a former Greek Orthodox church in Istanbul for use as a mosque led to Greece accusing Turkey of "insulting the character" of a World Heritage Site.

Turkey, meanwhile, criticized a Greek plan unveiled last month for "marine parks" in parts of the Ionian and Aegean Seas. Ankara said the one-sided declaration was "a step that sabotages the normalization process." But such low-level disputes are far removed from relations a few years ago, when energy exploration in the eastern Mediterranean resulted in a naval confrontation and a vow by Erdogan to halt talks with Mitsotakis' government. The two countries are also locked in a dispute over Cyprus, divided since 1974 between its ethnic Greek and Turkish populations. For the past seven years, Turkey has rejected a long-standing agreement

for a reunified Cyprus under a federal system. Instead, Ankara and the Turkish Cypriot administration, which is only recognized by Turkey, have proposed a two-state solution.

Despite sharp differences over the Israel-Hamas war, Erdogan and Mitsotakis are keen to hold back further instability in the Mediterranean as Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine grinds on. The recent thaw in relations was partly helped by Greek solidarity after last year's devastating earthquake in southern Turkey. Erdogan has initiated a broader effort to reengage with Western countries following an election victory last year that saw him extend his two-decade rule by a further five years.

Speaking before the meeting, Greek government spokesman Pavlos Marinakis said that the leaders would review progress in bilateral relations and the agreed upon areas of cooperation. "Our country seeks to maintain the climate of dialogue with the neighboring country," he said, adding that "we believe that dialogue is only positive for the two countries."

## ‘Energy summit seeks to curb cooking habits’

PARIS: An energy summit that seeks to reduce millions of premature deaths around the world, most notably in Africa, is set to open in Paris and aims to raise billions of dollars to fund expanded access to clean cooking methods.

Representatives from 50 countries will meet in the French capital to discuss how to help billions of people improve kitchen habits, which can produce deadly pollutants and fuel global warming. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), which is spearheading the summit, 2.3 billion people across 128 countries breathe in harmful smoke when they cook on basic stoves or over open fires.

In a recent report conducted with the African Development Bank (ADB), the IEA said those cooking practices result in the deaths every year of 3.7 million people, and children and women are most at risk. The problem "touches on gender, it touches on forestry, it touches on climate change,

it touches on energy, it touches on health", the IEA's sustainability and technology director Laura Cozzi told journalists. A third of the world cooks with fuels that produce harmful fumes when burned, including wood, charcoal, coal, animal dung and agricultural waste.

They pollute indoor and outdoor air with fine particles that penetrate the lungs and cause multiple respiratory and cardiovascular problems, including cancer and strokes. These cooking practices are the third highest cause of premature deaths in the world and the second highest in Africa. In children, they are a major cause of pneumonia. Switching to clean cooking methods, such as gas or electric cooking, would save 1.5 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions a year by 2030 - roughly the amount emitted by ships and planes last year, according to the IEA.

Changing old methods and practices, however, would cost billions of dol-

lars. The ADB is seeking to raise \$4bn to provide clean cooking access for 250 million Africans by 2030. That amount is only a "small fraction" of the \$2.8 trillion invested globally in energy each year, the ADB said in a statement issued before the summit. But even that small investment would go a long way in saving more in the long term.

According to the ADB, the annual economic cost of women's and girls' time searching for fuel wood is estimated at \$800bn, and the health costs are as high as \$1.4 trillion. "Dollar for dollar, it's hard to imagine a single intervention that could have more bang for its buck in terms of health emissions and development than this," Dan Wetzel, an IEA expert, said. Such financial support is essential because many households in Africa cannot afford a suitable cooker or fuel. The IEA also recommends strong national leadership as well as grassroots efforts to change social norms. — Aljazeera

## Wong set to take centre stage as Singapore’s new PM

SINGAPORE: For the first time in 20 years, Singapore will inaugurate a new prime minister, Minister for Finance and Deputy Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, who will take the reins of power in a ceremony on May 15. The 51-year-old will replace Lee Hsien Loong - the eldest son of the country's first Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew - who has been in the job since August 2004.

Wong is only the fourth leader in Singapore's 59-year history as an independent nation. Like his predecessors, he is a member of the People's Action Party (PAP), co-founded by the elder Lee and the only ruling party Singaporeans have ever known. The stage is now set for a general election in the city-state of 6 million people, which observers say could be held as early as this year, although the term of the current government does not expire until 2025.

At the last election in

2020, the PAP secured more than 61 percent of the vote, losing just 10 seats in the 98-member parliament to the opposition, but this was considered a sub-par performance given the opposition had won only six seats in the previous parliament.

The stakes are higher now, and a new leader is traditionally expected to gain a strong mandate from voters. Wong will be tasked with maintaining the dominance of the PAP in the face of an increasingly demanding electorate who want a greater say in governance and eschew the knuckleduster tactics and paternalistic politics of previous governments. They are also tiring of the rat race, which Wong himself has acknowledged. Among the most pressing issues on his plate: tackling the rising cost of living, an ageing population, a slowing economy and immigration. The PAP has also been rocked by a rare corruption

scandal. In addition, Wong must navigate the ever-present China-United States rivalry as the tiny island is a key ally to both superpowers.

The mild-mannered Wong was selected by his peers among the "4G", or fourth generation of leaders in Singapore's political jargon, to be a successor to 72-year-old Lee in April 2022. Something of a compromise candidate, he was not their first choice.

That was former central bank chief and Minister for Education Heng Swee Keat, 63, who had been appointed to succeed Lee in 2018. In a country renowned for its political stability, Heng sparked a mini political crisis by stepping aside two and a half years later, citing his age and admitting that he had not felt up to the task from the start. Unlike many of his PAP peers, Wong did not come from the island's establishment or attend its top schools. — Aljazeera

## UK’s migrant deportation law shouldn’t apply to Ireland

LONDON (AP): The United Kingdom's law to deport asylum-seekers shouldn't apply in Northern Ireland, because parts of it violate human rights protections, a Belfast judge ruled. The Illegal Migration Act was incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights and undermines rights provided in the Good Friday peace agreement of 1998, High Court Justice Michael Humphreys said.

U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said that the government would appeal the judgment. The law is central to Sunak's contentious plan to deport some migrants to Rwanda, but it wasn't immediately clear what impact the ruling would have on that initiative. While the prime minister's office said the ruling wouldn't derail or delay Rwanda

deportations that the U.K. government says will begin in July, a lawyer whose client prevailed in bringing the case said the law wouldn't apply in Northern Ireland. "This is a huge thorn in the government's side," attorney Sinead Marmion said. "There's a huge obstacle in the way of them being able to actually implement that in Northern Ireland now." The law was created to deter thousands of migrants who risk their lives crossing the English Channel to claim asylum in the U.K. by creating the prospect that they would be sent to the east African country. It allows those who have arrived illegally to be deported to a "safe" third country where their claims can be processed. While the U.K. Supreme Court struck down flights to Rwanda, because it said the nation was

unsafe, a subsequent bill pronounced the country safe, and that makes it harder for migrants to challenge deportation. It also allows the U.K. government to ignore injunctions from the European Court of Human Rights that seek to block removals. Humphreys found that parts of the law violated human rights protections of a post-Brexit deal signed between the U.K. and European Union last year. That agreement, known as the Windsor Framework, said that it must honor the peace accord that largely brought an end to the Troubles - 30 years of violence between British unionists and Irish nationalists. The leader of the Democratic Unionist Party said that the U.K. government had been repeatedly warned that its immigration policy wouldn't apply in Northern Ireland, because it was incompatible

with the post-Brexit agreement with the E.U. "Whilst today's judgment does not come as a surprise, it does blow the government's irrational claims that the Rwanda scheme could extend equally to Northern Ireland completely out of the water," DUP Leader Gavin Robinson said. Sunak said that the Good Friday agreement wasn't intended to be "expanded to cover issues like illegal migration." The law was challenged by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and a 16-year-old Iranian boy who crossed the English Channel last year without any parents and claimed asylum in the U.K. The boy, who is living in Northern Ireland, said he would be imprisoned or killed if he's sent back to Iran. The judge placed a temporary stay on the ruling until later this month.

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## The Strategic Alliance Between Pakistan and Korea

**I**N the contemporary global landscape marked by rapid technological advancement and geopolitical shifts, the fortification of bilateral ties emerges as a pivotal strategy for nations aspiring to accelerate their economic growth and innovation trajectories. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent engagement with the Korean Ambassador, Park Ki Jun, underscores Pakistan's determination to harness international partnerships for its socio-economic transformation. This engagement serves as a compelling testament to the potential that lies in fostering deeper cooperation between Pakistan and Korea, particularly in realms crucial for future readiness, such as industrialization, Information Technology (IT), and the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) sector.

Pakistan's readiness to learn from Korea's exemplary model of industrialization offers a blueprint for what could be a transformative era for its economy. Korea's journey from a war-ravaged country to a global innovation powerhouse is nothing short of inspirational. By aligning with Korea, Pakistan not only aims to replicate this success but also ensures it is tailored to meet its unique developmental needs and socio-economic context. This initiative to adapt and learn from Korea's experiences in IT, including artificial intelligence, and the SME sector, reveals a strategic vision aimed at enhancing Pakistan's industrial capabilities and technological prowess.

Furthermore, the emphasis on exchanging skilled manpower aligns perfectly with the contemporary global demand for human resource excellence. Pakistan's proposition to enhance the export of its skilled workforce to Korea not only augments its own economic stability through remittances but also contributes valuably to Korea's industry, which is in continual need of diversifying its workforce. This exchange promises mutual benefits, fostering a deeper cultural and economic bond between the two nations.

The historical context of Pakistan-Korea relations, dating back to the 1960s, laid the foundational stones of trust and mutual respect which are being revitalized under the current leadership. The longstanding trade and investment collaborations have already set the stage for a robust economic partnership. With Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's proactive approach to engage more closely with Korea, exemplified by his proposition to exchange business delegations and facilitate high-level discussions, Pakistan is clearly steering towards a more engaged and mutually beneficial economic relationship.

The planned visit of President Yoon Suk Yeol to Pakistan, upon invitation, is anticipated to further cement this burgeoning partnership. Such high-level exchanges are pivotal, as they not only reinforce diplomatic ties but also create avenues for substantial economic agreements and cultural exchanges that benefit both nations.

In the larger tapestry of Pakistan's foreign relations, the alliance with Korea is strategically astute. Pakistan's broader engagement with global powers, as seen through recent interactions with Saudi Arabia, highlights its commitment to a multifaceted foreign policy that prioritizes economic advancement through strategic partnerships. The appreciation of Saudi Arabia's cooperation, as noted by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif during his interview with Al Arabiya, illustrates Pakistan's diplomatic acumen in balancing relations with multiple key partners to optimize mutual benefits.

As Pakistan navigates through various macro-economic challenges, the support from nations like Korea and Saudi Arabia could be instrumental. These partnerships not only provide economic relief and investment but also offer models of development that Pakistan can adapt. From enhancing agricultural outputs through modern technologies to expanding its IT manpower exports, Pakistan is poised to redefine its economic landscape significantly.

In conclusion, the proactive diplomatic engagements by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif with Korea and other nations underscore a strategic foresight aimed at revitalizing Pakistan's economy through international cooperation.

The emphasis on learning from Korea's development, increasing skilled manpower exports, and inviting investment reflects a holistic approach to national advancement.

As these initiatives move forward, they hold the promise of transforming Pakistan into a thriving, technologically advanced nation, fortified by strong, supportive international alliances. This is more than a diplomatic endeavor; it is a vision for a prosperous future, built through the synergies of international friendship and cooperation.

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## Netanyahu should accept that his Gaza war is over

Osama Al-Sharif

**A**FTER more than seven months of the most horrific and relentless bombardment of Gaza, resulting in more than 35,000 Palestinian dead and 10,000 missing, one nagging question is now haunting Israeli leaders and their Western allies: Can Israel defeat Hamas, thus bringing an end to this costly war?

Israel last month withdrew most of its ground forces from Gaza for "tactical reasons," having overrun northern and central Gaza and pushed more than 1.2 million inhabitants toward the south, especially the border town of Rafah. It claimed that it had cleared Gaza City and Jabalia refugee camp, as well as the city of Khan Yunis, of Hamas fighters. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu boasted that his army had wiped out 20 of Hamas' 24 battalions and that it needed to launch a ground offensive on Rafah to finish off the remaining four.

For weeks, the US and Israel's Western allies warned against an Israeli ground offensive in the heavily populated Rafah. The US wanted to see plans for the evacuation of civilians and to receive assurances that Israel would take measures to protect those fleeing. But Netanyahu was defiant, claiming victory was within reach and that taking Rafah would secure it.

Then, last week, the Israeli army began shelling the city's parameters while ordering residents, mostly displaced people, to head to the north and east to so-called safe areas. Days later, its troops stormed the Rafah border crossing with Egypt and raised the Israeli flag there, prompting Cairo to suspend aid shipments and refuse to coordinate with Tel Aviv.

But while Israel was focusing on Rafah, resistance fighters launched rockets from Jabalia in northern Gaza, forcing Israel to resume shelling of the area and redirect ground forces back to the north. By

Sunday, gruesome images and footage of Palestinian dead and injured were coming from Jabalia once more. Thousands of hapless civilians were running for their lives — again — this time with nowhere to go.

Israel admitted that Hamas fighters were regrouping in the north while heavy fighting was taking place in almost all parts of the beleaguered Gaza Strip. The war was no closer to an end, just like a few months before. Netanyahu is looking for a finish line that does not exist. What we know is that Israel has killed tens of thousands of civilians, injured many more and destroyed hospitals, schools, universities, mosques and churches. We do not know how many of the resistance fighters it has killed and how close it is to concluding the war and declaring victory.

But while Netanyahu was still discussing an existential war that must be won, strong words came from US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Sunday. Speaking to US TV networks, Blinken said that Israeli tactics had resulted in "a horrible loss of life of innocent civilians," while failing to neutralize Hamas leaders and fighters, who could wage a lasting insurgency. He added that the US had worked with Arab countries and others for weeks on developing "credible plans for security, for governance, for rebuilding" in Gaza, but "we haven't seen that come from Israel ... We need to see that, too."

Instead of victory, the defeat of Hamas and the return of hostages, Israel now finds itself trapped in a costly war of attrition, facing a "lasting insurgency." While the Biden administration continues to support Israel militarily — the temporary suspension of a delivery of 2,000-pound dumb bombs notwithstanding — it is clear that the White House is fed up with Netanyahu's prevarication and his recent derailment of

a ceasefire deal. This agreement, worked out by the Egyptians, the Qataris and the Americans and accepted by Hamas, would have stopped the bloodletting and secured the return of the Israeli captives.

On Monday, Jacob Lew, the US ambassador to Israel, defended US-Israel ties. However, when asked if the Biden administration still sees the elimination of Hamas as the primary goal of the war, he said: "We have learned from our experience in difficult wars that there is a difference between eliminating something and making it no longer a threat, and the challenge is to weaken Hamas to the point where it is no longer a threat." He added that the common goal was "to defeat Hamas, locate the leaders of Hamas and close the border to smuggling in both directions. Our common interest here is broad."

However, the Israeli and American goals may differ from those of Netanyahu. His idea of victory, finishing off Hamas and other resistance movements completely, is proving impossible to achieve after more than seven months of fighting. The Israeli army is facing a war of attrition and an insurgency that could last years. The cost will prove to be too high for Israelis, Palestinian civilians and the rest of the world.

If Netanyahu is hedging his bets, waiting for November's US presidential election and a possible Donald Trump victory, he will be making a grave mistake. Trump would be able to do little to outbid Biden in terms of supporting Israel militarily. And he would be condemning the remainder of the Israeli captives to certain death.

This is a war fought not against regular armies but guerrilla fighters who can outlast and outmaneuver soldiers in armored vehicles in urban areas. The fighters do not rely on centralized command and control structures and can defend their territories

independently. They are motivated and able to regroup, surviving on limited munitions.

Blinken's reference to insurgencies is essential. The US fought the Taliban for 20 years and lost. The Soviet Union battled the mujahideen in Afghanistan for more than a decade and was eventually repulsed. A long war favors the defenders, while an invading army can quickly lose its way in a protracted conflict.

Added to this is the fact that the war is taking a toll on Israelis, who are frustrated with the government's handling of the conflict and its failure to deliver a decisive conclusion. Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of Israelis remain displaced in the north and south of the country. The Israeli economy is suffering and the country has already lost its war in the court of global public opinion. The geopolitical reverberations of the war on Gaza have shaken the foundations of Western democracies and are testing the credibility of the international rules-based order.

Netanyahu should accept that his war in Gaza has come to an end. His army will never deliver the victory he has been espousing. A day-after scenario, or multiple scenarios, is what should be discussed today, in which Israel must first withdraw from the Strip and allow the unfettered flow of humanitarian aid. Who rules Gaza next and how is the real question. The future of Hamas as a political entity under the Palestine Liberation Organization's umbrella is now a must.

More importantly, the international community must push for a political process that ends the Israeli occupation and allows for the creation of a Palestinian state.

Such proposals are anathema to Netanyahu and his far-right cohorts. But the world cannot go back to the day before Oct. 7, both for Israelis and Palestinians. This is as much for Israel's survival as it is for the Palestinians.

see it as an opportunity to make profits. As a matter of fact, the eldercare market in China was worth 10 trillion yuan (\$1.38 trillion) in 2022 and could be worth 20 trillion yuan — almost the size of the United Kingdom's GDP — by the end of this decade.

Hundreds of high-end nursing homes have been built over the past two decades by investors. To make quick money, they may ask an applicant to pay 1-2 million yuan to get a membership before paying more than 10,000 yuan a month for the services they get. Most retirees cannot afford the high prices, leaving many beds in such nurseries vacant.

Other investors are developing robots to provide eldercare services — robots that are capable of doing not only household jobs but also chatting with the lonely souls if need be.

In such a situation, the government should coordinate different sectors and sources, so as to check investors' lust for making quick money. Making eldercare accessible and affordable to the entire elderly population should be our common goal.

## What is behind Russia's nuclear escalation threat?

Leonid Ragozin

**L**AST week, tensions between Russia and the West appeared to escalate to a dangerous new level when President Vladimir Putin ordered military drills involving tactical nuclear weapons near the Ukrainian border. The Kremlin made clear that the drills were in response to statements by Western leaders about the deployment of NATO troops to Ukraine and the use of Western weapons to strike targets inside Russia.

On May 2, during a surprise visit to Kyiv, British Foreign Secretary David Cameron pledged to keep helping Ukraine "for as long as it takes" and suggested that Ukrainians were free to use British weapons in order to strike Russian territory. This could pertain to the Franco-British Storm Shadow missiles as well as drones the United Kingdom had pledged to supply to Ukraine in their thousands.

While Western countries have been supplying Ukraine with weapons, they have explicitly made clear that they cannot be used for attacks on Russian soil. For this reason, until now, Ukraine has been using its home-made drones and missiles against civilian and military targets inside Russia.

French President

Emmanuel Macron, for his part, has repeatedly suggested that NATO could potentially end up deploying troops to Ukraine. He reiterated it this month in an interview with the Economist published on May 2. The French president refused to provide more details, insisting that the European Union should maintain "strategic ambiguity" and leave the Russians guessing about its real intentions.

Emmanuel Macron, for his part, has repeatedly suggested that NATO could potentially end up deploying troops to Ukraine. He reiterated it this month in an interview with the Economist published on May 2. The French president refused to provide more details, insisting that the European Union should maintain "strategic ambiguity" and leave the Russians guessing about its real intentions.

But the Kremlin has chosen not to play the guessing game. The announcement of military drills involving tactical nuclear weapons in its Southern Military District which borders Ukraine sends a clear message to the West.

And to make the point clearer, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned the British and French ambassadors and released details of the rebukes they received.

The one addressed to France merely denounced Macron's statements as "provocative" and "destructive". The statement addressed to the UK was much harsher. It said that by allowing Ukraine to use weapons against targets in Russia, the UK becomes a side in the conflict. The ambassador was warned that should Ukraine proceed with strikes using British weapons, Russia could strike British targets "in Ukraine and beyond".

This was the first direct threat of an attack against NATO targets outside Ukraine since the start of Russia's full-out invasion in 2022. But it was not the first time Russia threatened the UK in the context of this conflict.

Back in the summer of 2021, the Russian navy fired warning shots when the British warship HMS Defender entered what Russia considers its territorial waters off the Crimean coast. It also threatened to bomb any British vessel that would attempt it again. That episode served as an important prelude to the Russian invasion.

Several factors must have contributed to the current escalatory episode. In the British case, domestic considerations did play a role. The unpopular Conservative government is nearly guaranteed to be routed in the upcoming national elections, which makes foreign affairs one

of the last straws it could hold on to.

Being "tough on Russia" has been its trademark since the time when Prime Minister Boris Johnson emerged as the staunchest supporter of Ukraine and opponent of any deals with Russia while trying to salvage his post amid a COVID party scandal at home. Cameron's visit came on the day of the UK's local elections; his posturing in Kyiv, however, did not help his party avoid a crushing defeat.

But, of course, there is more to it than domestic politics. Western leaders generally tend to coordinate the statements and actions regarding this conflict. European leaders, especially the British, also tend to adopt the role of a "bad cop" in dealing with Russia so that the Biden administration appears more restrained and reasonable.

There is also the situation on the battlefield, which clearly worries Western capitals. Over the past few months, the Russian army has steadily advanced and more recently has extended the front line by a few dozen kilometres, attacking Ukraine from the north in the Kharkiv region.

The ongoing search for a magical solution that would turn the tables in

Ukraine's favour has so far been fruitless. The crucial US aid package, finally approved by Congress in April, will at best stall the Russian offensive at some point later this year. But the Russian army will likely seize more territory before it happens.

What Ukraine could realistically achieve is to try to make the Russian advance costlier by delivering more painful and more long-distance strikes, using Western missiles. The bridge connecting Russia's mainland to the occupied Crimea is often named among the most prized targets.

The Ukrainians would also be very keen to target more infrastructure inside Russia proper if only to retaliate for Russia's incessant strikes that have devastated Ukraine's energy sector.

Western powers are willing to leave these options on the table in order to restrain Russia and make it think twice before launching large-scale operations with devastating consequences for Ukrainian defences.

Russia, on the other hand, wants to look undeterred and dead set on achieving its goals in Ukraine, no matter the cost. The Russian calculation has always been that at the end of the day, Ukraine will always be far less important for the West than for Moscow.

Against the backdrop of what might turn out to be the most decisive phase of this war, the sides are trying to set the rules of the game and draw their red lines which — they hope — the adversary will, at the very least, hesitate to cross.

But with nuclear weapons being demonstratively rolled out, it is becoming clear that the game of brinkmanship is nearing its natural limit. With most — if not all — trump cards on the table, the contours of a new equilibrium are becoming clearer which makes peace talks more likely.

As Putin made another bellicose speech during the Victory Day parade in Moscow on May 9, the recently reprimanded French ambassador was in attendance, breaking the boycott imposed by all the other major Western powers. Behind the curtain of harsh rhetoric and threats, diplomatic efforts to put an end to the war continue.

## Every senior citizen deserves affordable eldercare services

Kang Bing

**E**LDERCARE has become a serious challenge with the rapid aging of China's population. Statistics show that by the end of 2023, China had more than 296 million people aged 60 or above who made up 21.1 percent of the total population. The figure has been increasing at a relatively fast pace because people today have access to advanced healthcare services and nutritious food.

In fact, demographers expect China's elderly population to increase to 400 million in the next 10 years, peaking at about 520 million — more than the population of any other country except China and India — by the middle of this century.

The central authorities have left no stone unturned in taking proper care of senior citizens. The Government Work Report submitted by Premier Li Qiang to the annual session of the National People's Congress in March this year not only mentioned the phrase "eldercare" more than 10 times, implying the great importance the government attaches to the issue, but also pledged to increase the pension for retired peo-

ple in both urban and rural areas, and expedite the building of a comprehensive, sustainable and fair social security system.

Moreover, in early January, the State Council published a document on the development of the "silver-haired economy" — the first use of the term in the central government document — in a bid to attract investment into the eldercare sector.

Taking care of over 296 to 520 million people aged 60 or above in the next two decades or so is probably China's biggest challenge. Yet to ensure the "fruits of development" are shared by all, the central government has been increasing the pension by 4-4.5 percent a year.

Since it is not feasible to send hundreds of millions of aged people to nursing homes, China has been promoting a stay-at-home care model, under which health workers including professional nurses, cleaners and cooks can organize into companies to provide eldercare services, with neighborhood committees seeing to it that they provide quality services at reasonable prices. Besides, China has estab-

lished a call system which provides eldercare services at home. Those in need can avail of such services by just pressing a button to get a service provider to clean the house, do the laundry, cook a meal or even trim the nails or, if need be, call for an ambulance or just sit and chat with the senior citizen.

Although these are paid services, the neighborhood committees see to it that the prices are affordable for the elderly people. As for the senior citizens, they seem to like the model because they can stay at home while getting the services which are not much different from what they can get at a nursing home.

Realizing that eldercare services may eventually develop into a big business employing millions of people, the related central ministries recently released a working standard for long-term care workers, which sets the conditions for people entering the profession, and the regulations for workers' training and classification of their levels.

While it's an obligation for the government to take care of the elderly, investors

# A GCC-EU agenda for regional peace

**THE Gulf Cooperation Council and the EU enjoy close political, economic and security relations. Hence, their interests converge over issues of regional security and cooperation in the Middle East and Europe. The GCC countries seek stability and peace in the Middle East, as it enhances their own security and development. On the other hand, conflict in the Middle East has serious security implications for the EU member states. Mutual gains motivate their shared interests over conflict resolution in Palestine and Ukraine, and stability and cooperation in the respective regions.**

The two organizations have a lot in common in terms of their origin, evolution and purpose. Over the past eight decades, Europe has been through a miraculous progressive journey after experiencing the horrors of the Second World War. The EU today, despite the successive shocks of the past couple of decades, is a role model of regional integration in the world. Though born in response to a regional security threat, the GCC has also been able to put in place the essential features of economic cooperation over the last four decades. Both organizations seek peace and stability in the wider Middle East and Europe, as it serves their respective institutional goals for survival and growth.

Just like Germany in the EU, Saudi Arabia leads the GCC. It has been an anchor

of stability and growth in the Gulf, the Middle East, the Muslim world and at the global level due to its distinctive national attributes of being the largest Gulf state and the richest Arab nation, a center of gravity in the Islamic world and a key stabilizing factor in the global energy sphere. In the past eight years, the Kingdom has undergone a huge socio-economic transformation under the pioneering Vision 2030 of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. This strategic program asserts that the sustained prosperity of the Saudi people is an essential driver of the country's foreign policy, as well as the prosperity and stability of the region.

The Saudi leadership understands that the window of opportunity to pull off the vision's socioeconomic agenda depends upon regional stability. Hence, it has led the process of political reconciliation and economic development in the Gulf and the Middle East. In the aftermath of the so-called Arab Spring, the whole region was in deep turmoil, with deadly wars in Syria, Iraq and Yemen. Reconciliation has helped to bring Syria back to the Arab League fold, heal factional strife in Iraq, reach a sustainable ceasefire and political path in Yemen, improve Turkish ties with the Gulf and Egypt, and overcome the unfortunate GCC rift with Qatar. Saudi Arabia has also normalized relations with Iran, despite the Iranian regime's rampant use of militant proxies to destabilize

Arab nations in the recent past.

Yet, in the complex landscape of the Middle East, there are forces that have a vested interest in subverting regional security and cooperation. The Hamas attack on Israel and the massive Israeli military response in Gaza have stalled the reconciliatory momentum in the Middle East, including the Abraham Accords. Israel has not lived up to its side of the bargain under these accords by continuing to build illegal Jewish-only settlements in occupied Palestinian lands. There was even talk of Saudi-Israeli normalization; however, that is conditional on the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. This rare chance has also become a casualty of the competing interests of militant proxies and ultranationalist elements amid the Gaza war.

Israel's genocidal killing spree against hapless Palestinians has enraged public opinion across the world, especially among the Arab and Muslim people. This could, in turn, inflame extremist passions, producing more terrorists and their sympathizers. Neither the Gulf nations nor EU members were immune from the previous wave of terrorism in the region. The wars in Iraq, Syria and Libya also produced the worst refugee crisis in EU history. Now, with each passing day, the prospect of peace in Palestine is getting further away.

At least Saudi Arabia and

the other GCC members realize the lurking danger of global inaction on Gaza. Hence, they have engaged in hectic diplomacy to push for an immediate ceasefire, humanitarian support and containment of the conflict. Iran has taken sides by supporting Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis. Despite this, there have been attempts at diplomacy, with Saudi and Iranian leaders engaging in talks to reduce tensions and sustain their normalization. Israel and Iran have engaged in open hostilities once, but thankfully shown restraint since. Meanwhile, the Kingdom and the GCC have not allowed the resurgence of the conflict to derail their modernization and integration plans. Other fruits of regional reconciliation also remain more or less intact.

Yet, the regional fallout of the Gaza war is clear from the Houthis' attacks on international shipping in the Gulf and recurrent Hezbollah-Israeli military exchanges. The GCC and the EU must prevent this conflict from spreading beyond Gaza. Previously, they pursued an incremental approach to political change during the Iraq war and the Arab uprisings in 2011 and beyond. The EU also has a shared interest with the GCC in Vision 2030's catalyzing impact on regional stability and cooperation. Like Saudi Arabia and the GCC, it supports the urgency of a ceasefire and humanitarian help in Gaza. It

Dr. Ali Awadh Asseri

has long championed a two-state solution to the Palestine conflict, for which the Saudi-sponsored Arab Peace Initiative provides a crucial reference point for negotiations in the wake of the Gaza war.

Therefore, in its policy statements throughout this conflict, the Saudi leadership has consistently called for the revival of this comprehensive peace plan, which offers a win-win option for both parties, i.e., security for Israelis and a state for Palestinians. The Arab Peace Initiative is endorsed by the Arab League and the UN. What the Middle East Quartet (of which the EU is a member) has failed to achieve, this peace plan could do by producing a sustainable political bargain between Israel and Palestine, along with a genuine international consensus.

As for the war in Ukraine, Saudi Arabia and the GCC have adopted a cautious and neutral stance, navigating a delicate balance between their relationships with global powers and regional interests. But the crown prince has clearly positioned himself as a key mediator to end this war through dialogue. He enjoys a personal rapport with both Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Russian President Vladimir Putin, as the Kingdom is an important partner of Russia in the OPEC+ group of oil-producing nations.

Saudi Arabia last year

hosted the largest gathering of more than 40 nations, but not including Russia, to explore diplomatic options to end the war. The Ukrainian leader visited Riyadh in February to follow up on this global initiative. Besides providing humanitarian support to Ukraine, Saudi Arabia has also partnered with Turkiye to facilitate a prisoner swap between Kyiv and Moscow, resulting in the release of Western nationals. Together with its Gulf and European allies, the Kingdom must continue the search for a viable settlement of this conflict, which will contribute to transregional security and economic cooperation.

The GCC and the EU have a long-standing relationship based on a cooperation agreement signed in 1988. The two sides meet annually to discuss issues and best practices and oversee its progress. They also have a strategic partnership that includes regular dialogues on cooperation in areas such as trade, investment, climate change, energy, environment and research. GCC-EU relations have been strengthened over the years, with the EU being the second-largest trading partner of the GCC and an important source of investment for Gulf countries. The relations have also been marked by a number of high-level visits and meetings, including the 27th GCC-EU Joint Council and Ministerial Meeting held in Oman last October.

The GCC and the EU also have a strong partnership based on shared interests in

regional security. Previously, they collaborated on diplomatic efforts to resolve conflicts in Syria, Yemen and Libya, as well as on counter-terrorism initiatives against extremist groups like Daesh and Al-Qaeda. Currently, as the war in Gaza threatens to possibly refuel another wave of extremism, they must gear up their security cooperation to keep the consequences of renewed Middle Eastern conflict beyond their frontiers. More importantly, both organizations must push for a lasting solution to the Palestine question within the two-state option under the Arab Peace Initiative. The US' carte blanche to the state of Israel is the key barrier to its implementation. The EU must prevail over Washington in this respect.

Finally, through its Belt and Road Initiative, China has taken the lead by massively investing in Saudi infrastructure development, including in transport networks, green energy projects, technology parks and industrial zones. The EU is yet to fully harness the potential rewards of this development spree under Vision 2030. It is true that, under this vision, the Kingdom seeks to become a global economic hub by reorienting its oil economy toward the productive sectors of technology, green energy, services and tourism. However, as argued before, Vision 2030's real value lies beyond Saudi economic development as a catalyst for regional security and cooperation.

## The limits of the Biden-Netanyahu ‘dispute’

Eyad Abu Shakra

**I am still uncertain about the implications of US President Joe Biden's decision to suspend "advanced weapons" to Israel in response to the defiance of Benjamin Netanyahu and his war Cabinet, who have ignored Washington's requests that they refrain from invading the city of Rafah.**

Frankly, I am not sure that President Biden has finally "toughened up" after running out of patience with Israel's blatant disregard for Washington's interests, and I am not saying its feelings. Netanyahu's intransigence and arrogance have impelled him to perpetuate the displacement and genocide and push it all the way to the edge of the Gaza Strip.

I say this because I am very well aware of the kind of administration Biden leads. I have no doubt that the Israel lobby dominates the bodies, figures and networks of influence and funding over the Democratic and Republican parties.

Accordingly, I believe it is highly unlikely that the White House has not received advice from several key figures tied to the administration justifying Israel's crimes since the start of this displacement war. In my opinion, they have certainly warned Biden that he is dealing with an influential force. It exercises near-total control over both chambers of Congress, meaning that it would be crazy to clash with it — or even criticize it — in the year of a presidential election.

Indeed, I have heard and read, as others have, Netanyahu's recent statement. With typical overbearing arrogance, he challenged the decision to suspend arms shipments, declaring that it would change nothing. "If we have to

stand alone, we will stand alone. If we need to, we will fight with our fingernails," he said. We also heard John Bolton, a veteran conservative right-wing hawk, claim that Biden's decision to suspend arms shipments could cost him the presidential election in November.

Thus, I believe that a few factors may have encouraged the American president to take the risk of adopting this kind of stance at this time — which, in my estimation, will have no impact — the most prominent of which are the following.

First is the willingness of Republican politicians to outbid him. No matter how excessive President Biden's defense of Israel becomes, Donald Trump and other Republican Party leaders have not hesitated and will never hesitate to outbid him. This is apparent not only because of the policies of Trump, which reflected Likud's dreams during his presidency, but also from the statements made by the former president and several of those aspiring to work with him (or replace him if he were unable to run in November).

Secondly, the student uprisings on university campuses all across the US, from coast to coast, have challenged the stagnation. This "intifada" has effectively shaken the Israeli narrative that had monopolized the political arena for a long time, especially as the scenes of massacres and terrible destruction have been streamed daily, hour by hour, reaching every home in the US and the West.

Thirdly, the Israeli far-right has regurgitated increasingly aggressive, brazen and racist speeches since October. Extremist ministers

Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, as well as the rabid settler leaders, have made provocative statements that have alienated all neutral or moderate observers. This has had a real negative impact on many in the West (both in the US and Europe), who refuse to blindly endorse the lie of "Israel's right to defend itself," which has been promoted by Israel's propaganda and its psychological warfare campaign. Israel has entrusted its defense to a network of organizations it controls, some of which are bodies of major political parties and media institutions.

Lastly, the Arab and regional considerations in the Middle East. Here, observers find a direct conflict of interest between two allies. The superpower, the US, has multifaceted considerations, friendships and hostilities in this extremely sensitive region. Its calculus has been further complicated by the expansion of Chinese and Indian interests across the Middle East and the geopolitical reality that Russia has created in the Black Sea and the Caucasus Mountains. Meanwhile, the regional power, Israel, has a lot of influence within the American establishment and it could not care less about undermining Washington's interests with the other regional players — the Arabs, Turkey and Iran. On the contrary, Israel's objective is to monopolize having a special relationship with Washington and then exploit it at will to attack all its neighbors and regional rivals.

In any case, this state of affairs certainly creates risks. However, conditions in the Middle East have become so bad that there may not be time to wait for the right cir-

cumstances to present a comprehensive vision for this region, which has one map today but could wake up to another tomorrow.

It is a region where problems have become intertwined, hostilities have arisen, mistakes have piled up and the components of modern statehood and civil society have collapsed in many polities.

Even the Israeli right, with its religious nationalists, opportunists and militarists, may not yet fully understand the implications of the unbridled chaos that will result from killing all opportunities for coexistence and people's futures.

Moreover, the West has problems of its own that it often seems to lack the courage to acknowledge. The US presidential election in November may be the juncture at which the conundrum of withering partisan life, the growth of religious and racial fanaticism and the decline of youth's confidence in establishment parties are revealed.

As for Western Europe, some of its countries find themselves in a much worse situation. Local and continental factors explain why this is the case, including the migrant crisis, which directly contributed to the rise of the neo-fascist belligerent right in several democratic countries. Indeed, neo-fascists have become the only (alternative) force capable of challenging the ruling consensus parties. They threaten the identity of the EU and its common interests, to say nothing of its international ties.

And last but not least, there is the old-new obsession: Russia.

In my mind, there is only one thing more dangerous to Europe than a reassured Russia ... and that is a Russia that feels besieged and targeted.

## Shadows under the lighthouse: Observations on human rights practices in the West

**THE United States, alongside its Western allies, often prides itself on being a beacon of freedom and justice and a promoter of human rights across the globe. However, beneath the surface, shadows loom large. During the 55th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, an increasing number of developing countries raised the problem of human rights abuses within the borders of Western countries. This article further elaborates on what the West has done under the pretext of human rights "protection".**

Xin Ping

hurting their own citizens. At the same time, racial disparity is tearing the country apart. The average net worth of a White family is about 10 times that of an African American family. African Americans are more likely low-wage workers with lower level education of attainment compared with their White counterparts. These are part of the reason why intergenerational poverty persists in the US.

**II. Refugee rights never secured**

As of September 2023, among the over 32 million refugees worldwide, 72 percent were from coun-

on the rights of refugees from countries such as Syria, Yemen and Sudan. The Biden administration has continued to expel immigrants and refugees from Cuba, Haiti and Nicaragua, leading to tragedies of family separation and child deaths.

**III. Judicial system: A casino for the rich**

Judicial systems are essential for the effective prevention of crimes and the protection of the lives and properties of citizens.

While the West keeps pointing fingers at the judicial systems of developing countries in the Human Rights Council, their own systems are flawed with

**After the end of US military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, dual-purpose weaponry suitable for both urban warfare and municipal law enforcement made by arms manufacturers were redirected elsewhere. Since the mid-2000s, the amount of military gear transferred to local law enforcement agencies has surged rapidly. In other words, the weapons produced by the West to defend their so-called democracy have ended up hurting their own citizens. At the same time, racial disparity is tearing the country apart.**

**I. Police violence never ends**

Police brutality has long been an issue in many Western countries. During the general debate of Item 4, Western countries continued to point fingers at China, Venezuela, Russia and other developing countries over issues of police violence. However, a careful examination of the record of the accusers shows that Western countries are far from the paragon of virtue they claim to be. In the US, for example, the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor at the hands of police have sparked global protests and highlighted the country's systemic racial biases. Across the Atlantic, the death of Adama Traoré in police custody ignited protests against police brutality and racial injustice in 2016.

These tragedies are mainly caused by two factors: police militarization and widening social divide. In the 1990s, the US Department of Defense started to allow the transfer of surplus military equipment to police departments, prioritizing anti-drug and anti-terrorism efforts. After the end of US military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, dual-purpose weaponry suitable for both urban warfare and municipal law enforcement made by arms manufacturers were redirected elsewhere. Since the mid-2000s, the amount of military gear transferred to local law enforcement agencies has surged rapidly. In other words, the weapons produced by the West to defend their so-called democracy have ended up

tries that have experienced extensive Western military interventions. And natural disasters often made things worse. For example, the number of refugees in Syria soared to 7 million after the 2023 earthquake. However, during the OHCHR general debate, Western countries chose to ignore the impact of natural disasters and blamed Syria for allowing refugees to cross into Europe. These refugees were counting on Western "saviors" for a helping hand. Yet reality tells a different story.

One of the key pillars of international refugee law is the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits the forced return of refugees to countries or territories in which their lives or freedom may be threatened due to their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. This means no rejection at the border, no extradition, no expulsion, and no mass refoulement. However, Western countries have blatantly violated this principle with practices such as offshore interceptions and refugee swaps.

As early as the 1980s, the US intercepted over a hundred thousand Central American refugees at sea. In the following years, Australia and the EU quickly followed suit in turning down refugees. During the Trump administration, the US implemented the harmful "Remain in Mexico" policy that forced asylum seekers from Central and South America back to Mexico. There was also the infamous "Muslim Ban," which blatantly infringed

problems that are much more severe.

"Money makes the mare go." This best describes judicial systems in the West. Money can buy suspects out of pretrial detention, privileging the rich over the poor. Moreover, court verdicts sometimes have little to do with fairness or justice and are more like a "gamble"—betting that the other party has less money to tip the "scales of justice."

The entire US legal system operates like a massive marketplace where judges, police, prosecutors and lawyers do deals with one another. Money changes hands among the powerful, covering up bullying, violence, and even murder in the name of justice, while the poor had to face various exorbitant charges. No wonder Philip Alston, the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, reported to the UN Human Rights Council after investigating several US states in 2017 that the US justice system was being used to generate revenue rather than promote justice—a national and pervasive issue.

As the 20th-century French writer Anatole France aptly said, "The law, in its majestic equality, forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread." Yet in the West, the crisis of human rights still exists. When the halo of freedom and democracy fades, all that remains is the blood and tears of the impoverished.

Western human rights—what a joke.

— China Daily

## How the role of nurses has been redefined

Margaret Helen Shepherd

**THE profession of nursing in the modern context has evolved beyond just clinical care and support to patients. Nurses around the world are an important bridge between families and patients on the one hand and the healthcare professionals and the hospital on the other.**

Post- Covid, the International Council for Nurses (ICN) published a report on how the pandemic resulted in stress and a major burnout for the nursing force around the world, triggering widespread dissatisfaction and many leaving the profession.

As we commemorate this noble profession on the International Day of Nursing, it is important to reflect on some of the bleak realities. As per the World Health Organisation (WHO), there are an estimated 29 million nurses worldwide and 2.2 million midwives. WHO estimates a shortage of 4.5 million nurses and 0.31 million midwives by the year 2030.

If healthcare equity is to become a reality for all and access to quality care is something nations are striving for, the nursing force plays a crucial role in access to health care delivery and innovation.

Nurses, who account for a sizeable section of the population in healthcare globally, combine the unique art of compassion, care and dispensing of medication with the science, skills and knowledge required to understand the true nature of disease, the efficacy of treatment and the power of research in improving out-

comes and patient care.

**Some paradigm shifts**

Today, with the rapid strides in machine learning, Artificial Intelligence applications in healthcare and advances in other areas including genomics, there are numerous opportunities to improve understanding, efficiency and ensure optimal care. The nursing workforce can develop and undertake research to increase understanding and contribute to literature for the benefit of all.

In this month, as we celebrate the significant contribution of nurses to the healthcare sector globally, we have got to acknowledge the contribution of nurses towards providing a more articulate and enhanced experience to every patient both in hospitals and in the community. Nurses have great potential in providing their unique perspective to healthcare that arises from their first-hand patient experience, their training, experience, and their empirical clinical knowledge.

**A case in point**

To cite an illustration, I had the opportunity of spearheading the translation of research findings in monogenic diabetes into clinical care through the instigation of a national network of genetic diabetes nurses in the UK.

People with rare genetic types of diabetes caused by a change in a single gene (monogenic diabetes) were typically misdiagnosed as having Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes, and therefore often treated unnecessarily with insulin

injections.

With my efforts, genetic testing of those likely to have monogenic diabetes has increased the numbers of patients confirmed with different types of monogenic diabetes which has resulted in improvements in treatment and quality of life.

This has not only impacted the approach to diabetes care through increased awareness of monogenic diabetes but improved blood glucose control for many patients with dramatic improvements in quality of life. Since the start of the Genetic Diabetes Nurses network, referrals for genetic testing have continued to increase, with around 4,500 patients in the UK with a confirmed diagnosis of monogenic diabetes. In the past two years, this model of training was extended through work with NHS England to provide free virtual training to healthcare professionals across England, resulting in a further 1,054 staff trained since 2021, with 95 per cent of hospitals in England offering a diabetes service having a trained and named monogenic diabetes lead.

In the case of Neonatal Diabetes which is diagnosed within the first six months of life and is also caused by a change in a single gene the Royal Exeter University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust is able to offer genetic testing free-of-charge for anyone diagnosed with diabetes within the neonatal period from anywhere across the world who would otherwise be unable to

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## In brief

## Envoy hosts reception for Women cricket team

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan High Commissioner to the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland Dr. Muhammad Faisal on Tuesday hosted a luncheon to the Pakistan Women's cricket team at his residence in London. The Pakistan Women Cricket team is currently visiting England and Wales to play white-ball series. The English Women lead the three-match ODI series 1-0. The seventeen-member women cricket team and the coaching staff attended the luncheon and were welcomed warmly by the High Commissioner Dr. Muhammad Faisal. Captain Nida Dar presented team jersey, signed by all the women cricketers, as a souvenir to the distinguished host. Pakistan's High Commissioner Dr. Muhammad Faisal expressed his wishes for the Pakistan women cricketers in the remainder of the series against English women cricketers.

## PTF selects two more players for Davis Cup

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) has announced the selection of two players for the Pakistan Davis Cup team after conducting trials from May 9-13 at the PTF-SDA Tennis Complex in Islamabad. Muhammad Shoab and Yousaf Khalil have been selected to be part of the team along with Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi and Aqeel Khan for the upcoming Davis Cup tie against Barbados in September, this year, according to a press release issued here on Tuesday. Ahmad Nael Qureshi has already been selected for the team based on his impressive performances in national and international junior tournaments. The trials saw 10 players, (six seniors, two juniors, and two wildcards) competing for a spot in the team. The selection was based on their performance and current PTF ranking. PTF President Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi and Secretary-General Col. Zia-ud-din Tufail congratulated the selected players and wished them good luck for the upcoming tournament. They asked them to display their best tennis and make Pakistan proud.

## Mbappe will join Madrid

BUENOS AIRES (Agencies): La Liga president Javier Tebas says Paris Saint-Germain striker Kylian Mbappe will join Real Madrid next season. The 25-year-old France captain announced last week he is leaving PSG at the end of his contract this summer, without specifying his destination, and Madrid are poised to sign him after years of failed attempts. "He's Madrid's next season, yes," Tebas told Argentine daily sports newspaper Ole on Monday. "If they've signed a five-year deal, he has five seasons of opportunity (to win the Champions League)." Mbappe is set to join a star-studded Madrid team led by Brazil's Vinicius Junior and England international Jude Bellingham. Los Blancos strolled to the Spanish title and are in the Champions League final at Wembley against Borussia Dortmund on June 1. "(Mbappe) is one of the best players in the world, but Vinicius and Bellingham are there too, Madrid will have a great squad," continued Tebas. "But that does not guarantee you will win leagues." Mbappe is PSG's all-time record scorer with 256 goals, having joined the club from Monaco in 2017 for 180 million euros (\$194 million).

## Dominant Pakistan thump Ireland to seal T20I series win

DUBLIN (Monitoring Desk): Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan's swashbuckling half-centuries after Shaheen Shah Afridi's splendid bowling figures of 3/14 powered Pakistan to a resounding victory over Ireland in a three-match series' decider on Tuesday.

Set to chase 179, Pakistan comfortably knocked the winning runs for the loss of four wickets and 18 balls to spare, courtesy of a match-winning second-wicket partnership between Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan.

The touring side, however, had a contrasting start to their pursuit as young opener Saim Ayub failed to make a mark and perished in the third over after scoring 14 off 11 deliveries.

Following the early blow, Babar joined wicket-keeper batter Rizwan in the middle and turned the tide in Pakistan's favour.

Babar and Rizwan dominated the Ireland bowling attack as both scored half-centuries and put together a marathon 139-run partnership for the second wicket.

Their match-winning stand came to an end in the 15th over when Mohammad Rizwan was bowled by Mark Adair. Rizwan remained a notable contributor to Pakistan's total with a brisk 56 off 38 deliveries, peppered with four fours and three sixes.

Meanwhile, Babar Azam, the core aggressor of the stand, fell in the next over after top-scoring for his side with a belligerent 75. His 42-ball knock featured six fours and five sixes. Pakistan then lost



another wicket as Iftikhar Ahmed perished in the next over cheaply.

Later, Azam Khan (18\*) and Imad Wasim (1\*) ensured that there were no further hiccups in the run chase and took Pakistan over the line with three overs left. Mark Adair was the pick of the bowlers for Ireland with his three wickets while Craig Young chipped in with a wicket.

The hosts had a shaky start to their innings after being sent into bat first as they lost their opener Ross Adair (7) in the third over with just 15 runs on the board. Following the early stutter, skipper Lorcan Tucker joined in-form Andy Balbirnie in the middle and launched an astounding recovery.

The duo knitted a brisk 85-run partnership that lasted with Balbirnie's dismissal off Abbas Afridi in the 11th over. The right-handed opener scored a brisk 35 off 26 deliveries, hitting two

fours and three sixes.

Tucker then put on a brief 32-run partnership with Harry Tector before Imad Wasim provided a much-needed breakthrough to Pakistan in the 14th over by dismissing the Ireland captain. Lorcan Tucker remained the top-scorer for Ireland with a 41-ball 73, laced up with 13 boundaries and a six.

His dismissal sparked a collapse and Ireland lost four more wickets in quick succession and consequently slipped to 164/7 in 18.3 overs. But Tector stood his ground firm and carried his bat all the way through with an unbeaten 30 off 20 deliveries with the help of two fours and a six while Graham Hume played an important 10-run cameo.

Shaheen Shah Afridi led the bowling attack for Pakistan with three wickets, followed by Abbas Afridi, who bagged two. Mohammad Amir and Imad Wasim, on the other hand, made one scalp apiece.

## Saudi Arabia Football Federation delegation visits Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): A two-member delegation of Saudi Arabia Football Federation, on Tuesday visited Jinnah Stadium, the venue for the upcoming FIFA World Cup 2026 Qualifiers match between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

The two-member delegation of the Saudi Arabia Football Federation, included Fitness Coach Claudio and Logistics Manager Musab Ibrahim, said a press release.

The delegation was received by the officials of Pakistan Football Federation, who were also present during the inspection. The FIFA World Cup 2026 qualifiers Round 2 between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia is scheduled to take place on June 6.

FIFA has also announced the match officials for the match, with Bahrain's Hassan Mhufoud set to be the referee while Kemel Tokabev from Kyrgyzstan will serve as the match commissioner.

The Jinnah Stadium was all set to host this exciting encounter, and football fans from across the country are eagerly looking forward to cheer on their team.

## Punjab CM awards Rs30m to national hockey team

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif Tuesday announced to increase in the prize money from Rs0.2 million to Rs30 million for the national heroes.

Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif handed over the prize money check of Rs30 million to the national hockey team. The national hockey team met with Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz.

Maryam said she was glad national hockey has made new records after 13 years. "Hockey team restored national pride," Punjab CM said.

National hockey was a source of pride for Pakistan in the past and national hockey will regain its position. "I promise, National Hockey will get full support from the Prime Minister and myself," Maryam Nawaz said.

Punjab CM instructed provincial sports authorities to take measures related to sports. Maryam Nawaz has been given the responsibility of sports promotion in Punjab. She said in the past, academies were built during the sportsmen's era.

Maryam Nawaz said the Punjab government will provide the necessary support from the Punjab government for the development of hockey.

## Tenpin Bowling C'ship in August

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Tenpin Bowling Federation is set to host the Independence Cup Tenpin Bowling Championship from August 8 at the Laser City Bowling Club, Jinnah Park, Rawalpindi.

According to Federation President Ejaz ur Rehman, preparations for the championship have already begun. The championship will feature male and female players from across the country, competing in eight categories: Men's Singles, Men's Doubles, Ladies' Singles, Amateur, Deaf Men's Singles, Deaf Ladies' Singles, Team Event, and TikTokkers.

He said the registration for the championship would start on July 15, and the final matches will be played on August 14.

A prize money of Rs two million has been announced for the championship. The colorful closing ceremony will be held at the Liaquat Gymnasium or Jinnah Stadium of Pakistan Sports Complex, he said.

It may be mentioned here that the Pakistan Tenpin Bowling Federation has been organizing this championship every year since 2003, to mark the Independence Day celebrations.

## Head Coach Gary Kirsten to join Pakistan squad on May 19

LEEDS (Monitoring Desk): Gary Kirsten will join the national men's side in Leeds on May 19 to commence his two-year tenure as the white-ball head coach, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced on Tuesday.

He will arrive three days before the start of the four-match T20I series against England at Headingley on Wednesday, May 22. The series will be followed by the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 in the United States and Caribbean, with Pakistan taking on the hosts in its opener in Dallas on June 6.

The 56-year-old South African was confirmed as the white-ball head coach along with Jason Gillespie as the red-ball head coach last month. The Australian will arrive in Pakistan in July for August's ICC World Test Championship fixtures against Bangladesh to start his journey.

Apart from next month's ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 and other bilateral white-ball series, Kirsten

will be the head coach for the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 in Pakistan, ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 in India and Sri Lanka, and the ACC T20 Asia Cup 2025.

"I'm truly excited to embark on this new journey with the Pakistan men's cricket team. It's an honour to coach such a talented and dynamic team, and I'm eager to contribute to their success on the international stage," the PCB quoted Kirsten as saying.

"These are indeed thrilling times for Pakistan cricket, with a new administration and players who are driven to deliver solid results. The upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 presents a fantastic opportunity for us to showcase our skills and uphold Pakistan's legacy as a formidable force in cricket.

The South African great, however, emphasized that success will require a collective effort, meticulous planning and unwavering support for one another. "With 19 other teams vying for the

title, we must consistently outperform our rivals to realise our aspirations."

"On a personal level, I've missed the experience of coaching at the international level and nurturing talented players to reach their full potential. I'm committed to working closely with the team to elevate their game and bring joy to fans around the world."

Meanwhile, the cricket board, on the recommendation of the team management, has added Simon Helmot (fielding coach) and David Reid (mental performance coach) to the player support personnel.

Reid will join the side on May 20 and will continue till the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024, while Helmot will team up with the national side on 31 May for the USA and Caribbean event. Aftab Khan, who is presently serving the side as the fielding coach, will assume the responsibilities of High-Performance Coach for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup following the arrival of Helmot.

## PSB Coaching center nurturing the future champions of squash

F.P. Report



PESHAWAR: PSB Coaching Center Peshawar Academy, situated at the Mohibullah Squash Complex, stands as a beacon for nurturing the future champions of squash. Under the diligent guidance of Pakistan Sports Board coach Shahzad Mohib, the academy has been instrumental in honing talent at the grassroots level, marking significant strides in its mission.

With a fervent dedication to developing skilled players, the academy boasts an impressive enrollment of 50 to 60 youths, all driven by a passion for the sport. These budding athletes, mentored by seasoned coaches, not only excel nationally but also leave a mark on the international stage, bringing pride to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Pakistan.

Shahzad Mohib, in his address to the media, underscored the academy's commitment to gender equality, ensuring both

boys and girls receive equal opportunities for training and competition. Led by the expertise of former world squash champion Mohibullah Khan and renowned coach Parvez Ali, alongside the nurturing guidance of Coach Adil Khan, the academy imparts a diverse range of experiences to its students, fostering their growth and skill development.

The relentless efforts of the academy have yielded promising results, evidenced by the emergence of talents like Junior

World Champion Hamza Khan and National Squash Champion Ibrahim Mohib, among others. With rising stars such as Yahya Khan, Riyan Zaman, Fawad Khan, Noor zaman, Rayyan Mohib and Abdullah Zaman, the future of squash in Peshawar appears bright.

As the academy continues its unwavering pursuit of talent development, it remains poised to reclaim its esteemed position in the global squash arena, buoyed by the determination of its players and coaches alike.



## Shakib Al Hasan named in Bangladesh T20 WC squad, Shanto captain

DHAKA (Agencies): Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on Tuesday announced a 15-member squad for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024, scheduled to take place in the United States of America (USA) and the West Indies.

Najmul Hossain Shanto will lead the squad in the mega-event while Taskin Ahmed will serve as his deputy.

Ahmed is currently sidelined due to a side strain he suffered during the recent series against Zimbabwe and will not be taking part in the three-match T20I series against the USA leading up to the T20 World Cup.

However, it is expected that he will recover in time for the tournament.

The Bangladesh squad also features veteran all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, who is set to make his record-ninth appearance in the T20

World Cup.

He and India's captain Rohit Sharma are the only two players to have participated in every T20 World Cup since the inaugural edition in 2007.

Meanwhile, pacer Mohammad Saifuddin was dropped and instead, young pacer Tanzim Hasan made the cut for the World Cup.

Chief Selector Gazi Ashraf of Bangladesh clarified that both players were assessed during the Zimbabwe series. Saifuddin failed to impress selectors due to a lack of yorkers in the death overs.

"We wanted to observe and analyse Saifuddin's performance in the Zimbabwe series. But when we considered what the team needs at the moment, Tanzim was ahead of Saifuddin. It was a close call between the two," Ashraf said.

"We saw Tanzim

against Sri Lanka. His dedication and hunger kept him ahead. He is also a good fielder. We didn't see enough yorkers in the death overs from Saifuddin."

Bangladesh are placed in Group D of the T20 World Cup 2024 alongside Sri Lanka, South Africa, Netherlands and Nepal.

They will kick start their campaign on June 8 against Sri Lanka in Dallas.

Bangladesh squad for T20 World Cup

Najmul Hossain Shanto (c), Taskin Ahmed (vc), Litton Das, Soumya Sarkar, Tanzid Hasan, Shakib Al Hasan, Towhid Hridoy, Mahmudullah, Jaker Ali, Tanvir Islam, Mahedi Hasan, Rishad Hossain, Mustafizur Rahman, Shoriful Islam, Tanzim Hasan

Traveling Reserves: Hasan Mahmud, Afif Hossain.

## Tabilo follows Djokovic shock by reaching Rome Open quarter-finals

ROME (Agencies): Alejandro Tabilo followed up his shock elimination of Novak Djokovic at the Rome Open with a 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (12/10) win over Karen Khachanov on Tuesday to book a place in the quarter-finals.

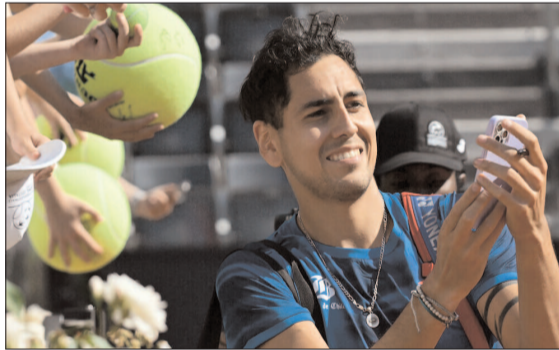
Chile's Tabilo stunned 24-time Grand Slam champion Djokovic in straight sets on Sunday and made the Foro Italico last eight after a hugely entertaining battle with Khachanov.

Tabilo reached the quarter-finals of a Masters 1000 event for the first time and will next play either China's Zhang Zhizhen or qualifier Thiago Monteiro.

"Just being in my first quarter-final is an unreal feeling, just trying to soak it all in right now. It's a crazy feeling," said Tabilo.

The 26-year-old had a much harder time of it against 18th-ranked Khachanov, whose six tour titles have all come on hard courts, than against Djokovic. Tabilo came through a thrilling second-set tie-break which featured 11 service breaks, two set points for Khachanov and five match points, exploding with joy after the winning volley.

"There was just so much nerves there, like feeling that arm really heavy and in the last few service points I was like 'I just gotta risk it all'," added Tabilo.



"With the win two days ago it's been crazy. I just had to turn off the phone and just kind of be with the team, be with the people close to me and I'm just happy that I was able to refresh the mind."

Tabilo will be followed on centre court first by women's world number one Iga Swiatek and then Alexander Zverev who faces unseeded Nuno Borges in the men's last 16 for a quarter-final clash with Taylor Fritz.

American Fritz beat eighth seed Grigor Dimitrov after losing a 20-minute tie-break in the second set before eventually coming through 6-2, 6-7 (11/13), 6-1. "It's easy to go back and I guess dwell on that the whole third set but I did a really good job in just putting it behind me," said Fritz.

Swiatek, Medvedev continue bids. Top seed Swiatek continues her bid for a third Rome title with a quarter-final clash against American Madison Keys,

ahead of her French Open title defence last month. The three-time Roland Garros champion, who arrived in the Italian capital off the back of winning a third WTA 1000 title of the season in Madrid, is yet to drop a set.

The winner of that match will play either Zheng Qinwen or third seed Coco Gauff who face off in the day's final match on centre court. Men's second seed Daniil Medvedev faces Tommy Paul after coming through a gruelling match against qualifier Hamad Medjedovic on Monday.

The 28-year-old has a great chance to retain his title as the men's tournament has been shorn of a host of big names, including the man he beat to last year's crown Holger Rune.

And with Madrid champion Andrey Rublev and the beaten finalist Felix Auger-Aliassime also falling, an event without the world's top three players is now wide open.

## Thunder beat Mavericks to level semi-final series

NEW YORK (Agencies): The Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Dallas Mavericks 100-96 to level their Western Conference semi-final series at 2-2.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 22 of his game-high 34 points in the second half, while Thunder team-mate Chet Holmgren registered 18 points, nine rebounds and four blocks. Dallas led 54-43 at half-time but Thunder closed the game with a 20-10 run to take the win. "We all have our role on the team," said Gilgeous-Alexander. "We all have somewhere we like to get to. All we can do is get to it and

trust our work. That's what we did and we pulled it out." PJ Washington top-scored for Dallas with 21 points, while Luka Donic had 18 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists for a triple double.

However, the Mavs only made 12 of their 23 free throws, while the Thunder made 23 from 24. Game five in their best-of-seven NBA play-offs series will take place in Oklahoma on Wednesday. The Boston Celtics also won on Monday as they beat the Cleveland Cavaliers 109-102 to take a 3-1 lead in their Eastern Conference semi-final series. Jayson Tatum scored a

game-high 33 points as Celtics team-mate Jaylen Brown weighed in with 27 points against a Cavaliers side deprived of star player Donovan Mitchell because of a left calf injury.

"I thought both teams played really hard," said Boston coach Joe Mazzulla, whose team can win the series when they next play on Wednesday.

"I just thought you have to make plays down the stretch. So they made a tonne of plays and put a tonne of pressure on us, and we made a tonne of plays. I thought both teams brought it."



## In brief

### IRSA releases 217,000 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 217,000 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 239,700 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1470.00 feet and was 72.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 61,200 cusecs and 60,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1173.30 feet, which was 123.30 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 63,900 cusecs and 42,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 130,200, 68,100, 43,800 and 13,500 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 80,400 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 19,700 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### PHA to sell 15 shops

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Housing Authority (PHA) Foundation will sell 15 shops through a public auction located at its Residencia project I-16/3 on May 22. According to sources in the PHA, the auction would commence at the Islamabad Hotel Melody while interested parties can obtain brochures at the cost of Rs 3,000 non-refundable. Similarly, the bidders will have to submit Rs 200,000 refundable for participating in the offer, adding the amount will be refunded to the unsuccessful bidders, while it would be adjusted against the payable amount for the successful bidders. The PHA employees including its contractor would not be able to participate in the bidding. PHA Foundation is a subordinate public company of the Ministry of Housing and Works mandated to provide low-cost housing units to low- and middle-income groups including the general public and federal government employees.

### CPO visits police stations

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi, Syed Khalid Hamdani here on Monday night made surprise visits to different Police Stations including Waris Khan, New Town, and Sadiqabad. The CPO reviewed the buildings, front desk, records, and lock-ups to ensure the provision of all possible resources to police stations. Syed Khalid Hamdani also inspected the facilities being provided to the public and directed that merit and justice must be provided to the people. He directed the police officers to make their best efforts at the police station level to address the complaints of the citizens. He said, tight security arrangements should be made for the security of the people. Strict action in accordance with the law should be taken against criminal gangs and law-breakers, he said.

### New library to be constructed: CDA

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Chief Commissioner Islamabad Muhammad Ali Randhawa Tuesday said that the new library will be constructed in the federal capital as per the international standards, with provision for e-library as well. Muhammad Ali said this while chairing a meeting of the Islamabad Development Working Party which was attended by representatives from various government departments.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Japan Mr. Mitsuhiro WADA called on Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq at Parliament House. —APP Photo

## Rs 7.6 bln, 213 employees of Kashmir Council transferred to AJK regime

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Amir Maqam Tuesday said that the timely decision of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has saved from the major incident and bloodshed in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK).

The minister also hailed the role of President Asif Ali Zardari in resolving the issue of Kashmiris. Addressing a press conference, he said that as per the demands of the Kashmiris 36

vehicles and 213 employees of the Kashmir council have been transferred to the Kashmir government and all pending issues of the government of Azad Jammu Kashmir would be resolved on a priority basis.

Amir Maqam said that the Kashmir Council fund of Rs 7.6 billion had been transferred to the Kashmir government and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif approved the Rs 23 billion for the subsidiary on flour and electricity signed a proper

agreement and issued the notification of new rates of flour and power tariff. Some elements were very actively highlighting and propagating on the recent protest but all characters badly failed in their nefarious acts.

The minister said that the demand of Kashmiris about the charges on water resources of the valley would be addressed within 30 days.

He said that a financial assistance package would be provided to the families of all martyrdom.

## Uniform policy pursued to combat power pilferage

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Azam Nazeer Tarar, said on Tuesday in the National Assembly that a comprehensive uniform policy is being implemented to address power pilferage nationwide.

Responding to Asad Qaiser, he highlighted that under this policy, increased load shedding is being applied to feeders with high levels of power theft. He said that curbing power pilferage is crucial to mitigate the circular debt issue. He further mentioned that the government has initiated a campaign against power theft, resulting in the recovery of billions of rupees.

He said that significant progress has been made in border management at Chaman through new mechanisms. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to resolving issues faced by the people at the Chaman border.

He said that the public has elected representatives to advocate for their concerns and formulate solutions within parliament.

He said that it is the collective responsibility of all stakeholders to address the public's challenges.

The minister expressed the government's determination to tackle issues affecting the Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA) and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

He acknowledged the sacrifices made by these regions and announced that funds have been allocated to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) for the development of areas affected by terrorism.

The speaker of the National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, announced

plans to schedule a meeting with the finance minister to discuss the issues concerning FATA and PATA.

Former Speaker Asad Qaiser highlighted that PATA and FATA have been granted tax exemptions to expedite development in these regions.

He said that all political parties have agreed to prioritize development in areas affected by terrorism, with significant tax revenue already being collected from these regions.

Qaiser proposed the formation of a special committee comprising representatives from all political parties to address the issues specific to these areas.

Qaiser also raised concerns about load shedding in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and urged the federal government to address this pressing issue.

## Refurbishment project to add 310 MW electricity

ISLAMABAD (APP): The power generation capacity of Mangla Hydel Power Station will increase from 1000 megawatts (MW) to 1310 MW after the completion of the Mangla Refurbishment Project.

Sources told APP here that after the completion of the project, the average annual generation will also jump from 5 billion units to 6.6 billion units. Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) is executing the project with an approved PC-I cost of Rs.52,224 billion.

USAID is providing US\$150 million as a grant and AFD France is providing Euro 90 million as a loan for the project, while the rest of the amount is being arranged by WAPDA through loans and from its resources, they said.

The Project is being carried out in various phases, wherein the generating units are to be refurbished by closing down one tunnel (two generating units) at a time. Refurbishment of the first two units had already been completed in 2022, while refurbishment of all 10 generating units is likely to be accomplished by the year 2027-28 in a phased manner.

Meanwhile, WAPDA has also awarded contract Package III C amounting to \$ 6,28729 million for the design and supply of two 220 KV, 168.75 MVA Generator Step-up (GSU) Transformers for Unit No. 9 and 10 of Mangla Refurbishment Project.

## ANF seizes 384 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 10 operations across the country managed to recover 384 kg drugs and arrested 10 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Tuesday. He informed that in two different operations at Karachi Airport, 280 grams Ice and 466 grams hashish were recovered from two passengers going to Doha and Bahrain.

280 kg Ice was recovered from a container in Karachi and two accused were arrested. 36 kg hashish was recovered from an accused netted near Sultanabad in Karachi. In two different operations near M-1 Islamabad, 37 kg hashish and 700 grams Ice were recovered from two suspects. He said that in an operation near RCD Road Hub, 10.8 kg hashish was recovered. 9.6 kg hashish was recovered from a drug smuggler arrested in Haripur. Six kg hashish was recovered from an accused rounded up in South Agriculture Center Punjab. In the 10th operation, 3.6 kg hashish was recovered from an accused held near Kashmir Road Faisalabad.

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

## Ayaz Sadiq, Japan's envoy; discuss parliamentary cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq Tuesday said that Pakistan and Japan enjoyed genial relations validated by trade and cooperation between the two nations. "Pakistan values high its relations with Japan and wants to further strengthen them" he said while talking to Mitsuhiro WADA, Japanese Ambassador.

"Pakistani Parliament strongly desires to enhance parliamentary relations between parliaments of both the friendly countries," he added.

The speaker urged the

need for regular exchanges of Parliamentary delegations to facilitate all-encompassing robust bilateral relations.

Emphasizing the role of Parliamentary diplomacy, the speaker remarked that the Parliamentary Friendship Group between Pakistan and Japan at the National Assembly of Pakistan exhibited the notion of commitment to strong bilateral relations between the two countries.

He also said that Pakistan had vast opportunities, especially in the Agriculture Sector to be

explored. Appreciating Pakistan's economic potential, the ambassador highlighted that Japan would continue to work with Pakistan to strengthen economic relations.

He endorsed Ayaz Sadiq's proposal for diversification of trade and economic relations. He also assured the speaker of his country's assistance in the socio-economic development of Pakistan. The ambassador further added that Pakistan was an important pillar in Japan's outreach towards South Asia.

## Ashrafi presents a copy of 'CoC for Pilgrims' to Saudi Envoy



ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) Chairman and Hajj Organizers Association of Pakistan (HOAP) Patron-in-Chief, Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, on Tuesday convened a meeting with Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Saud Al-Malki and presented him a copy of the 'Code of Conduct for Pilgrims'.

He expressed gratitude to

the leadership of Saudi Arabia, particularly to the Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, for their unwavering cooperation concerning Pakistan's affairs, the Route to Makkah programme, and the exceptional services extended to pilgrims and visitors by Saudi Arabia.

Ambassador Al-Malki emphasized that the relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia epitomized brotherly ties, reflecting the

profound bond between the leadership and people of Saudi Arabia with Pakistan. He underscored the unequivocal affection of Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman towards Pakistan.

"The leadership of Saudi Arabia views it as a privilege to cater to the needs of pilgrims and visitors, dedicating tireless efforts day and night to serve the revered Guests of Allah", he maintained.

## Chairperson BISP urges dignity, empowerment for needy women

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Rubina Khalid has underscored the importance of upholding the self-respect and dignity of BISP's deserving women.

Addressing senior management and officers during an introductory meeting at BISP Headquarters, she emphasized the need for unwavering commitment to providing essential services to the programme's beneficiaries.

Rubina Khalid made it unequivocally clear that any instances of mismanagement or misconduct would not be tolerated under her leadership, and strict action would be taken against individuals involved.

Secretary BISP, Amer Ali Ahmad, endorsed the chairperson's statement, reinforcing the commitment to accountability and

efficiency within the organization.

Additionally, Ms. Khalid expressed her intention to personally visit BISP field offices to monitor the situation closely, emphasizing her hands-on approach to ensuring effective implementation of her directives.

Emphasizing transparency and empowerment, she stressed the establishment of bank accounts for BISP beneficiaries, allowing them to access their funds independently, thus minimizing human intervention.

The chairperson emphasized the significance of vocational and technical training, particularly for the children of beneficiaries, as a means to alleviate their hardships and contribute positively to their families' well-being. She highlighted the need for creating employment opportunities to uplift the beneficiaries from poverty.

Ms. Khalid also proposed BISP management to devise policies specifically targeting the inclusion of unmarried and widowed individuals in the program.

Recognizing them as the most vulnerable segments of society, she underscored the importance of extending support and assistance to ensure their socio-economic well-being.

The meeting also witnessed a comprehensive briefing by the secretary BISP on the core initiatives and new developments within the program. On the occasion, Addl. Secretary BISP, Dr. Tahir Noor, along with all Director Generals of BISP, were present to discuss the strategic direction of the program.

The chairperson conveyed her eagerness to engage with the BISP team further and deepen her understanding of the program's operations.

## Cell phones severe threat to children's eyesight

RAWALPINDI (APP): The leading ophthalmologist at Al-Shifa Trust, Prof. Dr. Tayyab Afghani Tuesday said that smart phones have developed into a substantial risk for youngsters. He said smart phones could have severe and long-lasting effects on children's eye health.

While talking to media persons, he said that "mobile phones keep children connected at all times and serve many positive purposes, but overuse has become common, leading to serious eye complications."

The ophthalmologist advised the parents and teachers to be aware of the consequences of children staring at smart phones for too long. According to him, most children with

access to a smart phone use it almost all the time, while those whose eyesight is still developing have disastrous impacts on their vision.

Dr Afghani said smart phones could potentially contribute to epidemic levels of eye problems, and research shows that by 2050, the vision of 50 per cent of the world's population may be affected. He said mobile phones have anti-glare screens and settings that reduce the emission of blue light, which may damage the cornea.

However, adjusting the brightness, contrast, and size of the text can help reduce some harm to the eyes. Teaching children to blink frequently when watching the screen and ensuring the screen is at

least 16 inches away from their eyes while watching is always helpful, he advised. Afghani stressed that parents and teachers should try to involve children in other activities that distract them from the screen.

He said that setting time limits on how long kids can stare at screens is the best way to keep them from getting eye problems. Every six months, a trained ophthalmologist should examine children's eyes, lubricant eye drops should be used, and the 20-20 rule must be followed. According to this rule, a person using a screen should shift his eyes to look at an object 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds and be repeated after a 20-minute gap.



RAWALPINDI: A painter busy in painting the body of a delivery truck at his workplace at Pirwadhai IJP road. —APP Photo

Japan provides \$6.9m aid

KABUL (BNA): Japan is supporting vaccination services and vaccination campaigns in Afghanistan by providing \$6.9 million in aid. Japanese government is providing an additional \$6.9 million to support UNICEF's lifesaving efforts. The statement mentions that this financial assistance to UNICEF enables the procurement of vaccines and injection equipment to provide vaccination services and conduct vaccination campaigns in Afghanistan.

40,000 children left homeless

KABUL (Khaama Press): Save the Children has expressed concern over the devastating consequences of floods in Baghlan province of Afghanistan, stating that approximately 40,000 children in this province have lost their homes. According to a statement released, the organization announced the launch of health clinics staffed by female and male specialists to assist the affected in Baghlan province of Afghanistan.

IEA emphasizes role of education in uplift



J A L A L A B A D (TOLOnews): Nida Mohammad Nadim, the Acting Minister of Higher Education, highlighted the critical role of knowledge in national development during a meeting in Nangarhar. He stressed that for a country to progress, significant attention must be given to both religious and contemporary sciences. While addressing students at Nangarhar University, Nadim further conveyed that

the leader of the Islamic Emirate has emphasized the importance of quality-based education in Afghanistan. Nida Mohammad Nadim stated, "If we want Afghanistan's advancement and development, we must pay attention to both modern and religious sciences in the country because knowledge is the tool for development and progress, and progress is achieved when real knowledge is present, having real doctors, engi-

neers, and muftis." According to the acting Minister of Higher Education, improving the quality of education is currently a priority for the Islamic Emirate, and the leader of the Islamic Emirate has also recommended that academic credentials should not be given to unqualified individuals. The acting Minister of Higher Education added, "The Amir al-Mu'minin, may Allah preserve him, has always advised us to align the quality of education with standards and has repeatedly told us not to give academic credentials to the underqualified." The acting Minister of Higher Education also told the students to stay firm in their thoughts and beliefs and not to be influenced by foreign ideas. He emphasized the topic of unity among the people, adding that Afghanistan's success lies in unity.

Rahmat's family lost 11 members in flooding



BAGHLAN (TOLOnews): Eleven members of a family died in the deadly floods on Friday in the rural district of Fulool, Burka district, Baghlan province. Relatives of the victims in this district told TOLOnews that three days later, some are still missing. Rahmat Shah, a 45-year-old resident of Fulool village in the Burka district, heartbroken over the loss of eleven family members, recounted: "From our fami-

ly, my father, my mother, my sister, my sister's husband, my brother's wife with her four children -- in total, eleven members were martyred." Efforts to retrieve bodies in various parts of the Fulool village continue and, according to local residents, nearly 100 bodies have been recovered and buried so far. Homeless women and children are still waiting for the recovery of their family

members. "We found between 80 to 100 martyrs, whose number were buried today, and the rest are still missing," Mohammad Taher, a flood victim in Fulool village, told TOLOnews. Although the exact number of missing people is not yet available, local officials in Baghlan said that efforts to find the missing people continue. "Operations by various teams are still ongoing. The figures we provide are not fixed; they may increase," Alam Majidi, the spokesperson for the governor of Baghlan, told TOLOnews. The floods on Friday in the districts of Burka, Nahrin, Tala wa Barfak, Doshi, Dand-e-Ghori, Dahna-e-Ghori, Central Baghlan, Khost wa Fereng, Ghorband pass, and the city of Pul-e-Khumri caused significant human casualties and extensive financial loss.

Non-food supplies distributed in Ghor



GHOR (Khaama Press): Local authorities in Ghor province have reported that the IOM office, in coordination with the province's natural disaster management office, has distributed non-food items to 207 families affected by recent floods. The aid includes tents, plastic rugs, kitchenware, blankets, clothing kits, solar lamps, and emergency shelter kits, and it was dis-

tributed to families that had previously been surveyed and identified. Furthermore, the Ghor provincial office announced that their teams have surveyed and identified 400 families affected by the floods. Plans are underway to provide assistance to these families as soon as possible. Residents of Ghor province have welcomed the distribution of these

aids and emphasized the need for more assistance for the victims of the recent floods. Additionally, Afghanistan is currently facing a dire humanitarian crisis, exacerbated by economic collapse and ongoing conflicts that have left millions in urgent need of food, healthcare, and basic services. Moreover, the situation for Afghan refugees is also difficult, as neighbouring countries, including Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey, have begun forcefully repatriating Afghan refugees. These returns come at a time when Afghanistan is least prepared to reintegrate such a large number of returnees, lacking the necessary infrastructure, resources, and stable conditions to support them. This situation creates a cycle of displacement and hardship for the returned individuals and their families.

Afghanistan and Japan collaborat to reduce poverty

KABUL (BNA): In a recent meeting between Qari Din Mohammad Hanif, Acting Minister of Economy in Afghanistan, and Takashi Okada, Ambassador of Japan to Kabul, both sides have reaffirmed their commitment to collaboration and announced the implementation of projects aimed at reducing poverty and improving livelihoods in Afghanistan. During the meeting, Ambassador Okada expressed his condolences to the victims affected by recent floods in Afghanistan and assured

the Acting Minister of Japan's continued humanitarian and emergency assistance. In line with this commitment, the Japanese government pledged \$6.9 million through the World Health Organization (WHO) to enhance health service delivery and capacity building for health workers in Afghanistan. An additional \$6.9 million was allocated through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for vaccine procurement to support the national vaccination campaign, benefiting 4.7 million children.

The Acting Minister warmly welcomed Japan's assistance and stressed the importance of aligning developmental projects in agriculture, health, and infrastructure sectors to benefit the Afghan people. He emphasized the potential for collaboration with Japan in creating job opportunities and improving service delivery. Ambassador Okada pledged comprehensive cooperation between Japan and Afghanistan and assured the Acting Minister of Japan's commitment to alternative livelihood projects.

1st shipment of Qatar's aid arrived

MAZAR-E-SHARIF (TOLOnews): 22-ton shipment of Qatari humanitarian aid for the flood victims of Baghlan province has arrived in Mazar-e-Sharif. This aid, which was handed over to the officials at Maulana Jalaluddin Mohammad Balkhi airport in Mazar-e-Sharif, included food items, medicine, tents, and other essentials. The Qatari representative stated during the delivery that Doha is committed to delivering humanitarian aid to the flood-affected people in Afghanistan. Fahd Abdullah Al-Dosari, head of International Search and Rescue Advisory Group of Qatar, said: "This is our first shipment of aid. These 22 tons of supplies include medicine, tents, and other necessities for the affected people, and Qatar will continue its relief efforts for the flood victims in Afghanistan." The Islamic Emirate considers Qatar's assistance crucial in the current situation and has asked other countries to help Afghanistan. Mohammad Alam Jamil, the financial and administrative deputy of the Ministry of Economy, said: "This 22-ton shipment includes tents, camp beds, and food items. This aid is not the last; perhaps five more planes will come."

Some of the affected families and residents of Baghlan province, while welcoming Qatar's goodwill, asked for the immediate transfer and distribution of this aid. Shah Wali, a flood victim in Baghlan, said: "We are pleased that they are helping. We want other countries to help these people too because they have suffered a lot and have had casualties." The first shipment of Qatar's humanitarian aid was handed over to the local officials in Balkh, province as many affected families in Baghlan have previously criticized the slow distribution process of humanitarian aid.

Afghan migrants deported

KABUL (Khaama Press): Officials in the High Commission for Addressing the Problems of Migrants state that 256 families returned to the country through various borders with Iran and Pakistan after being deported. According to officials, 256 families returned to the country through the Torghundi, Spin Boldak, Pul-e Khisht, and Islam Qala border crossings. Afghan migrants have continued to face detention, deportation, and pressure from Tehran and Islamabad despite calls from human rights organizations to halt the deportation process of Afghan migrants. Afghan migrants are being expelled from neighbouring countries at a time when Afghanistan's needs have escalated due to recent natural disasters such as earthquakes and recent floods, and relief organizations are constantly appealing for assistance to the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund. The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan has reached a critical point, with millions of people in need of urgent assistance. Decades of conflict, coupled with natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic, have exacerbated existing vulnerabilities, leaving many Afghans without access to necessities such as food, clean water, and healthcare. The ongoing violence and displacement have further strained resources and hindered humanitarian efforts, leaving aid organizations struggling to reach those most in need. Recent flash floods have added to Afghanistan's already dire situation, causing widespread devastation and displacing thousands of families. The floods have destroyed homes, infrastructure, and agricultural land, exacerbating food insecurity and economic hardship for millions of Afghans.

Health Minister visits flood-stricken villages

BAGHLAN (Ariana News): Afghanistan's acting minister of public health Dr Qalandar Ebad, along with other officials, visited a number of flood-hit villages in Baghlan province on Tuesday. The officials assessed damage in the villages of Sai Hazara and Ghoro in the Guzargah district. According to a statement issued by the ministry, Ebad inspected "vulnerable areas affected by recent floods and, expressing sympathy with the local people, promised that the leadership of the Ministry of Public Health will spare no effort to provide health services to those in need." Ebad also expressed gratitude for the efforts of healthcare workers and their commitment to helping people in need. He directed officials to make every effort "to improve the health status of



patients affected by recent floods in the villages of Sai Hazara and Ghoro, Baghlan province". Based on official figures,

more than 300 people have died as a result of floods in Baghlan province and over 1,600 others have been injured.

Islamic Emirate urges Iran to help curb precious stone smuggling

KABUL (TOLOnews): Qadir Qiafa, deputy head of Iran's Chamber of Commerce, said that precious and semi-precious stones mined in Afghanistan are smuggled into Iran and sold. He added that Iran is interested in investing in Afghanistan's mining sector; however, sanctions imposed by the United States have affected Iran's investments in Afghanistan. The Islamic Emirate has announced efforts to prevent the smuggling of mineral resources, particularly precious stones from Afghanistan, and emphasized cooperation with Iran to stop the trafficking. Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesman for the Islamic

Emirate, said: "The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is making its utmost effort to completely stop smuggling. In this regard, cooperation with Iran is also needed. We have instructed our forces to prevent the smuggling of prohibited items and to pay serious attention to this issue." The Chamber of Commerce and Investment has been focused on creating markets for the sale of Afghan mineral materials, especially precious and semi-precious stones, by the Islamic Emirate to prevent smuggling. Jaan Agha Naveed, spokesman for the Chamber of Commerce and Investment, said: "At that

time, we had specific markets in the former Soviet Union, the United States, and India. Now we can reactivate these markets and also create opportunities within Afghanistan for processing and selling locally." At the same time, several Iranian traders said that the Afghan lapis lazuli, ruby, sapphire, and emerald markets in Iran are particularly booming and are mostly used in decorating precious jewelry. These traders are calling for the establishment of a joint standard factory for processing precious and semi-precious stones between Afghanistan and Iran within Afghanistan.

Ali Akbar Sheibani Fard, an Iranian trader, said: "A joint operation should be conducted between Afghan and Iranian traders at a specific site where extraction and processing can be done, and from that site, it can be sent to other countries." Mortaza Jalali, another trader, said: "Lapis lazuli is very useful; agates are being imported and have good use." Previously, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce had reported that in 1402, precious stones worth more than \$2 million were exported to Pakistan, China, Uzbekistan, Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates, and Germany.

Aid collection campaigns for flood victims launched

KABUL (TOLOnews): Following the collection efforts in Herat following a deadly earthquake last year, the campaign to gather aid for the recent flood victims has begun in several other provinces. Recently, several tents have been set up in the provinces of Nangarhar and Paktia to collect aid. As each day passes, the number of flood victims continues to rise. Tasbihullah, one of the donors, has contributed his one day's earnings to the aid collection fund for the victims. This 15-year-old teenager, who runs a cart in Jalalabad, said that in the current situation, the flood victims are in greater need. Tasbihullah told TOLOnews: "I run a cart and donate all I can, I want to donate 50 Afs." Ruhullah, another resident of Nangarhar, said: "I ask all people to help with the flood-affected people, they need help." Meanwhile, several residents of Nangarhar and Paktia, who have participated in the aid collection campaign, are asking other citizens, businesspeople, and aid organizations for immediate assistance to



those affected by the floods. Marshad Khan, the campaign manager for aid collection in Nangarhar, said: "Khaled Pashtun, a resident of Paktia, said: "On behalf of the youth in Nangarhar, we organized the aid gathering so that people can help because they have sympathy with the victims of the flooding." Local officials in Nangarhar and Paktia have stated that the collected aid will be transparently dis-

tributed to the flood victims through designated committees. Zahir Shirzad, the youth director of the Department of Information and Culture in Nangarhar, said: "Every single penny of this aid will be distributed transparently." Sawab Jan Islamiar, the head of the Department of Information and Culture in Paktia, said: "A box has been set up and will be here for three days to collect money. We will collect aid

from people, businesspeople, and government administrations." The campaign to collect aid for flood victims in some provinces of the country has begun while earlier, several businessmen and national cricket team players had also announced their collaboration to assist.

Trade with Turkey up 53 per cent

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Ministry of Industry and Commerce reports a fifty-three percent increase in trade with Turkey in 1402. Based on information from this ministry, trade with Turkey last year was valued at over \$100 million, of which \$27 million consisted of exports. Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad, the spokesman for the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, stated: "During the year 1402, the trade volume was about \$107 million, with exports accounting for \$27 million and imports for \$80 million, indicating a 53 percent increase compared to 1401." The Chamber of Industries and Mines also emphasized the need to focus on Turkey's investments in Afghanistan alongside trade.

Death toll of Baghlan flooding over 170

BAGHLAN (TOLOnews): The number of victims from the recent floods in the country has nearly reached 180, doctors said, as cited by Mullah Baradar, who visited the disaster-stricken Baghlan province of Afghanistan. Meanwhile, on the fourth day of the flooding in Baghlan province, affected families called for immediate aid. They said that they lack shelter, food supplies, and clean drinking water, and are living in heartbreaking conditions. Mohammad Alam, 50, who lost six family members in the Friday floods in the Darwazakan area of central Baghlan, said: "I have lost two of my sister-

in-laws, my wife, two daughters—one six years old and the other thirteen—and a nephew." Another group of affected individuals who have lost their possessions are also demanding urgent help from the authorities. "We need clean water and tents. The foreign aid that has been promised needs to be delivered," said Arbab Gulzada, a flood victim in Baghlan. "Our request from the Islamic Emirate is to deliver aid to the people affected in Baghlan, especially central Baghlan," said Haqbin Moradi, a flood victim in Baghlan. At the same time, Alam Majidi, the spokesperson for the governor of

Baghlan, said that the process of distributing initial aid from the government and aid organizations to the flood victims is ongoing, and more aid will be distributed to them after assessments are completed. Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, deputy prime minister for economic affairs, who visited the flood-affected areas, said: "They told us the number of casualties is 154 martyrs, but doctors have reported up to 170 people." According to official statistics provided by the authorities in the caretaker government, the death toll in Baghlan province so far reached nearly 180, and the search and rescue operations are still ongoing.

# Israel’s Rafah attack set Hamas talks ‘backward’

DOHA, QATAR (AFP): Israel’s military operation in Rafah has set truce negotiations with Hamas “backward,” mediator Qatar said on Tuesday, adding that talks have reached “almost a stalemate.”

“Especially in the past few weeks, we have seen some momentum building but unfortunately things didn’t move in the right direction and right now we are on a status of almost a stalemate,” Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani told the Qatar Economic Forum. “Of course, what happened with Rafah has set us backward.”

Qatar, which has hosted Hamas’s political office in Doha since 2012, has been engaged — along with Egypt and the United States — in months of behind-the-scenes mediation between Israel and the Palestinian militant group. Israel continued to fight Hamas in Rafah on Monday, despite US warnings against a full-scale assault on the south Gaza city that is crowded with displaced Palestinians.

“There is no clarity how to stop the war from the Israeli side. I don’t think that they are considering this as an option... even when we are talking about the deal and leading to a potential ceasefire,” Sheikh Mohammed said. Israeli politicians were indicating “by their statements that they will remain there, they will continue the war. And there is no clarity on what Gaza will look like after this,” he added.

Meanwhile, a shortage of banknotes is gripping Gaza, fueling criminal gangs and profiteering, after Israel has blocked imports of cash and most banks in the enclave have been damaged or destroyed during the war, according to residents, aid workers and banking sources.

After more than 7 months of Israeli bombardment, just a handful of ATMs remain operational in the strip, most of the them in the southern city of Rafah, where some 1.4 million Palestinians are sheltering. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) has ordered civilians to evacuate parts of the southern city, sparking fears of a looming offensive. Its tanks entered residential districts there on Tuesday.

Supplies of basic goods had returned to some markets in April and early May for the first time in months after Israel ceded to international pressure to let in more aid trucks amid famine warnings. But residents and aid workers say that many people haven’t had the cash to purchase them. Now residents say Israel’s offensive in Rafah has dried up supplies again and stoked prices.

Hundreds, sometimes thousands, of desperate people crowd outside ATMs, often waiting days for access. Armed gangs sometimes demand a fee to provide priority access, exploiting the absence of Palestinian police, three Western aid workers and seven resi-

## US doesn’t believe ‘genocide’ occurring in Gaza: White House

WASHINGTON DC: The United States does not believe that genocide is occurring in Gaza but Israel must do more to protect Palestinian civilians, President Joe Biden’s top national security official said. As ceasefire talks stall and Israel continued striking the southern city of Rafah, White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan insisted that the responsibility for peace lay with militant group Hamas. “We believe Israel can and must do more to ensure the protection and wellbeing of innocent civilians. We do not believe what is happening in Gaza is a genocide,” Sullivan told a briefing.

The US was “using the internationally accepted term for genocide, which includes a focus on intent” to reach this assessment, Sullivan added. Biden wanted to see Hamas defeated but realized that Palestinian civilians were in “hell,” Sullivan said. Sullivan said he was coming to the White House podium to “take a step back” and set out the Biden administration’s position on the conflict, amid criticism from both ends of the US political spectrum. Biden has come under fire from Republicans for halting some weapons shipments to press his demands that Israel hold off a Rafah offensive, while there have been protests at US universities against his support for Israel. The US president believed any Rafah operation “has got to be connected to a strategic endgame that also answered the question, ‘what comes next?’” Sullivan added. This would avoid Israel “getting mired in a counterinsurgency campaign that never ends, and ultimately saps Israel’s strength and vitality.” —Arab News

dents told Reuters. Abu Ahmed, 45, a resident of Rafah, said he had waited for as long as seven days and became so frustrated that he turned for help to gang members, who are sometimes armed with knives and guns.

“I paid 300 shekels (\$80) of my salary to one of them for accessing the ATM and getting my cash,” said Abu Ahmed, who asked that his last name not be used for fear of reprisals. He earns 3,500 shekels per month as a public servant. The three Western aid workers described the gangs as improvised groups that have sprung up across the Strip up as desperation has grown.

As of May 13, only 5 branches and 7 ATMs remain operational in the strip, primarily in Rafah, according to the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute, a non-profit organization headquartered in the West Bank. Before the war, Gaza had 56 bank branches and 91 ATMs. The conflict erupted after an Oct. 7 attack on Israel by Palestinian Islamist militant group Hamas, in which some 1,200 people were killed and more than 250 taken hostage. Israel’s assault on Gaza, aimed at destroying Hamas and returning the hostages, has killed at least 35,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza’s health ministry.

The Palestinian economy runs on the Israeli shekel. Gaza’s financial system is almost completely dependent on Israel, which must approve major transfers and the movement of cash into the enclave, bankers said. Israel has blocked cash imports to Gaza since the start of the war in October, according to the Palestine Monetary Authority (PMA) and the Association of Banks in Palestine (ABP), a non-profit based in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

Adnan Alfaleet, the Gaza district

manager of Palestine Islamic Bank, which operates the biggest Islamic banking network in the Palestinian Territories, said his bank has no cash left in Gaza. “We reached the point of complete lack of liquidity now. It can’t get worse,” he said. The Israeli central bank did not respond to questions about whether transfers had been blocked. It said there were no Israeli banks in Gaza and shekels had circulated there in the past because of trade with and Palestinian workers in Israel. COGAT, an Israeli Defense Ministry agency tasked with coordinating aid deliveries into the Palestinian territories, did not respond to Reuters’ questions.

Ismael Al-Thawabta, the director of the Hamas-run government media office, said the Palestinian police were trying to protect ATM machines, despite coming under fire from Israeli forces. A Hamas official, who declined to be named, said police were keeping a low profile and only making surprise raids or patrols at certain locations after officers had been targeted in Israeli strikes.

In February, the top US diplomat involved in humanitarian assistance to Gaza said Israeli forces had killed Palestinian police protecting a UN convoy. The IDF did not respond to a request for comment on whether its forces have targeted police officers. Reuters could not determine how many police officers have been killed during the war. Residents said some merchants are profiteering from the shortage. Some money exchange store owners, who can cash Western Union transfers, and even some pharmacists who have credit card machines, were charging hefty commissions for access to money, according to two sources.



ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner Jane Marriott called on PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

## President visits Green Pakistan Initiative HQs

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: President Asif Ali Zardari on Tuesday visited the Green Pakistan Initiative Headquarters where he was given a detailed briefing about the Initiative, Land Information and Management System operations. Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti and Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari were also present on the occasion, the President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release.

The president was briefed about the improved water irrigation system based on modern patterns. A briefing was also given over agriculture, dredging of canals, IT-based operations and effective irrigation water system under the Green Pakistan Initiative. The president was also apprised of the concepts of model agri-farms and agricultural smart farms operations to facilitate the farmers’ community for progress of the agriculture sector.

President Zardari appreciated the working of Green Pakistan Initiative and Land Information and Management System under the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). While lauding the team of Green Pakistan Initiative, he stressed upon working with equal zeal for the national and economic development of the country. For the bright future of Pakistan, the president also assured complete cooperation of all the provinces for achieving the objectives of Green Pakistan Initiative.

## £190m case: IHC reserves verdict

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday reserved its verdict on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan’s plea seeking bail in the £190 million National Crime Agency (NCA) settlement reference.

A two-member bench, comprising IHC CJ Aamer Farooq, Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri, reserved the verdict after the completion of arguments. The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) had launched an investigation against Imran Khan and his wife and others for the alleged gain of hundreds of canals of land in the name of Al Qadir University Trust, which reportedly caused a loss of 190 million pounds to the national exchequer.

## Fazl announces movement

FAISALABAD (INP): Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam chief Maulana Fazlur Rahman announced that his party had launched a movement against what he referred to as electoral malpractices.

Addressing a gathering of reporters here, Fazl declared that the JUI-F would hold a public million march on June 1. Fazl stated that the country’s system was in turmoil, and urged all politicians to reflect on the perennially disputed nature of elections in Pakistan. He deplored a lack of implementation of the constitution, and questioned its purpose if not followed. The JUI-F leader criticised the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for its passive stance in face of electoral rigging and constitutional violations. He, however, cautioned against solely blaming the Commission, arguing that doing so would imply a void of the constitution and law in the country.

# Meeting reviews progress on uplift schemes in KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The second round of meetings regarding the draft Annual Development Program 2024-25 was held on Tuesday with Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur in the chair.

The meeting, besides reviewing the progress so far made on the ongoing projects, discussed in detail the proposed projects of Health, Elementary and Secondary Education and Agriculture Departments to be reflected in the upcoming ADP and proposed funds allocation for both the ongoing and new schemes of these departments. Besides provincial cabinet members Syed Qasim Ali Shah, Muhammad Sajjad Barakwal, Faisal Khan Tarakai and Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif, the meeting was attended by Additional Chief Secretary Syed Imtiaz Hussain Shah, administrative secretaries and other high ups of the concerned departments.

While issuing policy directives regarding the formulation of new ADP, the chair directed the authorities of these departments not to propose such development schemes which could not be completed for years, and to keep the ADP realistic keeping in view the financial position of the province further directing to propose such schemes for the new ADP which could benefit maximum population.

The Chief Minister termed the Education and Health as priority sectors of his government and said that development funds would be allocated for these sectors on priority basis. Ali Amin Gandapur stressed the need to give special attention to the provision of basic amenities to the people of backward areas of the province including the merged districts.

He urged upon the authorities concerned to fix realistic timelines for the implementation of developmental schemes and ensure physical progress as per the given timelines; and made it clear that unnecessary delay in the implementation of developmental schemes shall not be tolerated.

The Chief Minister directed the high ups of health department to focus on the improvement of service delivery in the existing health facilities instead of going for constructing news buildings, and to strengthen the health service delivery units of far-flung areas so that basic facilities are ensured to the people of those areas at their door steps, and burden on the hospitals of urban areas is reduced.

Ali Amin Gandapur directed the health department to propose a project for the establishment of Command and Control Centre for an effective and centralized monitoring of service delivery in public sector hospitals of the province with the aim to improve service delivery to the desired level further directing the department to propose schemes for the establishment of Gamma Knife Radiosurgery Centre to facilitate cancer patients of the province.

He also directed the department to propose initiatives for the treatment of Thalassemia and Hemophilia patients further directing to reflect the inclusion of Air Ambulance Service in the upcoming ADP so that the service could be started soon. Regarding Agriculture Sector, the chair stressed the need of modern research to increase the per acre yield of agricultural products and directed the authorities concerned for necessary steps to this effect.

The chair also directed the high ups of the agriculture department to propose schemes aiming at the promotion of olive and saffron cultivation in the suitable areas of the province adding that projects for the construction of small check dams also be proposed for efficient utilization of rain water.

With regard to the Elementary and Secondary Education sector, the Chief Minister directed the concerned authorities to incorporate the provision of free school bags to school children in the existing project of free textbooks. He also directed the high ups of the Education department to ensure the availability of drinking water and washrooms in all the public sector schools of the province.

# NAB amends case: SC allows Imran to attend proceedings

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) allowed PTI founder Imran Khan to attend court proceedings in the NAB amendments case via video link. On September 15, 2023, the Supreme Court of Pakistan struck down amendments made to National Accountability Bureau laws as it announced its reserved verdict on the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder’s plea.

A five-member bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Qazi

Faez Isa comprising Justice Amin-Ud-Din Khan, Justice Jamal Mandokhail, Justice Athar Minallah and Justice Hassan Azhar hearing the govt’s pleas challenging the NAB amendments verdict. At the outset of the hearing, the NAB prosecutor general said the bureau will adopt the arguments of the federal government in this case.

Justice Minallah remarked it has been told that the PTI founder wants to appear in this case. “How can a respondent be barred from attending court proceedings.” This is a matter of

basic fundamental rights, he remarked. CJP Justice Qazi Faez Isa remarked that Adiala Jail Superintendent was asked to make arrangements for the video link appearance of the PTI founder. This is not a matter related to a person but it is a matter of law and justice. The federal government filed the review plea in the NAB amendments case under the SC Practice and Procedure Law and made the Federation of Pakistan, National Accountability Bureau and PTI founder respondents.

# Pakistanis own property

(Continued from Page 1)

partner of this investigative project, she clarified that she had purchased another property in Dubai in January this year when Naqvi was still interim chief minister of Punjab. Two months later, he was a candidate for the Senate seat in March and chose not to declare this property. To a question regarding this, she said: “We will declare it in the current year’s tax declarations and for the ECP”.

According to the data leak assessed by economists and reporters, the number of residential properties owned by foreigners in Dubai put Indians first, at 35,000 properties and 29,700 owners. The total value of these properties is estimated at \$17 billion that same year. Owners with Pakistani nationality come second among foreigners at 17,000 owners of 23,000 residential properties followed by UK citizens and Saudi nationals. Among the Pakistani owners, the average value per owner is estimated at \$0.41 million (Rs11.40m). The combined value of the properties of Pakistanis has been estimated at around \$11 billion (Rs30tr) whereas the total value of properties of 204 nationalities is \$386 billion (Rs1073.70tr).

The Property Leaks data includes the controlling party of each property, as well as other identifying information such as his or her date of birth, passport number, and nationality. In some cases, the data cap-

tured renters instead of owners as mostly it came from official government documents as well as publicly owned utility companies. The project’s reporters have only revealed the names of owners in cases that serve the public interest. This includes property owners who have been convicted or accused of crimes, are facing sanctions, or are public officials or their associates, including those accused of corruption or who have kept their properties hidden from the public.

Journalists used the data as a starting point to explore the landscape of foreign property ownership in Dubai. They spent months verifying the identities of the people who appeared in the leaked data, as well as confirming their ownership status, using official records, open-source research, and other leaked datasets. Reporters have only included people in the project if their identities could be independently confirmed through other sources. Dubai’s official land registry was also used to ascertain whether individuals appearing in the data remain property owners. In some cases, reporters could not determine current ownership status, usually because a property had been recently sold. In those cases, extra efforts were made to confirm that the person did own property in Dubai, including combing through real-estate transactions and rental databases. — Agencies

## Putin to visit China in first foreign trip since re-election

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin will visit China this week, both countries announced, using the first foreign trip of his new six-year term to underscore the deepening partnership with China’s Xi Jinping. China and Russia declared a “no limits” partnership in February 2022 when Putin visited Beijing just days before he sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine.

“At the invitation of Chinese President Xi Jinping, Vladimir Putin will pay a state visit to China on May 16-17 as his first foreign trip after taking office,” the Kremlin said on Tuesday. China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Hua Chunying said in a statement that the two will discuss “bilateral ties, cooperation in various fields, and international and regional issues of common interest”.

It will be Putin’s second visit in just over six months to China, an economic lifeline for Russia after Western nations imposed sanctions over its military offensive in Ukraine. China has rebuffed Western criticism of its ties with Russia, but their economic partnership and military cooperation have come under increasing scrutiny in the West.

The United States’ latest punitive measures, announced this month, targeted more than 280 entities in their latest effort to paralyse Russia’s military and industrial capabilities, including 20 firms based in China and Hong Kong. The US casts China as its biggest competitor and Russia as its largest nation-state threat while US President Joe Biden argues that this century will be defined by an existential contest between democracies and autocracies.

Putin and Xi share a broad worldview, which sees the West as decadent and in decline just as China challenges US supremacy in everything from quantum computing and synthetic biology to espionage and hard military power. During the visit, Putin will meet Chinese Premier Li Qiang to discuss economic cooperation. — Aljazeera

# Pakistan rejects India’s baseless claims

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Tuesday urged the Indian politicians to cease dragging Pakistan into their domestic politics for electoral gains and to handle sensitive strategic matters with the utmost caution.

“We call upon the international community to take note of Indian leadership’s belligerent rhetoric, which poses a grave threat to regional peace and stability,” Spokesperson Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, said in a press statement, in response to media queries regarding a series of Pakistan-related remarks made recently by the Indian Prime Minister, External Affairs Minister and other cabinet members. The spokesperson said that they were witnessing an alarming surge in anti-Pakistan rhetoric from various Indian leaders amidst the ongoing Lok Sabha election campaign.

“We outrightly reject these irresponsible statements, which cover a wide array of topics including the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, counter-terrorism efforts, state of bilateral relations, and nuclear capa-

bilities,” it was added. Regrettably, the spokesperson said these statements reflected an unhealthy and entrenched obsession with Pakistan and revealed a deliberate intent to exploit hyper-nationalism for electoral gains.

These also signified a desperate attempt to deflect attention from mounting domestic and international criticism, she added. “The bravado and jingoism exhibited by Indian leaders expose a reckless and extremist mindset. This mindset calls into question India’s capacity to be a responsible steward of its strategic capability,” the spokesperson maintained.

On the other hand, she further said the purpose of Pakistan’s strategic capability was to safeguard its sovereignty and defend its territorial integrity. “Pakistan has also clearly demonstrated its resolve to defend itself in the past, and would not hesitate to do so in the future should the Indian side choose to embark on a misadventure,” it was asserted.

Just a few months ago, Pakistan exposed details of India’s campaign of extrajudicial and transnational

assassinations on Pakistani soil and India’s continuous emphasis on its readiness to take aggressive actions within Pakistan constituted a tacit admission of guilt. Regarding the inflammatory rhetoric about Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan reiterated that historical facts, legal principles, moral considerations, and ground realities refuted India’s baseless claims. “Jammu and Kashmir remains an internationally-recognized disputed territory, and the relevant UN Security Council resolutions clearly mandate a plebiscite under UN auspices for its final determination.

No amount of inflated Indian statements can change this reality. India should, therefore, focus on implementing these resolutions instead of indulging in fantasies of grandeur,” it was reiterated. The spokesperson emphasized that vision of peace, progress, and prosperity in South Asia could only be realized through the peaceful resolution of all outstanding disputes, including Jammu and Kashmir, and a shift from confrontation to cooperation.

# Enlisting PTI leaders in PNIL: PHC seeks reply

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) ordered federal government along with Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) for submission of comments within 7 days regarding inclusion of Provincial Minister Arshad Ayub and former minister Taimour Salim Jaghra in the Provisional National Identification List (PNIL), on Tuesday.

PHC divisional bench comprised of Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Syed Arshad Ali heard Arshad Ayub plea while a two-member bench comprising Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Shakeel Ahmed heard the case filed by Taimour Saleem Jaghra respectively.

The counsel Ali Azcem advocate argued that Arshad

Ayub is provincial minister and political leader wanting to go aboard but being stopped at the airport as enlisted in PNIL. He argued for removal of Arshad Ayub name from PNIL.

Director Legal FIA Abdul Rehman Afridi requested for provision of time to file a response, which was granted by the court. In the case of Taimour Saleem Jaghra, the court expressed surprise that his name was included in the PNIL despite obtained bail in three cases. Meanwhile, PHC ordered federal government and FIA to submit reply within 7 days and adjourned the hearing until May 21.

PHC dispose-off PTI’s harassment plea: PHC divisional bench comprising of Chief Justice Peshawar High Court Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Sahibzada

Asadullah disposed of a petition filed by Advisor to Chief Minister on Zakat and Ushr Mashaal Azam Yusufzai against the harassment of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) workers at the PHC gate.

PHC observed that the situation has changed completely since the elections on February 8 and asked why the petitioners were still seeking relief from the court when they (PTI) have their own government in the province.

Moreover, in another case, a two-member bench comprising Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Shakeel Ahmed directed the Pakistan Bar Council to hear the appeal of Mashaal Azam Yusufzai against the suspension of his license to practice law.