

4 die of heatstroke in Sindh

HYDERABAD (PPI): Four people have died due to exposure to heatwave in Hyderabad and Jamshoro in Sindh. In Hyderabad, two policemen passed away within three days due to extreme heat. Rizwan Sheikh, an official deput- ed at a local court, and an ASI from Qasimabad police station died due to heatstroke. A police spokesperson claimed that Rizwan's death was not due to heatstroke.



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ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Buddhist Monks led by Minister of Budhassasana and Religious Affairs of Sri Lanka Vidura Wickramanayaka called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

## PM highlights ancient heritage of Pakistan

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday highlighted that Pakistan was proud of its ancient Buddhist heritage, which flourished in the northwest Pakistan in the shape of Gandhara art and culture, over two thousand years ago.

He underscored the importance that his government attached to interfaith harmony. The prime minister expressed these views during a meeting with a delegation of esteemed Buddhist leaders that called on him. The delegation is visiting Pakistan to attend a symposium and an exhibition titled "From Gandhara to the World," organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The delegation included Sri Lanka's Minister for Buddhadasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs Vidura Wikramanayaka, Most Venerable Thich Duc Tuan from Vietnam, Most Venerable Anil Sakya from Thailand and Dr Keshabman Shakya from Nepal. Minister for Religious Affairs Ch. Salik Hussain, Minister for Information and Broadcasting and Cultural Heritage Attaullah Tarar, SAPM Syed Tariq Fatemi also attended the meeting.

The prime minister warmly welcomed the delegation and expressed his gratitude for their participation in the symposium, being held in connection with the 'Vesak Day' that commemorates the birth, enlightenment and passing away of Lord Buddha. He also acknowledged the valuable contributions of the Buddhist scholars and monks to the promotion of interfaith harmony and understanding.

During the meeting, the prime minister and the delegation discussed ways to strengthen interfaith dialogue and cooperation, as well as opportunities for cultural and academic exchanges between Pakistan and the Buddhist majority countries. "The meeting concluded with a resolve to continue exploring avenues for mutual understanding and cooperation, and to work together towards a more harmonious and

peaceful world. In that connection, the possibility of establishing a joint forum for dialogue and collaboration was especially discussed," it was added.

The Buddhist leaders appreciated the prime minister's commitment to fostering a culture of inclusivity and respect for all religions. They also commended Pakistan's efforts to preserve and promote its Buddhist heritage sites and cultural artifacts. The delegation members showed their keen desire to collaborate with Pakistan in preserving and promoting Buddhist heritage in Pakistan.

**On UN Peacekeepers Day, PM lauds Blue Helmets' contributions to peace:** As the world community observed the International Day of UN Peacekeepers on Wednesday, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif paid tribute to their services saying that the UN missions had been critical in maintaining peace and protecting civilians in conflict zones.

According to the United Nations, since 1948, more than two million uniformed and civilian personnel have helped countries in transition from war to peace. Today, more than 70,000 peacekeepers serve in 11 missions deployed in hotspots around the world.

Besides paying tribute to the service and sacrifice of peacekeepers, the Day also honours more than 4,000 peacekeepers who have lost their lives serving for peace. Prime Minister Shehbaz expressed special gratitude for the Pakistani peacekeepers who had made significant contributions. "230,000 military personnel, including our brave Pakistani female peacekeepers, have made the nation proud for 64 years of our commitment to the UN peacekeeping. Among these were 181 martyrs who sacrificed their lives for global peace, we also pay tribute to them. Their selfless act of courage and sacrifice will forever be etched in our hearts," he wrote on his X timeline. The prime minister reiterated Pakistan's commitment to its pursuit of peace and justice and to building a future "where peace prevails and humanity thrives."

## Poet Farhad arrested by AJK police, AGP tells IHC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Attorney General for Pakistan, Mansoor Usman Awan, Wednesday informed the Islamabad High Court regarding the whereabouts of missing Kashmiri poet Ahmed Farhad.

According to the AGP, the poet has been "arrested and currently in police custody" in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The AGP revealed the information during the hearing of a petition seeking the recovery of the poet. Urooj Zainab, Farhad's wife who moved IHC on May 15, sought her

husband's recovery and requested the court to identify, investigate, and prosecute those responsible for his disappearance.

The plea was heard by Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani, while human rights lawyer Iman Mazari is representing Zainab in the case. A report by the DhirKot Kashmir police station was also presented before the court.

In conversation with journalists outside the IHC, Federal Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar said the police is investigating the Kashmiri poet's case. "Ahmad Farhad is in Azad

Kashmir, I assisted on constitutional matters as a judicial assistant," he said, explaining his presence at the court today.

Farhad, known for his defiant prose, was allegedly abducted from his house on May 14. During the hearing of the case on May 21, AGP Awan assured the court about rescuing and recovering the poet following the IHC orders. "[We] will do whatever it takes. [We] will rescue and recover [Farhad]," the AGP said while addressing the IHC judge and taking the responsibility to look into the matter.

## Pentagon discusses ISIS-K threat, US-Pakistan cooperation

Jalil Afridi

WASHINGTON DC: Major General Patrick Ryder, the Pentagon spokesperson, emphasized that ISIS-K poses a significant threat along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and that this threat should be consistently taken seriously.

He mentioned that combating ISIS is integral to the US national defense strategy. General Ryder's comments came in response to an inquiry from the *Frontier Post*. He further noted the ongoing agreement between Pakistan and the US to combat terrorism, affirming that cooperation will persist.

In response to another question from the *Frontier Post* regarding Afia Siddiqui, who has been imprisoned in the US for the past 15 years, General Ryder acknowledged his awareness of the case, which he stated is currently under the purview of the US Justice Department. *The Frontier Post* has also previously raised Siddiqui's case on humanitarian grounds at the US State Department.

## LPG price slashed

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The price of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) plunged by Rs70 per kilogram as surplus stock puts pressure on prices.

The new price of LPG has been fixed at Rs180 per kg as previously it was sold for Rs250 in Pakistan. The development comes after Oil & Gas Development Company (OGDCL) has reduced the production cost following the arrival of three ships carrying imported LPG. The prices are expected to go see another dip in coming days as another ship is set to dock at Karachi port in two or three days. As inflation has been on a decline during the current calendar year, the Finance Division expects the CPI for May to drop further and stay between 12.5-13.5 range, thus boosting the hopes for interest rate cuts – considered a must for reviving Pakistan's economy.

# The Frontier Post

## Petrol price likely to reduce

ISLAMABAD (INP): Petrol and diesel prices are expected to decline by up to Rs5 per litre in the upcoming fortnightly review. The Petroleum Division sources said that per litre price of petrol is likely to go down by Rs5 while diesel is expected to be slashed by Rs4 per litre. However, they said the next two days are important regarding any change in the fuel prices as the Ogra will forward its summary to the Finance Division on May 31.

## 28 killed as coach overturns in Washuk

F.P. Report

TURBAT: As many as 28 people, including women and children, were killed when a coach heading from Turbat to Quetta met with an accident at Washuk early Wednesday morning.

As many as 17 passengers, including the driver, were also injured in the horrific accident which witnesses said was caused by a tyre burst which led to the bus carrying 45 passengers to overturn due to overspeeding. The driver lost control of the vehicle which plunged into a deep ravine near Basima Town in Washuk city of Balochistan.

The rescue personnel shifted the bodies and the injured to a local hospital.

Basima Assistant Commissioner Ismail Mengal confirmed that the accident was caused by a tyre burst which led to the vehicle overturned and fell into the ravine. Mengal said the dead and wounded were shifted to Civil Hospital where condition of six of the passengers was said to be serious.

Mengal said injured people were being shifted to Quetta after giving them first-aid and they have requested the provincial government to provide a helicopter for shifting the injured. The dead bodies were being kept in Civil Hospital for identification, the AC added.

"The driver was navigating a turn in a mountainous area when the vehicle lost control and fell into a ravine," Ismail Mengal later told a foreign news agency. "We are still investigating the cause of the incident. It could



be that the driver fell asleep or was speeding, which led to the accident," he added. Noor Ullah, chief doctor at Civil Hospital Basima, told media that 27 bodies were taken there, including three women and two children. Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bughti on Wednesday expressed heartfelt grief and sorrow over the loss of previous lives in a road accident near Basima area of the province.

In a statement issued by the Chief Minister's Secretariat, Bughti conveyed condolences to the bereaved family members. He said that he fully shared the grief of bereaved family members.

Praying for the early recuperation of the injured of the accident, he directed the relevant authorities to provide the best treatment facilities to the injured of the accident. It is pertinent to mention here that 28 persons, including women and children, died and 24 others sustained injuries, after

Quetta-bound passenger bus coming from Turbat fell from a bridge in Basima area of district Washuk. Assistant Commissioner Basima, Muhammad Ismail Mengal said that the bodies and injured were taken to the Basima Hospital. Medical Superintendent Basima Hospital, Dr. Nurullah said that among the dead were three women and a child.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed his deep grief over the loss of lives in a tragic traffic accident in Balochistan's Washuk area.

The prime minister prayed to Allah Almighty for peace for the departed souls and sympathised with bereaved families. Praying for the swift recovery of the injured, he instructed the authorities concerned to extend the best possible medical treatment to them. "We stand by the grieved families in this hour of distress and express heartfelt sympathies with them," he remarked.

## Power outages: People take to streets amid heatwave

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Troubled citizens took to the streets across several parts of the country on Wednesday due to the non-availability of electricity amid extreme temperatures. Protests have broken out in numerous cities, including Karachi and Peshawar, over the past few days as the citizens' lives are having a hard time due to the prolonged loadshedding. Severe heat has also slapped several cities, with extreme temperatures expected in the days to come.

In Karachi, the residents of Golimar protested for more than two hours, blocking the road, which led to a severe traffic jam. However, they later dispersed, allowing the traffic to flow. Citizens, troubled due to loadshedding, in Khyber district's Landi Kotal, stormed a grid station. The angry protesters entered the grid station and staged a sit-in. The protesters demanded an end to load shedding, which was taking place for more than 20 hours.

In the Chilas area of Gilgit-Baltistan, protests against unannounced loadshedding were also held at several places and a shutdown strike was observed by traders. In Balochistan's Naseerabad area, citizens took to the streets against 12-hour loadshedding. In Usta Muhammad, citizens protested by burning tyres and also blocked the highway.

Meanwhile, in Multan, power suppliers are observing loadshedding of four to eight hours. Students attempting their intermediate examinations in nine districts of Sindh were also not spared as the power supply to exam centres was also being cut. In the Matiari district, loadshedding of 12-18 hours is

being observed. The maximum temperature was recorded in Karachi today at 41.5° and even in such extreme heat, electricity has been cut off for 10 hours in different areas.

The development came a day after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed the authorities concerned to minimise the ongoing loadshedding in different areas through better load management, considering public relief in scorching weather.

The prime minister, chairing a meeting on load management and power theft, reiterated that the government would strictly deal with the power thieves and that the ongoing mission against them would be taken to the logical end. For Karachi, the sole power supplier Karachi-Electric has said that if the citizens do not pay their bills, it cannot ensure constant provision of electricity.

## ASI gunned down; funeral prayer offered

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: An Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) of Peshawar police was martyred and a passerby injured after unknown assailants opened fire in the Sarband area of the provincial capital on Wednesday.

Police said ASI Haji Ali Akbar, son of Akbar Khan, was on his way to duty on his motorcycle when unknown assailants fired at him, killing him on the scene. Another passerby also sustained bullet injuries in the firing. The martyred ASI Ali Akbar

was deputed at the PAL office in Hayatabad.

SP Cantt said police have collected evidence from the crime scene and initiated a large-scale search operation in the area to arrest the perpetrators.

The funeral of Assistant Sub-Inspector Haji Akbar was held with full state honours at Malik Saad Shaheed Police Lines. The funeral was attended by Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Akhtar Hayat Khan Gandapur, CCPO Syed Ashfaq Anwar, SSP Operations Kashif Zulfikar,

Coordination Muhammad Waqas Khan, SSP Investigation Sajjad Ahmad Sahibzada, SP Headquarters Rahim Hussain, divisional SPs, SDPOs, as well as a large number of the martyr's family members and police officers.

During the ceremony, police officers laid floral wreaths on the martyr's coffin, and a well-disciplined police contingent presented a salute. IG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Akhtar Hayat Khan Gandapur expressed condolences to the martyr's family.

## Economic stability gains ground

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Finance Ministry has said signs of economy stability are becoming more evident. In its monthly economic update and outlook report, the Finance Ministry states that the GDP growth is on the recovery path while inflation continues its steady decline.

Fiscal consolidation efforts are apparent from the positive primary balance, and the resilience of the external sector is evident by the positive current account balance. According to the report, agriculture has emerged as a main driver of economic growth in the current fiscal year, registering growth of 6.25 percent.

Large Scale Manufacturing (LSM) growth is expected to remain moderately positive on average throughout the second half of the current fiscal year. The CPI inflation stood at 17.3 percent on a year-on-year basis in April this year as compared to 36.4 percent of the corresponding period last year. On the fiscal front, the revenue growth outpaced the growth in expenditures during the first nine months of current fiscal year. Both tax and non-tax collection grew significantly by 29.3 percent and 90.7 percent, respectively.

On the external front, the current account narrowed down significantly, recording a deficit of 0.2 billion dollars compared to last year's 3.9 billion dollars, primarily due to an improved trade balance. In April this year, the current account surplus was recorded at 491 million dollars.

## SC takes exception to British envoy's remarks on Pakistan's general polls

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court has severely criticised British High Commissioner to Pakistan Jane Marriot's recent speech targeting the South Asian nation's general elections in 2024, calling on the UK to learn from past mistakes and move on.

The top court's registrar, in a letter to the envoy, said that her criticism of a certain political party being sidelined by stripping it of its symbol was unfounded as it did not follow the law. The letter, drawing attention to the court's role, said elections were required to be held within 90 days of the completion of the tenure of the national and provincial assemblies.

However, they did not take place because then-president Arif Alvi and the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) were at odds regarding who was empowered to announce the election date. "The matter was

resolved in just 12 days by the Supreme Court, and general elections were held throughout Pakistan on 8 February 2024," the registrar said.

Previously, it mentioned, that many wanting to contest elections in Pakistan faced a lifetime ban because they were not considered honest and trustworthy (Sadiq and Ameen) by the Supreme Court. However, a larger seven-member bench overruled the earlier decision, it said, holding that it did not conform to the Constitution and the law. The registrar said that the law enacted by Parliament (Elections Act, 2017) requires democracy with-in political parties via the holding of periodic intra-party elections; to forestall autocracy or even dictatorship within them.

To ensure compliance with this democratic principle the law stipulates, it said, that if a political party does not hold intra-party elections, then it would not be eligible for an

election symbol. "A political party (which had itself voted in this law) did not hold the mandated intra-party elections. The Supreme Court reiterated what the law stipulated," the letter said. Therefore, the registrar said: "...your Excellency's criticism with regard to this decision, with utmost respect, was unjustified".

It is worthy to mention that it was upon the current chief justice's assumption of office that cases of public importance began to be broadcast live for the first time in Pakistan's history. This allowed the public at large to view Supreme Court proceedings in their entirety, with transparency in regard to how decisions came to be made. The decision regarding intra-party elections and party symbols was one of many to be broadcast live as such. Updating Britain regarding a recent ruling, it stated: "It was gratifying that your Excellency had repeatedly stressed

the importance of open societies' which you stated are necessary for vibrant democracies. You will be pleased to learn that the Supreme Court has recognised the right to information and vigorously applied it to itself; a copy of its decision is attached as 'D'".

"Persisting in the violent undemocratic mistakes of the past condemns present and future generations, and perpetuates cycles of violence. Let us embrace truth, which sets us free," it added. Raising some questions, the top court's letter read: "Should the overthrow of the elected democratic government of Mohammad Mossadegh in 1953, to capture Iranian oil, not be revealed after over seven decades of cover-up? Will this not prove therapeutic for the perpetrator and the victim? Will it not engender trust, possibly friendship, and peace?"

"Ceding to what it described as

'Jewish Zionist aspirations', the British government wrote to an individual, its own citizen, on 2 November 1917 conveying its decision to establish a settler-colonial state. This decision was not voted upon by the people of the area who were impacted by it, not even by your own. The British government, and not Parliament, unilaterally decided it. The Balfour Declaration became the foundation on which an ethnic state was established. Those who had always lived there were excluded from this ethnic state; contained in ghettos, humiliated, deprived, brutalised, maimed and killed."

Let us step back from the precipice of settler-ethnic superiority. Deaths of thousands of children and many thousands more innocents may unjustifiably come to define a people, which would be an abomination. Let us all stand up and be counted for equality, peace and humanity, the apex court

stressed. "Let us be honest and acknowledge past mistakes in the spirit of openness, advocated by your Excellency. And, jettison the unholo concept of ethnic superiority, and its concomitant humanity — an inferior humanity."

"The Supreme Court of Pakistan has acknowledged the mistakes made in its past, addressed them in detail, and taken steps to ensure that they are not repeated. Since the Government of His Majesty King Charles III has stressed the need for open societies and democracy, and offered criticism on the decisions of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, reciprocity would presumably be acceptable." "This letter is written on instructions of the Chief Justice of Pakistan, who extends to you and the people of your country his yearning for openness and democracy, and his best regards," it concluded.



Farmers will be issued Benazir Hari Cards, says Sindh CM

Governor reviews progress on PSDP projects

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that farmers would be issued Benazir Hari Cards benefiting from various government programmes to consolidate Hari's information for transparent and efficient implementation of interventions.

This he said while presiding over a meeting of the agriculture department to firm up proposals for the issuance of Benazir Hari Card to growers on Wednesday. The meeting was attended by Minister Agriculture Mohammad Bux Mahar, Secretary Agriculture Rafiq Burio, Secretary Finance Fayaz Jatoi, Secretary CM Raheem Shaikh and others.

Shah said that his party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari had directed him to launch the Benazir Hari Card so that growers could be supported for the development of agriculture which was the backbone of the national economy. "Through the card, the farmers would be able to take benefit from various government schemes which would be announced from time to time," he said.

The CM was told that the Sindh

Cabinet sub-Committee on Hari Card Card on 2nd April 2024 under the Minister of Agriculture. The Minister for Irrigation & Food and Senior Member Board of Revenue (SMBR) were members of the committee while the secretary of agriculture (Secretary of Committee) reviewed and finalised the mechanism of the "Benazir Hari Card" and submitted detailed recommendations before the Cabinet.

The committee recommended the registration of farmers and engaging Sindh Bank and Commercial Bank through direct contracting. Eligibility: All agricultural landholders would be eligible regardless of their landholding size. The process can commence by issuing cards to over 150,000 verified farmers under the Wheat Seed Cash Reimbursement Program. The farmers have valid documents such as Form -VII verified by the revenue department.

Only one owner can register for jointly owned land, provided they produce a No Objection Affidavit from the other joint owners or heirs, as verified by NADRA and the concerned Mukhtiarkar.

Farmers with multiple landholdings would be eligible for one Card with cumulative landholding. Agriculture Department to engage top-notch human resource technology firms to develop required Software, Apps and other digital infrastructure through the Sindh Water Agriculture Transformation Project (SWAT) by taking the World Bank on board.

The chief minister said that a comprehensive Benazir Hari Card system would be developed, outlining specific roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders - including departments of Revenue and Agriculture, Banks, and Beneficiaries and establishing a streamlined registration process.

Mr Shah said that a robust, IT-based system with reliable backup support would facilitate Benazir Hari Card registration, clearly defining roles and responsibilities at each stage of the process. He added that the Revenue Dept would upload data into the Agriculture dept's web/app, including required documents.

The CM directed the Agriculture Dept to reach out to landholders to collect information

such as CNIC, address and Other landholdings. He said that the agriculture dept and BoR officials would jointly visit farms, Deh by Deh, to Geo-tag locations, and verify details entered in the app. The Assistant Commissioner/Deputy Director would authenticate farmer registration data and conduct random checks on entries from each Deh in their jurisdiction.

Mr Shah said that regular database reviews by the department would be done to identify missing data, errors, and anomalies. He directed the Administrative dept would rectify issues before card issuance. "Verified landholder data will be sent to a partner Bank for NADRA verification and Issuance of Benazir Hari Card," he said and added that the bank will deliver cards to the Agriculture Department (Taluka level) and the department would hand over cards to farmers.

The CM decided that the Benazir Hari Card functionality would be versatile allowing farmers to make banking transactions (deposits, withdrawals, balance checks, transfers) and subsidy access through ATMs.

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori presided over an important meeting related to the ongoing PSDP projects in the province on Wednesday. Federal Minister Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui and officials concerned were present in the meeting.

Governor was briefed on the progress of the projects while obstacles in the completion of these projects were also discussed.

Governor asked the authorities concerned to

present him report about PSDP projects of the province with special reference to projects underway in Hyderabad district.

Kamran Tessori asked the offices concerned to ensure timely completion of these projects and obstacles must be removed at all cost.

Tessori said he will soon visit the project sites to review progress of the ongoing projects and also witness the completed schemes.

Governor vowed that all

possible cooperation will be extended for timely completion of the PSDP projects.

Governor was briefed that efforts were afoot to ensure timely completion of these schemes so that people could be benefited.

Federal Minister Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, Chief Engineer PWD Mehmood Alam, Said Rehman Khan, Amir Rafiq Memon, Faraz Saleem, Imran Shams and others were also attended the meeting.

JICA delegation visits PDMA office

LAHORE (APP): A delegation from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) visited the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Punjab office here on Wednesday. The delegation also included officers from the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD). The JICA delegation toured the PDMA control room, where Director General Irfan Ali Kathia provided an overview of the authority's operations. He explained that the control room maintains 24-hour communication with all districts, ensuring effective coordination during emergencies. The briefing highlighted the ongoing relief activities addressing the current heat wave in Punjab.

The DG Irfan Ali Kathia emphasized that all available resources are being utilized to manage the heat wave situation. He also described the robust communication system in place with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), PMD, and other relevant bodies. This system enables the issuance of advance warnings and alerts for heat waves, rain floods, and other natural disasters.

PDMA's efforts in rehabilitating areas affected by natural calamities, as well as their preparedness for various challenges such as floods, COVID-19, dengue, drought, smog, and heat waves, were also discussed. The authority's role in helping farmers by estimating crop damage due to climate change-induced extreme weather was noted as a priority.

The JICA delegation expressed their admiration for PDMA's operational efficiency and coordination with other institutions. They pledged to provide all possible support to PDMA Punjab, recognizing that no country can tackle natural calamities alone.

Lahore Police arrest 8,841 POs so far this year

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Police have arrested 8,841 proclaimed offenders (POs), 14,154 court absconders, and 4,040 target offenders in various operations against lawbreakers this year. According to a Lahore police spokesperson, during various operations against lawbreakers, the Cantonment Division arrested 1,887 POs, 2,116 court absconders and 632 target offenders. In Civil Lines Division, 722 POs, 1,722 court absconders and 235 target offenders were apprehended.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The General Public Notes informed the plot No.85 Sector H (measuring 600 Sq Yds) situated in Engineers cooperative Housing Society Sector D-18 Islamabad was Attended/owned by Mr. Tasadduq Hussain Shahid S/O Mukhtar Haq, Bushra Perveen D/O Mukhtar Haq Makan No 247 Hijazi House Pehalwan Chowk West Bazar Fateh Jang. This office has been in formed that the allotted/owner (Bushra Perveen Reg No.C-11964) of the subject plot, died on 30-05-2023 and the following persons are legal heirs of the deceased 1. Tasadduq Hussain Shahid The above person/legal Heirs have applied to this office for transfer of above plot, if any Bank Financial institution or Person have any objection etc. for transferring the plot, they should contact the Society office within 15 days of the publication of this advertisement and furnish their written objection. After the expiry of said time period no claim will be entertained and the plot shall be transferred in the name of above legal heirs. Honoray Secretary Engineers Cooperative Housing Society Sangiani, Post Office Tarnol, Sector D-18 Islamabad.



KARACHI: A large number of people enjoy bathing in Arabian Sea at Seaview to get some relief from hot weather in Provincial Capital. —APP Photo

Governor pledges constitutional role

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan has reaffirmed his commitment to play a constitutional role for betterment of the province.

During a meeting at the Governor's House with delegations from the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Sargodha, the People's Students Federation (PSF) Punjab, and the PPP Minority Wing, he emphasised the importance of setting aside internal differences

to work tirelessly for the country's development and stability.

In his address, the governor welcomed the party delegations, stressing that his role transcends party lines and that he serves all of the province.

He reiterated that the Governors' House remains accessible to both workers and the general public.

"The PPP holds its workers in high esteem," he said, promising that the issues raised by the delegations would be

addressed promptly.

Key figures at the meeting included General Secretary PPP Central Punjab Hassan Murtaza, Information Secretary Shehzad Saeed Cheema, Tasneem Qureshi from Sargodha, PSF President Musa Khokhar, and Imran Athwal and Edwin Sohotra from the PPP Minority Wing.

The governor's inclusive approach and dedication to public service were well-received by the

attendeess, underscoring a collective effort towards the province's progress.

PROPERTIES AVAILABLE FOR RENT

1. Sealed applications from well-reputed Parties/Companies are invited seeking to take the following buildings/plots on rent in different cities.

Sr. No.	Region	Site Name	Open Area (sq ft)	Covered Area (sq ft)	Sr. No.	Region	Site Name	Open Area (sq ft)	Covered Area (sq ft)
1	RTR	Bewal T/E	15,000		13	NTR-II	Abdul Khel Exch	1480	9410
2	RTR	Chao Saidan Shah Exchange	9,200	-	14	NTR-II	Bannu II 1st Floor Exchange	19,000	665
3	RTR	Dhuddial Exchange	5,440	-	15	NTR-II	Bazid Khel	10,065	825
4	RTR	PTCL Colony Dhakoo Road Chakwal 5-Houses	21,760	-	16	NTR-II	Billiang Exchange	18,780	3,000
5	NTR-I	RTIS Peshawar	-	27,601	17	NTR-II	Ghazni Khel Exchange	19,290	2,490
6	NTR-I	RTIS Swat	38,500	17,920	18	NTR-II	Ghul Banda Exchange	10,065	825
7	NTR-I	Banda Kachori	11,669	826	19	HTR	Bagnotar	1,600	825
8	NTR-I	Bara	12,236	-	20	HTR	Besham	24,045	-
9	NTR-I	Behlola	3,000	-	21	HTR	Ghazi	2,060	440
10	NTR-I	Char Banda	10,890	-	22	HTR	Ghazikot	5,296	144
11	NTR-I	Teligram T/E	2,128	-	23	HTR	Harno Exchange	3,200	600
12	NTR-I	Charbagh T/E	1,320	-	24	HTR	Hattar Village	18,095	-

2. Open plots are best suited for marriage halls, service stations, workshops, restaurants & warehouses of pre-fabricated structure (permanent structure is not allowed).
3. Covered areas are best suited for corporate offices, schools and academies.
4. Documents can be collected from the office of the Manager (Estate Ops. & Financials) PTCL House, **F-5/1, Islamabad**, after making a non-refundable cash deposit of **Rs. 200/-** for each site; during office hours **(09:00 AM to 04:00 PM)**. Regional Offices can also issue the documents located in Peshawar, Dera Ismail Khan & Abbottabad.
5. Interested parties can visit the sites during office hours before closing of business on **5th June 2024**.
6. Sealed applications are to be submitted along with CDR/Demand Draft/Pay Order equal to two months quoted rent made in the favor of the Senior Manager Accounts & Payments PTCL, PTCL NEST Office G-8/4, Islamabad. Applications without CDR/Demand Draft/Pay Order or partial amount will not be considered.
7. Unsuccessful bidders' CDR/Demand Draft/Pay Order will be refunded. However, incase the applicant withdraws from the offer PTCL reserves the right to forfeit the payment.
8. Interested Parties/Applicants can deposit sealed applications before **12 June 2024** by 04:00PM, at the office of the Manager (Estate Ops. & Financials) PTCL House, **F-5/1, Islamabad**.
9. Only shortlisted applicant(s) will be called/entertained.
10. PTCL reserves the right to accept/reject any or all applications at any stage without incurring any liability to the affected applicant(s) or any obligations to inform the affected applicant(s) of the ground for PTCL's actions.
11. For complete list of sites please visit PTCL website '**www.ptcl.com.pk**'.

**Note:** All Government Taxes will be applicable and will be paid by the winning applicant.

**Head of People Experience (North)**  
**PTCL House, F-5/1, Islamabad**  
**Contact Number: 051-2270087/ 051-2273188**





PESHAWAR: Director General NADRA Regional Head Office KP Khalid Inayat Ullah called on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi at Governor House.

# KPFSA inspects hospital canteens in province

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority has concluded a two-day special campaign inspecting canteens across major public and private hospitals in the province. Violations against health protocols have incurred hefty fines, with one canteen sealed for irregularities in cooking oil usage. Stringent punitive measures are to be taken against those compromising public health, as directed by the Minister of Food.

According to the spokesperson of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority, detailed inspections were conducted on canteens of 78 district headquarters hospitals, as well as other government and private hospitals across divisions such as Peshawar, Mardan, Malakand, Kohat, DI Khan, and Bannu.

Notably, the campaign was initiated in response to complaints from citizens regarding food quality in hospitals and related food points and hotels. During the campaign, sudden raids were conducted on canteens of both government and private hospitals in various locations.

In Peshawar alone, inspections were carried out at Lady Reading Hospital, Sifat Ghayoor Shaheed Memorial Hospital, Hayatabad Medical Complex, North West General Hospital, and Shaukat Khanum Hospital, among others. Instances of gross negligence were discovered, leading to the sealing of a canteen at Lady Reading Hospital due to extremely unsanitary conditions. Moreover, substantial fines were imposed for violations detected during the inspections.

Further details revealed that samples of oil, milk, salt, and other food items were tested using mobile testing labs.

Substandard cooking oil totaling 10 kilograms and 83 liters was confiscated and disposed of, alongside excess soft drinks and chips. Violations of health standards resulted in fines totaling Rs280,000 levied against the respective owners. Director-General of the Food Authority, Waseem Saeed, commended the inspection teams' efforts, emphasizing a zero-tolerance policy towards health violations and reiterating the commitment to eradicate malpractice in the province.

The Minister of Food, Zahoor Shah, has instructed food safety teams to take strict punitive actions against those endangering public health. No leniency will be shown in this regard, signaling a sustained effort to uphold food standards and protect citizens from health hazards posed by unhygienic practices.

# PIC celebrates International Nurses Day

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar Institute of Cardiology (PIC) honored its dedicated nursing staff with a special ceremony on International Nurses Day, under the theme of 2024 "our nurses our future the economic power of care."

The ceremony was attended by PIC's leadership, including Chief Executive Medical Director Professor Dr. Shahkar Ahmad Shah and Hospital Director Dr. Naimat Shah, the event highlighted the critical contributions of nurses to healthcare.

The ceremony, dedicated to the late nurse Muhammad Abrar, in his memory, the event was marked with simplicity and solemnity. The nurses also took an oath to continue serving humanity and providing excellent care to patients at PIC.

PIC's Director of Nursing, Mr.Afsar Dad, highlighted the invaluable contributions of nurses to the healthcare sector.

Chief Executive Medical Director Professor Dr. Shahkar Ahmad Shah praised the crucial role of nurses, describing them as the backbone of the healthcare sector. He emphasized the pride PIC takes in its nursing staff, whose efforts ensure top-notch services for patients, elevating PIC's standing in the healthcare community.

Hospital Director Dr. Naimat Shah acknowledged the selfless dedication of nurses worldwide, whether in times of peace, war, or pandemics.

He advocated for national honors for nurses, like to other professional fields, to further inspire their commitment to humanitarian service.

To encourage and recognize the efforts of the nursing staff, awards and shields were distributed in various categories. Director Nursing Afsar Dad and Nursing Manager Nazook Bibi received excellence shields as Best Team Leads. Additionally, certificates were awarded to three Assistant Managers, fifteen Head Nurses, four members of the Rapid Response Team, and two nurses from the Infection Control Unit for their outstanding performance.

Furthermore, ten Team Lead Nurses and eighteen other nurses were honored with the Nurse of the Year awards for their exemplary performance and timely response in various wards and units.

# PHC grants bail to alleged smuggler

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Sahibzada Asadullah has granted bail to an accused arrested for allegedly smuggling ice (methamphetamine) 510 grams.

The accused, Ashiq, a resident of Fakirabad, was arrested by the Pahiripura police during a search operation.

According to the prosecution, the police recovered 510 grams of ice-drug from the accused's possession, and a case was registered against him under the Narcotics Act.

The counsel Yousaf Khan Mirzadher and Shahzada Hasnain advocates informed that after his bail application was rejected by the lower court, the accused filed a bail application in the high court.

After hearing the case, the court granted bail to the accused against a surety bond of Rs 100,000 and two sureties, directing him to appear before the trial court on the next date of hearing.

# PBA committed to transforms as Green Peshawar Bar

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The newly elected General Secretary of the Peshawar Bar Association (PBA) Azhar Ullah Khan advocate has announced that the association is taking swift measures to transform the bar into a "Green Peshawar Bar" to provide a better environment for lawyers to perform their duties. He expressed these views during introductory meeting with journalists, where other newly elected cabinet members, including Press Secretary Afzal Khan Baba Khel Advocate, were also present.

PBA general secretary said that the entire cabinet is committed to serving the lawyers' community, prioritizing their welfare and well-being above political considerations. He emphasized that their goal is to provide maximum facilities and a better environment for lawyers during their tenure.

He revealed that under the leadership of Peshawar Bar President Amjad Ali Khan Marwat, the cabinet is working on multiple projects for the betterment of the lawyers' community. He mentioned that practical steps are being taken to implement the "Green Peshawar Bar" project, which includes shifting the bar's electricity supply to solar power, thereby reducing electricity bills and providing uninterrupted power supply to lawyers.

Additionally, measures are being taken to facilitate the visitors coming to the bar, including the establishment of a school on the pattern of Army Public School to provide quality education to lawyers' children. The cabinet is also considering setting up a hospital to provide better medical facilities to lawyers and their families.

# Governor discusses provincial rights with JI leadership

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi visited the central office of Jamaat-e-Islami Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. During the visit, he met with the Amir of Jamaat-e-Islami Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Professor Mohammad Ibrahim Khan, and discussed various matters, including the political situation of the province.

The meeting primarily focused on finding solutions to the financial crisis in the province. There were discussions about negotiating with the federal government for provincial rights and presenting a strong case before the federal government.

In addition to financial matters, the meeting also touched upon issues related to water, electricity, gas, and other essential services. Governor Kundi expressed his intention to raise a collective voice on relevant forums through effective consultation with political parties to ensure the province's rights are safeguarded.

The meeting was attended by Jamaat-e-Islami Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Secretary General Abdul Wasay, Deputy Emirs Sabir Hussain Awan and Enayatullah Khan, along with other provincial officials. Members of the Provincial Assembly

role in advocating for the rights of the province by organizing comprehensive data and statistics regarding provincial rights at the Governor House. Governor Kundi expressed his commitment to holding meetings with leaders of all political parties to discuss provincial rights and presenting a strong case before the federal government.

Ahmed Karim Kundi, Ehsanullah Khan Mehsud, and Arbab Zarak also participated in the Islamic Center's visit alongside the governor.

**KP Governor directs establishment of NADRA citizens facilitation centres at tehsil level**

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Faisal Karim Kundi here Wednesday directed the Director General NADRA Regional Head Office KP, Khalid Inayatullah to establish citizens facilitation centres at tehsil level to facilitate the locals population of the province.

The Governor passed these directives during a meeting with DG NADRA here at Governor House. They discussed the ongoing CNIC registration campaign from NADRA Mobile Van in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and NADRA services provided to citizens including issuance of CNIC and attestation process.

The Director General NADRA said that every possible services are being provided to the citizens of KP at NADRA offices and open katcheris (open courts) for resolution of people complaints are being arranged in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Besides establishment of national registration center (NRC) at Panyala in DI Khan, he said that upgradation of NRC at Paharpur and setting up of new NRC at Khasoor would provide best possible services to the areas people.

The Governor directed establishment of passport offices at NADRA Offices in KP.

The Governor said residents of rural areas especially senior citizens and women were confronted to problems in renovation and registration of CNICs and emphasized of mobile registration services at morning and evening in rural areas. He also directed simplification of collective services including acquiring of identity cards of NADRA to facilitate people.

# Chanzeb for promoting Sethi House as ancient architecture masterpiece

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister on Tourism and Culture, Zahid Chan Zeb, visited the ancient Sethi House at Mohallah Sethian downtown Peshawar near Chowk Yadgar and expressed his admiration for its glorious beauty and historical significance.

He directed the authorities to promote the building as an ancient architecture masterpiece and tourist destination and to organize cultural events and exhibitions in it to showcase its importance world over.

He said the present PTI-led provincial government is seriously working on schemes to ensure the importance and preserving cultural heritage and promoting tourism in the province, as he said it could be the big source of income and earning foreign exchange in case of attracting tourists at international level over here.

He also mentioned the efforts of the government to restore and protect historical sites like Sethi House, which is a testament to the rich cultural heritage of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Advisor Tourism said that Sethi House is a centuries old historic building in heart of Peshawar that has been declared a national heritage site.

He said the building is a masterpiece of Mughal and Central Asian architecture and dates back to the ends of 18th century.

He evinced keen interest in the library, research center, artistic bedroom rooms, lockers rooms, basements, the well of cold potable water that provided water to every storey of the 6 floors glorious building. He was astonished to know that the water pond at lawn of the building relected light of the moon to each and every room wherein the colourful glassworks in the ceilings was making the rooms and the building illuminated all over the night.

Zahid Chanzeb directed the authorities concerned to promote the Sethi House as a tourist destination even through virtual tourism and to organize cultural events and exhibitions to showcase its importance in nook and corner of the world.

# Minister assures measures taken to address varsities issues

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: A delegation of the All Pakistan Universities Academic Staff Association from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa held a meeting with the Provincial Minister for Higher Education, Meena Khan Afridi, at his office in the Civil Secretariat, Peshawar.

The delegation, comprising the President of the Association, Dr. Feroz Shah, General Secretary Zafar Khattak, Executive Member Dr. Furmanullah, and others, briefed the provincial minister on the current issues facing universities in the province. During the meeting, the delegation presented various suggestions and demands to the provincial minister.

On this occasion, the Provincial Minister assured the delegation that measures are being taken to address the prevailing issues in universities on a priority basis.

The Minister reiterated the commitment to stand by the universities and assured that every effort would be made to resolve their issues.

He stated that steps are being taken to transfer government universities and colleges to the solar system and introduce a paperless system in higher education institutions, which will significantly improve efficiency.

Emphasizing the promotion of quality education, he said that in line with market demands, there is a need to introduce subjects in universities that can benefit students. In conclusion, the meeting concluded with both parties expressing optimism about the ongoing efforts to improve the educational landscape in the province.

# Right to Public Service Commission organizes seminar

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Under the auspices of the Right to Public Services Commission (RTPSC), a public awareness seminar was organized for students of Frontier Law College, Peshawar.

The seminar saw participation from a large number of students and esteemed faculty members.

Commissioner RTPSC Muhammad Asim Imam in his speech on the occasion briefed the students on the objectives and legal regulations of the commission.

He answered questions from participating students and emphasized that collectively, they are committed to serving the nation and the country.

He reiterated that access to basic public services is the legal right of every citizen, and the commission is dedicated to raising awareness among the public regarding their rights by engaging efficient individuals from society. Principal of the college, Justice Zahid Yahiya Gillani, also briefed the audience on relevant laws. Director Akhtar Ali Khan expressed gratitude to the participants and representatives of the commission.

In his concluding remarks, Justice Muhammad Asim Imam stated that it is through the efforts of the Right to Public Services Commission that the public has been made aware of their fundamental rights to such an extent. Awareness of basic laws empowers the public to assert their rights effectively.

# Distribution of scholarships among children of WWB employees directed

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Labour Department Fazal Shakoor Khan on Monday issued directives to the concerned officers of Workers Welfare Board (WWB) KP to distribute students scholarship funds within a week among the labour and WWB employee's son and daughters who are studying in different universities of the province.

He issued further directives to form 3 zonal committees to expedite the process of scholarship funds distribution while no further delay would be bearable in this regard.

The provincial minister issued these directives in a review meeting of the WWB-KP held at Civil Secretariat Peshawar.

Secretary labour department, secretary WWB, directors and other officials of labour department attended the meeting. The KP labour department minister was briefed on the students scholarship funds.

It is said in the briefing that data of all beneficiaries has been collected for verification process which will be completed very soon and the funds will be distributed immediately. "The scholarship funds will be distributed among all deserving students before 30th June" said in the briefing.

Mr Fazal Shakoor Khan urged the distribution of scholarship funds among deserving students within a week time and informed that no further delay and complaint should come in this regard





## In brief

### 10 tandoor owners arrested F.P. Report

WANA: Assistant Commissioner Lower Waziristan took action against bread sellers in Wana Bazaar and arrested 10 tandoor owners for selling underweight bread at high prices, on Wednesday. Speaking to media representatives, AC Lower Waziristan said that despite strict instructions to sell bread at a reduced price, tandoor owners continued to sell underweight bread at old rates, prompting the district administration to take actions. He said that according to the official price list, 200 grams of bread should be sold for 30 rupees, but the arrested individuals were selling underweight bread to the public. The assistant commissioner warned that cases will be filed against the arrested individuals under the Food Act. He also warned shopkeepers that if they failed to sell food items at official prices, strict action would be taken against them, and prices would be monitored daily to ensure that no difficulties are faced by the poor and tribal people. People have highly appreciated the district administration's action.

### FC restores Mobile Tower F.P. Report

KALAYA: Frontier Corps (FC) North has successfully restored a mobile network tower in Zira village, in Orakzai district, which had been without mobile network facilities for a prolonged period, on Wednesday. Responding to the demands of local residents, Frontier Corps North initiated the tower installation project in collaboration with Jazz Network. The project faced numerous challenges, including land disputes, technical issues, construction difficulties, and the need for approvals from various departments. Despite these obstacles, the Frontier Corps North worked diligently on an emergency basis to ensure the project's completion. The successful installation was made possible through the cooperation of local residents and support from various institutions. To mark this significant achievement, a special ceremony was held in Zira village. The event saw the participation of district administration officials, Frontier Corps North representatives, Jazz Network officials, and local elders. During the ceremony, local elders expressed their gratitude to the Frontier Corps North for their crucial efforts in facilitating the project, highlighting the importance of the restored mobile network for the area's large population. The restoration of the mobile network tower is expected to significantly enhance communication capabilities and improve connectivity for the residents of Zira and surrounding areas.

### Civil society hold protest F.P. Report

SHAHDADKOT: In the city of Lahu Ranik a main city of Qamber Shahdadkot district, the influential ice factory owner and his workers took hostages of Laluranik journalists Khalid Bughio, Dharti TV reporter Rana Khan Mughri and three citizens. According to details, citizens, leaders and workers of political and social organizations in the city, including journalists Muharram Ali Chandio, Khalid Baghio, Comrade Mithal Mughri, Zafar Ali Mughri. A protest rally was held under the leadership of Sajid Ali Tunio, Citizens and journalists participating in the rally raised slogans for the arrest of the accused and a sit-in was held at the bus stop on Larkana Road.



HYDERABAD: Students solving question paper during annual examination of HSSC part II 2024 (Class XII) at Nazareth Girls College.

## Correction in revenue record urged

### F.P. Report

BUNER: The residents point out errors in revenue record as well as demanded provision of compensation to owners, whose land were acquired for roads and bypasses in 'Kuli Katcheri' held, on Wednesday.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Finance Fazal Wahid, Assistant Commissioner Daggar Syed Mehr Ali Shah, Director Agriculture Adalat Khan, TMA Assistant Sadaqat Khan, Forest Officer Said Rahim Khan and heads of other departments were there to directly listen to the problems, difficulties, complaints and objections of the participants.

In the open court, the public complained of several errors in the revenue records and demanded correction. The participants also complained about the problems like slowness in the process of personal property distribution

among families. They complained of delay payment of the lands which were occupied under section four for bypass roads and other purposes. They raised issues like many major link roads and major pathways and waterways have been occupied by influential people.

The participants questioned about the silence of the revenue staff and has been openly objected too. They demanded the administration instead of correcting matters let the people fight among themselves. The participants expressed public opinion regarding non-meter reading, irrigation and forest and many other issues.

ADC and AC on behalf of the heads of other institutions promised to reduce the public problems and difficulties and give relief to the people and hoped that the people will timely bring their problems into the notice of the administrative officers so that immediate relief can be

provided in the light of the orders of the provincial government.

**Class IV employees hold protest:** Class IV employees staged a protest at Daggar Chowk and raised slogans against the budget and demanded the government to increase the salaries of Class IV employees by 200% in proportion to inflation, pay time scale and pension.

Otherwise, the protest will be extended to the provincial and central capitals and they will sit on the roads by protesting in front of the assemblies until the demands are not accepted. Class IV employees District President Khushal Khan and Vice President Ajeeb Ullah in their address expressed commitment that the ongoing protest in favor of the demands will be carried forward according to the instructions of the provincial leadership and every type of sacrifice will be rendered to achieve the goal.

## Tribesmen hold protest against power outage

### F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: The tribesmen got hold of local grid when they forcibly entered into it against excessive power off here tehsil Landi Kotal on Wednesday. Scores of tribal people from political and social organizations gathered at Charwazai point and marched towards the local grid station.

While carrying black flags, they entered the local grid station peacefully and started a demonstration inside the premises of grid station. The grid station crew members fled the scene before the arrival of the protestors.

Speaking on the occasion Tehsil Chairman Haji Shah Khalid, Pakistan People Party (PPP) district chief Shah Rehman, head of Qaumi Masail Committee, Landi Kotal Ilyas Shinwari and others said that last year, the TESCO official had agreed to provide six hours electricity to rural areas but ironically they could not materialize their pledge. Prolong and unscheduled power off has made their lives miserable, they added and said the issue of temporary scarcity of potable water has risen in the area. The protestors vowed that until resuming of electricity as per old schedule i.e. six hours round the clock, they will not give up their protest.

## Five killed in clash

NASEERABAD (INP): At least five tribesmen were killed and three seriously injured in a clash between two groups of the Imrani tribe in the Naseerabad district of Balochistan.

The armed conflict between the two groups of the Imrani tribe turned into an old rivalry on Wednesday. The channel reported that there was an exchange of fire between the residents of Goth Ali Sher Imrani and Goth Zaman Khan Imrani in the limits of Khankot Polie Station in Naseerabad.

## Eight officials suspended on public's complaints

### F.P. Report

MARDAN: All necessary measures have been taken for transparency in the process of wheat procurement in the province. In this regard, eight officials, including a deputy director and two district food controllers have been suspended and action has been taken against them on public complaints.

This was told by Provincial Food Minister Zahir Shah Toru said addressing Meet the Press program at the Press Club Mardan after visiting the warehouses of the Food Department in Mardan. Provincial Minister of Public Health Engineering Malik Pakhtunyar Khan and Member of Provincial Assembly Tariq Mehmood Aryan were also present on this occasion.

The minister said that the process of purchasing wheat in 22 purchase centers of the province is going-on on first-come-first-served basis. CCTV cameras have been installed in all the centers for transparency in the purchase process, while the Secretary Food Office I have regular control room working. Similarly, 267 police personnel have also been deployed at 22 shopping centers. He said that under the vision of founder PTI Imran Khan, under the leadership of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur there is a zero-tolerance policy for corruption and on various complaints a Deputy Director of Food Department, two D.8 officials including FCs have been suspended, on a complaint about a Patwari in Mardan, the Deputy Commissioner has removed him from the wheat procurement process. He said that the target of 51% purchase in Mardan has been achieved.

In response to a question, provincial food minister Zahir Shah Toru said that the provincial government has saved a huge amount of 12 billion rupees in the purchase of wheat and for transparency in the purchase, NAB and revenue, agriculture, anti-corruption officers have also been involved. He said that DFCs buying defective and imported wheat will face disciplinary action.

He said that the purchase process will be completed before June 7. In response to other question, the food minister said that some elements are spreading baseless propaganda against the food department and the provincial government to straighten their own agenda, but we will complete the procurement process in a transparent manner without blackmailing anyone. The provincial food minister said that 29 billion 25 crore rupees have been allocated for the purchase of three lakh metric tons of wheat in the province.

**Clean& Green Pakistan to hold march from Peshawar to Karachi:** Founder of Clean and Green Pakistan Tariq Khan while announcing the start of 2018 cleanup and unity march from Peshawar to Karachi in October, said that the youth should join the nationwide cleaning campaign to present a better image of Pakistan to the world.

Speaking at the Meet the Press program along with Dr. Zahid Khan Yousafzai at Mardan Press Club, prominent social worker Tariq Khan said that it is his mission to keep Pakistan clean and to fulfill this mission he has left the luxurious life abroad. Health problems will be less if there is cleanliness. He said that he started the campaign from 2014 and in the sit-in of a political party he was carrying out the responsibility of picking up garbage

without any reason. I have no political goals, but it was heartbreaking to see educated people throwing garbage and dirt.

He said that there are 48 crore hands of 24 crore population, if every citizen pledges to pick up dirt from his area, then there is no reason why Pakistan will become clean in a day. He said that he is an Australian citizen. He came to Pakistan with his three-year-old daughter some time ago then the daughter raised a question that why Pakistan is so dirty. On this question of the daughter, he established the Clean and Green Pakistan Organization.

This organization is formally registered. Thousands of youths are a part of this organization. By selling the property of their fathers so far this campaign has been carried out and have sold their ancestral property to run this campaign so far the aim is to raise the awareness of cleanliness among people and change their thinking.

Tariq Khan said that if they want to plant trees to improve the environment, they don't need the Forestry Department, but the enemy of the trees is the Forestry Department. If they plant fruit plants and trees for charity for themselves and their parents, then the country will be green and the effect of climate change will be reduced. Tariq Khan said that he is again in the field of organizing his organization and will start a cleanliness and unity march from Peshawar to Karachi in October this year in which garbage will be collected in every city he said that all schools of thought, especially the youth should be a part of this campaign. Pakistan is ours and only we can present a good image in front of the world by making our country clean and tidy.

## All involved in marriage of under-age girl arrested

MURIDKE (INP): Taking action on the report that first went on media, police in Muridke have arrested all 11 persons who were involved in marrying off a five-year-old girl in Kot Bashir area to a 13-year-old boy; a practice that is called 'Wanni', police said on Wednesday.

Police have said that the man who solemnized the nikah as well as the fathers of both the bride and the bridegroom are among those taken into custody. Police have further said that an influential of the area who had ordered marrying off the child has also been arrested.

DPO Bilal Zafar Sheikh has said that the marriage of underage boys and girls is a crime. "Five-year-old Bismah was married off to punish her father for the

crime he had committed," the DPO said, and added, "All 11 persons were arrested within 72 hours of the news went on air." After making the arrests, the police presented both Bismah and Ibrar before the media.

They also presented all those people who had been taken into custody in connection with the crime. Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz and the provincial IGP had taken notice of the news that 24News had broken.

Following that the DPO stayed in Muridke for three days during which he made sure that all those involved in the crime were arrested. On the other hand, the Punjab IGP has praised the performance of DPO Sheikh and members of his team.

**Gunplay' claims young girl's life:** A minor girl shot and killed her sister while playing with a pistol considering it a toy in Muridke on Wednesday. According to police, the incident took place in Khana Ranganr village on Sheikhupura Road.

The police said that seven-year-old Eram Fatima was playing with a pistol when she suddenly pulled the trigger.

The bullet hit her 12-year-old sister Zahra Fatima who died on the spot. The younger sister is a fifth-class student while the deceased was a seventh-class student. The deceased's father, Zulfiqar, filed an application for legal action, the police said. The police recovered the pistol and interrogated the seven-year-old accused.

## Ecotourism flourishes in Kalam following increase of temperature

KALAM (APP): Providing meal and cold water to tourists, Haji Ehsan Ullah (28), a resident of Osho village has reserved his guest house for visitors by earning maximum capital in the wake of arrival of influx of adventure and mountains sports enthusiasts from hot plain districts of KP and Punjab provinces to the picturesque Kalam valley.

"No one can feel the pain of an unemployed married person better than me. I have opened my two room guest house for tourists on the advice of my grandfather and today he was earning a handsome amount enabling me to fulfill my household expenses," said Ehsan, a resident of Osho village near Kalam while talking to APP.

He said domestic tourists prefer small hotels and inns due to its affordable prices than expensive hotels at Kalam and majority of his villagers had opened their rest houses for accommodations of the tourists. Ehsan said that he provides free meal and water to tourists and obtain only Rs1500 rent for 24 hours stay.

"I came from Wapda Town Peshawar to spend few days in pleasant weather of Kalam," said Kaiser Khan, a retired Wapda employee while talking to APP. Impressed by the hospitality of locals, he said that guest houses

at Kalam were more economical than hotels and urged people here in large numbers to enjoy trout fish and paragliding besides rivers rafting.

Although local tourism had flourished visibly in recent years at Swat yet unfortunately these bounties remained untapped to the maximum due to multiple reasons like insufficient projection, facilities for tourism and law and order situation in the past. Since Pakistan has a meager share in global revenue earning from tourism, the experts believe that if the government fully employs the latest digital techniques and social media to highlight these hidden destinations, it can earn billions of dollars annually.

Internationally recognized as home to six United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) heritage sites, second highest mountain peak, long coastline and vast cultural and religious heritage, Pakistan offers plenty of tourism activities for local and foreign tourists. It is also a unique country with enchanting deserts, mesmerizing plains and snow covered peaks, adventurous sea shores and plenty of cultural and archeological sites, ancient Muslim architecture and religious sites of Buddhism and Sikhism.

Archeological wonders of Mohenjo-Daro in Sindh, Harappa in Punjab, Buddhist Ruins in Takht Bhai and Sahri Bahol in Mardan and Taxila, ancient Indus and Gandhara civilizations, Thal and Thar deserts and architecture of ancient rulers especially Mughal era can be future hot spots for tourism. Five highest mountains peaks of above 8,000 meters, including the second highest peak – the K-2 (8611m), 108 highest peaks of above 7000 meters, Deosai plain, cultural diversity of Sindh, Punjab, KPK, Balochistan and Azad Kashmir, historical monuments and much more across Pakistan are other hallmarks of our tourism treasure.

Muhammad Ali Syed, Manager KP Tourism and Culture Authority told APP that today is an era of digital tourism. Technological advancements has fast started transforming the travel and hospitality industry even in developing countries including Pakistan. "We have the most beautiful skiing spots at Malam Jabba Swat, picturesque valleys, rivers and brooks, hiking tracks, polo grounds, ice hockey fields, deserts for car rallies, sea surfing and mighty peaks for scaling."

But, he said, most of our areas remained insufficiently highlighted across the globe. "Therefore, we need to fully

employ the power of social and digital media as well as ensuring amicable environment for tourists." Despite its diverse potential, Pakistan's share in global tourism economy is too low. Therefore, at a time when international media predicts full recovery of tourism industry during 2024, Pakistan needs to tighten belts for securing its due share from trillions of dollars tourism economy.

UNWTO has recorded an estimated 1286 million international tourists (overnight visitors) around the world in 2023, an increase of 34% over 2022 as international tourism recovered 88% of pre-pandemic levels. The Middle East led the recovery being the only region to overcome pre-pandemic levels with arrivals 22% above 2019, Europe reached 94%, Africa recovered 96% and the Americas 90% and Asia and Pacific recovered 65% with the start of 2023. Following a strong rebound in 2023, the sector's outlook reflected in the latest UNWTO Tourism Confidence Index survey, reveals 67% of tourism professionals indicating better or much better prospects for 2024 compared to 2023.

"Our share is too meager as compared to international tourism earning. We secure just a billion or so dollars out of this trillions dollar economy,"

remarked Ex-Chairman Economics Department, Peshawar University, Professor Dr Zilakat Malik "This is pathetic and urge us to transform our efforts keeping in view the modern trends, exploiting all latest tools for projecting our potential."

"I expect from the new government to appoint digital professionals and experts to promote tourism to harness our due share in tourism economy," he stated. Besides nature's bounties in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan, there are ancient and religious sites in Sindh, Balochistan and Punjab to attract millions of foreign tourists.

"Scientific advancements and modern technological inventions have virtually turned the world into a global village. Therefore, we should vigorously project our amazing sites and archeological wonders," remarked Manzoorul Haq, former ambassador. "As developed nations have replaced conventional publicity methods with digital tourism, so we also need to exploit global positioning system (GPS) and artificial intelligence for quick dissemination of information and projection of our sites," he stated and proposed to patronage v-loggers, bloggers and social media groups for the purpose.

Although Pakistan's foreign

tourism has witnessed 115% increase during 2023 as mentioned by the then Caretaker Minister of State for Tourism Wasi Shah, yet it earned just US\$ 1.3 billion. "World Tourism Barometer" published by World Tourism Organization of the United Nations, had also mentioned that Pakistan had made a remarkable recovery in tourism to pre-pandemic levels.

Showing 115% increase, is just start of a journey towards an overall revolution in this sector that may reach 500% or even thousands percent provided that it is transformed on modern lines projecting Pakistan's potential. It is unfortunate that a country having much more potential than other nations, earn much lower than them that directly needs right person for the right job, political will and modern approach to excel in this arena.

This approach should be multi-dimensional, promoting natural, religious, cultural and adventure tourism on war footing to bring in precious tourism associated foreign exchange to support our economy and move forward for economic sustainability. The experts urged people to prepare small videos and photos and release on social media to attract foreign tourists imperative for generation of employment opportunities in rural areas of Pakistan.





## South Africans vote with ANC majority in balance

CAPE TOWN (BBC): South Africans are voting in the most pivotal election since the racist system of apartheid ended in 1994. More than 27 million people are registered to cast their ballots in a poll that highlights growing political fragmentation after 30 years of democracy.

A record 70 parties and 11 independents are contesting an election that will see South Africans vote for a new parliament, and nine provincial legislatures. "The huge growth in parties shows disillusionment with the old big parties or, cynics would say, people are looking for an opportunity to get into parliament and earn a pension," political analyst Richard Calland told the BBC. In power since anti-apartheid icon Nelson Mandela led it to victory at the end of white-minority rule, the African National Congress (ANC) is seeking a seventh term in office.

Though it is confident of a "decisive victory", opinion polls have consistently suggested that the party will lose its parliamentary majority for the first time, forcing it to enter into a coalition with one or more opposition party. "We are entering the next phase of our democracy, and it is going to be a big transition," Prof Calland told the BBC. "We will either become a more competitive and mature democracy, or our politics will become more fractured," he added. The campaign has been dominated by widespread corruption in government, crushingly high levels of unemployment, especially among the youth, deteriorating public services and rampant crime.

The main opposition Democratic Alliance (DA) has signed a pact with 10 other parties, agreeing to form a coalition government if they get enough votes to dislodge the ANC from power. But this is highly unlikely, with the ANC expected to remain the biggest party, putting it in pole position to lead a coalition. It got



57.5% of the vote in the last election compared to the DA's 21%. Former President Jacob Zuma caused a major shock when he announced in December that he was abandoning the ANC to campaign for a new party, uMkhonto weSizwe (MK), which translates as Spear of the Nation.

Although he has been barred from running for parliament because of a conviction for contempt of court, his name will still appear on the ballot paper as MK leader. Opinion polls suggest MK will get about 10% of the vote. It is expected to do especially well in his home province of KwaZulu-Natal, where tensions have been high, with some incidents of violence reported during the campaign. "The election in KwaZulu-Natal could become very messy - expect a lot of disputes and contestation over the results," Prof Calland said. Women make up 55% of registered voters - around 15 million, according to statistics released by the electoral commission. In terms of age group, voter registration is highest among those who are 30 to 39 years old. They make up almost seven million of the 26.7 million voters. But, said,

Prof Calland, around 13.7 million eligible voters did not register, with most of them - eight million - below the age of 30. "They have turned their backs on our young democracy. The assumption is that they have lost hope, feeling economically excluded and seeing no viable opposition," he added. This view was borne out by 29-year-old Keabetswe Maleka, who lives in Soweto, which was the epicentre of a student uprising against apartheid in 1976. In an interview with BBC Africa Daily podcast presenter Mpho Lakaje, he said he would not be voting because of bad public services, and because he is unemployed.

"I'm looking for a job. Nothing is happening," he said. Another Soweto resident, Mawela Rezant, 66, said he would definitely be voting in the hope that the next government would tackle unemployment and crime. "I'm hoping to see our economy grow. I'm hoping to see the police out in full force," he added. Police and the army have been deployed to polling stations across the country to ensure that voting takes place peacefully, and that ballot papers are not stolen.

## 'Cluster munition use reported'

MOSCOW: The Russian-held city of Luhansk in eastern Ukraine has come under repeated air attacks, according to local officials who reported the use of cluster munitions that have been banned by many countries.

The two air attacks made within three followed at least three attacks on Luhansk and nearby areas in recent weeks by Ukraine's military, targeting mainly fuel storage depots. Leonid Pasechnik, Russia-installed governor of Luhansk region, said the first attack at about 9pm (18:00 GMT) was made with cluster munitions, and fires broke out as a result of the attack.

He said that information on casualties was being clarified. Ukraine and Russia have been criticised for their use of cluster munitions on the battlefield, which have been banned by many countries because of the long-term risks posed to civilians. The United States, which supplies Ukraine with cluster munitions, has said they are being used "effectively" by Ukrainian forces in their counteroffensive against Russia's invasion. Al Jazeera could not independently confirm battlefield accounts or the weapon used. Russia's TASS news agency, quoting emergency services, said injuries had been reported after strikes.

Ukrainian media and war bloggers posted a picture of what they described as a large fire in the city. An official from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said a second strike hit the city at midnight, apparently in the same general area. Rodion Miroshnik, a special ambassador for the ministry, said city residents had heard two explosions in the same district as the site of the first attack. "It cannot be ruled out that the repeat strike occurred at the site where rescue teams are dealing with the aftermath of the previous missile attack," Miroshnik wrote on Telegram. Ukrainian news outlets said the target of the second strike was an airfield and posted a video of a fire spreading over a wide area. Ukraine made no official comment on either incident. Russia annexed the Luhansk region several months after its February 2022 invasion, along with three other regions, though it does not fully control any of them. Much of Luhansk has been occupied since 2014, when Russian-backed separatists took over swaths of territory in eastern Ukraine. — Aljazeera

## Former Thailand PM to go on trial

TAIPEI: Thailand's former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who returned home last year after 15 years in exile, will go on trial next month on charges of insulting the monarchy.

Prayuth Pecharakum, a spokesman for Thailand's attorney general, said 74-year-old Thaksin would be summoned to appear in court on June 18 to answer charges under Thailand's lese-majeste law, one of the strictest in the world. He also faces charges of violating the Computer Crime Act.

Thaksin, a prominent telecommunications tycoon, was first elected prime minister in 2001, but removed five years later in a military coup amid mass protests from the urban middle class and disquiet over his policies among the pro-royalist, pro-military elite. His populist political movement continued to win elections even after Thaksin went into exile, but was brought down in coups or court rulings amid relentless political upheaval. The latest allegations were made by the generals who seized power from Thaksin's sister, Yingluck Shinawatra, in 2014 and relate to an interview he gave to South Korean media the following year. "The attorney general has decided to indict Thaksin for insulting the monarchy," Prayuth told reporters. Thaksin returned to Thailand last August after the Pheu Thai party headed by his daughter took power as part of a coalition formed after establishment-aligned senators blocked the election-winning Move Forward Party, which campaigned on reforms to the military and the monarchy, from forming a government. — Aljazeera

## Rafah assault could halt last functioning hospital: WHO

GENEVA: A World Health Organization official said the last working hospital in Rafah could stop functioning and a substantial number of deaths could be expected if Israel launches a "full incursion" into the southern Gaza City. "If the incursion would continue, we would lose the last hospital in Rafah," Richard Peepkorn, the WHO representative for Gaza and the occupied West Bank, said on the sidelines of the World Health Assembly in Geneva.

He said that in the case of a "full incursion", a contingency plan involving treating patients in a string of ill-equipped field hospitals "will not prevent what we expect: substantial additional mortality and morbidity". The comments came as Israeli tanks were reported to have advanced into the centre of Rafah. Al Jazeera's Hani Mahmoud, reporting from central Gaza's Deir el-Balah, said Israeli tanks are "pushing deeper into Rafah right now from two major axes". "First, along the Philadelphia Corridor into the city centre, and second, from the eastern part of Rafah city all the way down to an area known as the al-

Awda traffic circle," he said.

Israel's three-week-old Rafah offensive stirred renewed outrage after an air raid ignited a blaze in a tent camp in a western district, killing at least 45 people. Israel claimed it had targeted two senior Hamas operatives in a compound and had not intended to cause civilian casualties. At least 21 Palestinians were killed and dozens of others wounded in an Israeli attack on an area with tents housing displaced people in al-Mawasi, west of Rafah, according to Palestinian medical officials. Peepkorn said that of the three hospitals in Rafah, only one was "barely functional". He said the Abu Youssef Al-Najar Hospital, which had previously served 700 dialysis patients, was no longer operating.

Artillery shelling in Rafah reached as far as the vicinity of the Kuwait Specialist Hospital, Al Jazeera's Mahmoud said, which has been pushed out of service. Three field hospitals in western Rafah city, are also all out of service, he said. Rafah was a major entry point for humanitarian relief before Israel stepped up its military

offensive on the Gaza side of the border with Egypt earlier this month and seized control of the crossing from the Palestinian side. Peepkorn said its closure had had a direct impact on the WHO's ability to get medical supplies into Gaza.

"Almost 100 percent of the medical supplies, essential medicines, equipment, they actually come from El Arish [in Egypt] through the Rafah crossing," he said. "There are currently 60 trucks that are in El Arish waiting to get into Gaza." Since the Rafah closure, WHO has only been able to get three medical supply trucks through the Karem Abu Salem crossing, which Israelis call the Kerem Shalom crossing. Peepkorn said. Meanwhile, WHO spokesperson Margaret Harris said that since Israel launched its offensive in Rafah, "there's been an abrupt halt to all medical evacuations," warning that more people will die waiting for treatment due to the halt. Thousands of Palestinians in Gaza are estimated to require urgent medical evacuation, but few have been able to leave the besieged territory since October 7. — Aljazeera

## Georgian parliament overrides presidential veto

TBILISI: Georgia's parliament has overridden a presidential veto of the "foreign agents" legislation that has fuelled Western concerns and set off weeks of street protests. The legislature, controlled by the governing Georgian Dream party, dismissed President Salome Zourabichvili's veto of the legislation that she and other critics have said will restrict media freedom and obstruct Georgia's chances of joining the European Union.

The president now has five days to endorse the bill. If she doesn't do so, the parliament speaker would be able to sign it into law. The bill that was approved by the parliament earlier this month requires media, nongovernmental organisations and other nonprofit groups to register as "pur-suing the interests of a foreign power" if they receive more than 20 percent of their funding from abroad. Zourabichvili, who is increasingly at odds with the governing party, vetoed the bill on May 18. She has accused the governing party of jeopardising the country's future and "hindering the path toward becoming a full member of the free and democratic world."

The veto was rejected by an 84-4 vote in a contentious parliament session,

during which a Georgian Dream deputy doused the leader of an opposition party with water while he spoke from the rostrum. The government says the bill is needed to stem what it deems to be harmful foreign actors trying to destabilise the South Caucasus nation of 3.7 million, but many Georgian journalists and activists argue that the bill's true goal is to stigmatise them and restrict debate in the run-up to parliamentary elections scheduled for October.

Opponents denounce the legislation as "the Russian law" because it resembles measures pushed through by the Kremlin to crack down on independent news media, nonprofits and activists. Critics have said the measure may have been driven by Moscow to thwart Georgia's chances of further integrating with the West. The bill is nearly identical to one that the governing party was pressured to withdraw last year after street protests. Renewed demonstrations again gripped Georgia as the bill made its way through parliament. Demonstrators scuffled with police, who used tear gas and water cannon to disperse them. The EU, which gave Georgia candidate status in December,

has repeatedly said the bill will be a barrier to Tbilisi's further integration with the bloc. The European bloc stressed at the time that Tbilisi needs to implement key policy recommendations for its membership bid to progress.

Last week, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced that travel sanctions would be imposed on Georgian officials "who are responsible for or complicit in undermining democracy in Georgia." He noted that "it remains our hope that Georgia's leaders will reconsider the draft law and take steps to move forward with their nation's democratic and Euro-Atlantic aspirations." The opposition United National Movement has described the bill as part of efforts by Georgian Dream to drag the country into Russia's sphere of influence - claims it has vehemently denied. Georgian Dream was founded by Bidzina Ivanishvili, a former prime minister and billionaire who made his fortune in Russia. Anti-bill demonstrations have been held for weeks, peaking in the evening, when crowds numbering in the tens of thousands have mounted some of the biggest protests seen in Georgia since it regained independence from Moscow in 1991. — Aljazeera

## Climate crisis threatens 41m across Caribbean and Latin America: UN

NEW YORK: Tens of millions of people living in coastal areas of the Caribbean and Latin America face "life-threatening" weather events made worse by the climate crisis, the United Nations said in a new report.

The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) report found that 41 million people - about 6 percent of the population across the region - are exposed to threatening storms and flooding.

Nearly 1,450 hospitals vital to maternal health and family planning across the region also are located in low-elevation coastal areas that are more prone to natural hazards, the UNFPA said. More than 80 percent of the hospitals in Aruba and Cayman Islands, Suriname, Bahamas and Guyana are in low-lying coastal areas prone to dangerous storms. In Ecuador, nearly 12 percent of the country's healthcare facilities were in these areas, report found, compared with 10 percent of Haiti's hospitals and 7 percent of those in Brazil.

The findings come as regional leaders are meeting this week in Antigua and

inequalities," Dr Natalia Kanem, the UNFPA's executive director, said in a statement. "Millions of poor and vulnerable women and girls, who are the least responsible for the climate crisis, pay a heavy price when climate-related disasters strike and disrupt essential health and protection services as well as livelihoods."

The agency said more than 80 percent of the hospitals in Aruba and Cayman Islands, Suriname, Bahamas and Guyana are in low-lying coastal areas prone to dangerous storms. In Ecuador, nearly 12 percent of the country's healthcare facilities were in these areas, report found, compared with 10 percent of Haiti's hospitals and 7 percent of those in Brazil.

The findings come as regional leaders are meeting this week in Antigua and

Barbuda for a Small Island Developing States summit to discuss the climate crisis, among other issues. Small island states across the Pacific, Atlantic and Caribbean, with negligible emissions, are particularly vulnerable to economic crises and rising temperatures due to their exposure to natural disasters, high debt and reliance on imports and tourism. "It is not sufficient for nations to simply make empty and grossly inadequate commitments under the Paris Agreement," Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister Gaston Browne, the conference president, said.

Under the 2015 Paris Agreement, countries agreed to limit emissions and prevent temperatures rising more than 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degree Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels. Browne also urged rich nations to honour

a pledge to send \$100bn a year to poorer countries to help reduce emissions and mitigate extreme weather. Experts have said the climate crisis is fuelling more devastating storms across the world, including drought, wildfires, flooding and hurricanes. Last week, forecasters with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Weather Service in the United States predicted that the Atlantic basin would see "above-normal hurricane activity" this year. Several factors are driving the risk of more hurricanes in 2024, the agency said, including "near-record warm ocean temperatures in the Atlantic Ocean, development of La Nina conditions in the Pacific, [and] reduced Atlantic trade winds and less wind shear". The Atlantic hurricane season typically begins in June and runs until the end of November. — Aljazeera

## Hong Kong police arrest 6 people accused of violating security law

HONG KONG (AP): Hong Kong police arrested six people, including a former organizer of the city's decades-long annual vigil that commemorated China's Tiananmen Square crackdown, for allegedly publishing seditious social media posts, in what were the first publicly known arrests under the city's new national security law.

Secretary for Security Chris Tang said Chow Hang-tung, a former leader of the group behind the vigil, alongside five others, used a Facebook page to anonymously publish the posts. Police said their acts began in April and that the suspects were targeting a "sensitive date." The authorities have not detailed the content of the posts. But the page started publishing a series of posts to mark the upcoming 35th anniversary of the 1989 crackdown, a politically sensitive topic in Hong Kong and mainland China, on April 30. Tang alleged the group made the posts with the intent to incite dissatisfaction or even

hatred against the Chinese central government, the Hong Kong government and the judiciary. The posts also aimed to encourage netizens to organize activities "endangering national security," he said.

"Although Hong Kong has embarked on the journey from stability to prosperity these days, we cannot let down our guard. We are still facing national security risks," Tang told reporters at a briefing. The authorities did not specify the content of the posts or identify the other five suspects. The introduction of the new security law in March - four years after Beijing imposed a similar law that had all but wiped out public dissent - has deepened worries about the erosion of the city's freedoms.

The new law, known locally as "Article 23," has expanded the government's power to deal with future challenges to its rule, punishing treason and insurrection with up to life imprisonment. Under the legislation, offenders who commit

sedition offenses face harsher penalties than before. They face a maximum jail term of seven years if convicted for committing seditious acts or uttering seditious words - up from the previous maximum sentence of two years. But Tang said it is not illegal to merely mention sensitive dates. "The main crime is not about the subject. It's about they're utilizing the subject during which they incited hatred," he said. The six suspects are between 37 and 65 years old. Authorities raided the homes of five of them and seized items including electronic devices that officers suspect were used to publish the seditious messages, police said.

When Britain handed Hong Kong back to China in 1997, Beijing promised to retain the city's Western-style liberties for 50 years. However, since the introduction of the 2020 law, Hong Kong authorities have severely limited free speech and assembly under the rubric of maintaining national security. Many

activists were arrested, silenced or forced into self-exile. Dozens of civil society organizations were disbanded under the shadow of the law, including the group behind the vigil. Chow and two former leaders of the group were also charged with subversion under the Beijing-imposed law and are being held in custody. The Beijing and Hong Kong governments say the law helped return stability following huge anti-government protests in 2019.

The annual commemoration at Hong Kong Victoria Park used to draw thousands of people to remember the victims of the bloody crackdown on June 4, 1989. Amnesty International's China director Sarah Brooks criticized the arrests, saying the government has again moved to suppress freedom of expression. "The government's shameful attempt to prohibit people from marking the upcoming anniversary is an insult to those killed in the Tiananmen crackdown and their family members," she said.

## Poland says it should not exclude possibility of sending troops to Ukraine

WARSAW (AP): Poland's foreign minister says the NATO nation should not exclude the possibility of sending troops to Ukraine and should keep Russian President Vladimir Putin in suspense over whether such a decision would ever be made. Radek Sikorski made the comments in an

interview published in the Gazeta Wyborcza daily.

"We should not exclude any option. Let Putin be guessing as to what we will do," Sikorski said when asked whether he would send Polish troops to Ukraine. Sikorski said he has gone to Ukraine with his family in the past to

deliver humanitarian aid. But a spokesperson for Poland's Defense Ministry, Janusz Sejmej, told Polish media he had "no knowledge of that" when asked about a report in Germany's Der Spiegel magazine suggesting Poland might send troops to Ukraine. The idea of sending foreign soldiers

to Ukraine, which is battling Russian military aggression, was floated earlier this year in France, but no country, including Poland, has publicly embraced it. Poland supports neighboring Ukraine politically and by providing military equipment and humanitarian aid.



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## Tel Aviv stands on the wrong side of justice

**ISRAEL'S ongoing assault on Rafah in the south of the Gaza Strip continues to cause heavy casualties among the Palestinian civilians that have congregated in the city as a result of Israel's military campaign.**

Israeli shelling and air strikes killed at least 37 people on Monday and Tuesday, most of them sheltering in tents, and this happened after strikes on Sunday had already triggered a deadly fire that engulfed tents in a camp for displaced Palestinians, killing 45 people, according to Palestinian sources. Israel said it had targeted Hamas operatives and had not intended to cause civilian casualties, with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu calling the Sunday deaths of civilians a "tragic mishap". But there have been too many "tragic mishaps" since Israel launched its campaign to eliminate Hamas from the Palestinian enclave.

No matter what excuse it gives, Israel cannot deny that it is pressing on with its military actions in Rafah despite the ever rising death toll of civilians. And despite the condemnation and repeated calls from the international community that it stop its military operations.

The fact that it is basically impossible to distinguish between Hamas militants and civilians in the congested Palestinian city makes Israel's military offensive in Rafah a collective punishment of all Palestinian people.

The Gaza health department said that about 36,000 people in Gaza, many of them women and children, have already been killed since Israel's strike against Hamas in response to the latter's attack on southern Israel on Oct 7, which resulted in the deaths of more than 1,170 people, mostly civilians. More than 1 million Palestinians were taking shelter in Rafah before Israel started its military retaliation in early May, many of them already displaced multiple times in the nearly eight-month war between Israel and Hamas. Families are now scattered across makeshift tent camps and other war-ravaged areas. The International Court of Justice of the United Nations has classified the humanitarian situation in Rafah as "disastrous", and indicated that the situation could "intensify even further" if the Israeli operation in Rafah continues.

Because of the dire situation the Palestinians have found themselves in since the latest round of Israeli attacks started, the UN court has called on Israel to abide by its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and to "immediately halt" its military offensive in Rafah.

Yet despite this, the enabler of Israel's retribution, the Joe Biden administration, has so far refrained from making any policy changes as it continues to facilitate the Israeli actions in Gaza, which is tantamount to acquiescing in what its closest ally in the Middle East has been doing in Rafah. John Kirby, US national security spokesman, showed the extent to which the administration is willing to distort the truth when he told reporters on Tuesday that Israel had not violated Biden's "redline" for withholding future offensive arms transfers because it has not launched a full-scale ground invasion into Rafah.

How many more civilians must die before the US administration reconsiders its unequivocal support for Israel? What is happening in Rafah is a tragedy, that, if not immediately and properly addressed, will proceed to develop into a lasting stain on the image of the US and the collective conscience of the international community. The UN, along with all the countries concerned, must work together to ask Israel to stop its butchery. Civilians and civilian facilities in Gaza must be protected.

That Israel has decided to "go it alone", with a lot of help from its friend, does not mean it should have a free hand to do whatsoever it wants in disregard of the basic international norms on the protection of civilians during armed conflicts. It will be held to account for its actions, if only in the court of public opinion.

## Warmongering Stoltenberg

**FIVE months away from his delayed retirement from the post, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has called on the alliance's members to ease the prohibition on Kyiv using weapons they supply to it to strike military targets in Russia, showing his intention of stoking the crisis as a legacy to his successor.**

In an interview with The Economist on Friday, the warmongering NATO chief said that Ukrainians have the right to defend themselves and that denying them the possibility of using Western-provided weapons "against legitimate military targets on Russian territory makes it very hard" for them to do so.

The strong opposition to his remarks, even from within the transatlantic security alliance, should serve to remind the NATO chief that his aggressive worldview is not shared by all. "Stoltenberg should either retract his statement, apologize, or resign," said Deputy Prime Minister of Italy Matteo Salvini. "NATO cannot force us to kill in Russia, nor can anyone compel us to send Italian soldiers to fight or die in Ukraine." That rebuke is fully justified, as the move urged by Stoltenberg, if taken, will instantly expand the Ukraine crisis to the rest of Europe. Moscow has warned the West that it is risking a global war over Ukraine and that a direct conflict between Russia and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization would mean the planet is one step away from "World War III".

That is why even the Joe Biden administration, which has demonstrated it has no qualms about starting and prolonging conflicts, has always been cautious about the reckless proposal Stoltenberg has put forward. Stoltenberg, who saw NATO suspend all its cooperation with Russia shortly after taking office in 2014, and swell its ranks four times since then — Montenegro joining in 2017, North Macedonia in 2020, Finland in 2023 and Sweden this year — is in a better position than most others to know that the ongoing Ukraine crisis is to a large extent attributable to the actions of the organization he is the belligerent head of. Instead of looking to worsen the crisis, Stoltenberg should reflect on why the so-called defensive security organization he heads has made the region where 30 out of its 32 members are located an increasingly dangerous place to live. As a stooge of the US, he has allowed NATO to become overbearingly bellicose, expansionist and interventionist, and not only in Europe as the organization now has its sights set on the Asia-Pacific and other new frontiers such as cyberspace and outer space.

The Ukraine crisis can only be resolved by political means. The tragedy should spur the European countries to weigh the gains and losses of their security strategies over the past 10 years. During that period of time, NATO was turned from an organization whose purpose was collective defense into a de facto gang of ruffians doing Washington's bidding. Stoltenberg will be remembered as a key figure in this process.

### Important Notice

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## Syrian refugee crisis continues to haunt European Union

Mohamed Chebaro

**If you ask any of the more than 5 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq or Turkiye about the likely chance they will be able to return home any time soon, the answer is a unanimous "zero."**

I am sure also that a majority of the millions who are displaced internally within Syria would want to leave the country if possible. For the 13 years since the protests against the regime in Damascus escalated into a civil war, most of the displaced have been actively trying to seek refuge elsewhere, preferably in EU countries where, if they were lucky, welfare might be provided by the state.

On the streets of major European cities, the sight of Syrians, mainly, but also Iraqis, Afghans and people from other countries, has become a source of discomfort, bordering on racism, among large sections of native populations, not all of whom look favorably on what some describe as an "invasion," and what they describe as "no-go areas" in neighborhoods now heavily populated by foreigners.

You hear it from taxi drivers and people in coffee shops. One elderly German asked me in a Berlin cafe recently whether I had "arrived in the UK swimming," referring to the waves of asylum seekers arriving from Turkey, North Africa or via Calais in France.

There is no doubt that migration, and the increasing numbers of refugees on Western streets, has been taking its toll. And there is a risk the situation might be further exacerbated if political figures from the ascendant hard right and hard left use the issue as a way to justify extreme political narratives that promise voters improved domestic social and health services and prosperity, while pledging to enhance security by blocking the arrival of more refugees, vetting those who are already in the country, and

deporting those who fail integration or language tests.

It is no exaggeration to say that the European Parliament elections, which will take place from June 6 to 9, are being fought not through ideas for social and economic renewal or who might best provide security for EU nations facing an existential threat from Russia, but instead on a narrow agenda of anti-immigration fears that could disrupt the entire EU project.

Europe is undoubtedly facing a major test and on the brink of lurching further to the right as it tries to remain true to its ethos of protecting human rights and sharing among its community of nations the burden of providing refuge for those in need.

The EU's latest donors' conference for Syria took place this week, but preventing divisions within its membership while also offering dwindling levels of assistance to Syrians might now be an impossible balancing act for the bloc to maintain.

Syria undoubtedly has become a "forgotten crisis" that nobody wants to address amid the Israel-Hamas war, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and the near-total geostrategic discord between the big global powers in which some actors do not shy from weaponizing migration flows in an attempt to squeeze concessions from their rivals or enemies.

The result of all this is that the refugee and asylum-seeker crisis might have long-lasting repercussions as it continues to divide societies across the 27-country union.

During this week's donors' conference in Brussels, 7.5 billion (\$8.1 billion) was pledged, of which the EU promised to commit 2.12 billion (\$2.3 billion) for 2024 and 2025. This could be useful as many Syrians continue to seek ways to reach

Western countries, primarily, by hazardous land and sea routes because their instincts tell them, correctly, that their frozen conflict is not high on the list of priorities for the major global powers. But as the economic and social burdens associated with refugees mount, the bloc is increasingly divided and unable to find solutions to adequately address the issue.

International funding for efforts to support Syrians is in decline in general, with the likes of the World Food Programme reducing the amount of aid it provides. Difficulties associated with hosting refugees are increasingly surfacing in neighboring nations, most notably Lebanon, where the economic situation is already perilous because of a long-running financial crisis, and the call for Syrians to be sent home is one of the rare issues that can unite most of the country's fragmented communities.

Such growing calls for repatriation come despite the general, widely held assessment that the quest to find a "political solution to the conflict in Syria remains at an impasse," with no safe, voluntary or dignified process for the return of refugees, as the EU's chief diplomat and security commissioner, Josep Borrel, put it.

The level of participation at donor conferences has fallen over the past few years. The likes of Russia, a key backer of President Bashar Assad's regime, is in no mood to lend a hand, even a humanitarian one, that might put pressure on Damascus to meet some political conditions that could pave the way for refugees to return.

Meanwhile, divisions within the EU on the issue are on the rise. Countries such as Italy and Cyprus are more open to some form of dialogue with Assad to at least discuss possible ways to step up the voluntary return of

refugees, in conjunction with and under the auspices of the UN.

These divisions were highlighted last week when eight countries — Austria, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Greece, Italy, Malta and Poland — issued a joint statement following talks in Cyprus in which they broke ranks with the bloc's position. They argued that the dynamics had changed in Syria and that while political stability does not yet exist, the situation had evolved sufficiently to "reevaluate the situation" in an attempt to find "more effective ways of handling the issue," curb the flow of refugees, and work to send some of them home.

As it stands, more than one in four Syrians are extremely poor, according to a recent report by the World Bank. The UN humanitarian response plan for 2024 requires more than \$4 billion of funding but so far donations are only in the millions.

And amid the near-total geostrategic discord between the big powers, this week's EU donor conference is unlikely to provide much more than symbolic traction. In our increasingly conflicted world, peace efforts for Syria will be swept under the carpet for another while, leaving desperate Syrians with no choice but to resort to whatever means they can find to feed their loved ones, whether that is the crumbs provided by international organizations, or through mass migration to less-than-welcoming societies in the West.

Their presence in those European countries might be shaking some host communities to the core, resulting in the magnification of intolerant narratives driving wedges between people in otherwise tolerant countries, and indirectly increasing the chances that previously marginal, anti-immigrant voices could be elected across Europe next month.

## The Rohingya in Myanmar face yet another genocide

Dr. Azeem Ibrahim

**THE Rohingya have been described as the most persecuted minority in the world, as a result of decades of systematic discrimination and violence. Their plight has culminated in their current status as stateless refugees, predominantly residing in the world's largest refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.**

Now the small number of Rohingya who remain in Myanmar are facing the specter of yet another genocide, trapped between the country's brutal military junta and the Arakan Army rebel group.

The roots of the Rohingya crisis can be traced back to longstanding ethnic and religious tensions in Myanmar. The Rohingya, who are predominantly Muslim, have long faced discrimination from the Buddhist majority in the country.

Despite having lived in Myanmar for generations, the Rohingya are denied citizenship under a 1982 Burmese nationality law, rendering them stateless. This legal exclusion has been accompanied by restrictions on movement, access to education and employment, as well as periodic outbreaks of violence targeting them.

In 2017, a brutal military crackdown in Myanmar, described by the UN as a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing," forced more than 700,000 Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh. The refugees settled in makeshift camps in Cox's Bazar that have grown into the largest refugee settlement in the world. The conditions in these camps are dire, with overcrowding, inadequate sanitation, and limited access to healthcare and education. Regionally, the Rohingya are largely unwanted. Myanmar continues to deny them citizenship and basic rights, while neighboring countries such as Thailand, Malaysia and India either refuse to allow fleeing Rohingya to enter or impose severe restrictions on their stays. This widespread regional reluctance to accept the Rohingya underscores their precarious situation.

Bangladesh, which hosts nearly a million Rohingya, is eager to repatriate them. The country faces significant economic, environmental and social pressures arising from the prolonged presence of such a large refugee population. It has attempted to relocate some Rohingya to Bhasan Char, an isolated island prone to flooding, and has engaged in repatriation talks with authorities in Myanmar, though concerns about safety and dignity have stalled this plan.

The statelessness of the Rohingya and the limited intervention by the international community have left them in a persistent state of limbo, with no country willing to offer a permanent home. Their struggle highlights the dire consequences of systemic persecution and the complexities of refugee crises in a geopolitically sensitive region. Now, as the junta battles the Arakan Army in Rakhine State, the Rohingya find themselves caught in the crossfire, suffering civilian casualties, further displacement, and the destruction of their homes and property.

In a cruel twist of fate, the same military that committed acts of genocide against the Rohingya is now forcibly conscripting them into its

ranks, using them as human shields on the front lines against the Arakan Army. Men and boys are abducted from their homes and refugee camps, given minimal training and sent to face the very rebel group that claims to be fighting for their rights. Testimonies provided by escaped Rohingya conscripts paint a harrowing picture of coercion, exploitation and utter disregard for their lives. One man recounted how his group was sent to an area surrounded by Arakan Army fighters to serve as mere cannon fodder, the junta fully aware they would likely be killed.

As the conflict between the junta and the Arakan Army escalates, Rohingya villagers find themselves caught in the middle, with both sides inflicting civilian casualties and destroying homes. The Arakan Army, an ethnic Rakhine Buddhist rebel group, has vowed to expand its control over Rakhine State but its stance on the Rohingya remains ambiguous.

While it has warned Rohingya not to join the junta's forces, there are also reports of the rebel group confiscating food and other resources from Rohingya communities. They are therefore left with the impossible choice of siding with the military that committed genocide against them or the rebel group that remains unclear in its intentions for their future.

The renewed violence has exacerbated the already dire humanitarian crisis the Rohingya face in Rakhine State. More than 100,000 people, many of them already displaced by previous violence, have been forced to flee their homes once again. Access to aid and medical care is severely restricted, leaving the vulnerable population at grave risk. Bangladesh, which as noted hosts more than a million Rohingya refugees, has closed its borders, leaving those who flee the violence with nowhere to go. Families are resorting to digging holes within their homes in which to shelter and hide from fighting and raids, in a desperate attempt to survive.

The international community must act swiftly to prevent another genocide against the Rohingya. Foreign governments should loudly condemn the junta's actions and the escalating violence in Rakhine State, and demand an immediate cessation of hostilities and unfettered humanitarian access. The forced conscription of Rohingya by the military junta is a flagrant violation of international law and must be halted immediately. The junta's widespread and systematic abuses against the Rohingya amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes, for which its leaders must be held accountable.

The Arakan Army, too, must clarify its stance on the Rohingya and take concrete steps to protect the civilian population, adhering to the laws of war and ensuring the safety of noncombatants.

The Rohingya have endured unimaginable suffering, and the world cannot stand idly by as they face the threat of another genocide. Urgent action is needed to end the violence, provide humanitarian aid, and pave the way for a just and lasting solution that recognizes the Rohingya's fundamental rights and dignity.

— Aljazeera

## Letter from ‘Kibbutz Israel’

Belén Fernández

for the next 76 years and counting. Here was a concentrated battle for the landscape in the space of one city block. The embassy compound was saturated with Israeli flags, while the streets surrounding the building had been taken over by pro-Palestinian protesters and signage. One sign announced: "WELCOME TO KIBBUTZ ISRAEL", with an addendum underneath: "SINCE THEY THINK SETTLEMENTS ARE COOL". Indeed, what more symbolic way to protest a murderous occupying force than through a counter-occupation? In addition to Palestinian flags, other visuals lining the street included invitations to "Honk 4 Palestine", pictures of bloodied Palestinian babies and other carnage in Gaza, and a reminder of Israel's use of starvation as a weapon of war. A faux street sign read: "Genocide Street Northwest". Directly in front of the embassy was a memorial to Aaron Bushnell, the 25-year-old active duty mem-

ber of the US Air Force who self-immolated outside the compound on February 25 in what he warned was an "extreme act of protest – but compared to what people have been experiencing in Palestine at the hands of their colonisers is not extreme at all". Bushnell's literal self-sacrifice was what launched Kibbutz Israel, now three months old. On the day of my visit, a charming character emerged from the embassy and attempted to topple the memorial, after which he received a talking-to and then a handshake from the US Secret Service officers on duty. As he was whisked off in a black vehicle, he snarled through the open window at one of the female activists:

Kibbutz Israel protesters and Israeli embassy personnel struggled for occupation of the auditory realm, as well, and protesters had erected a sign advising that there was a "noise demonstration" under way. Complimentary earplugs were offered along with the suggestion to "please cover your ears (and open your eyes/rise up against

genocide)". To that end, protesters took turns shouting through megaphones in the direction of the embassy, while embassy staff intermittently blasted music from within the compound to drown them out. But if Israel's diplomatic representatives in Washington can't even deal with the ruckus made by a handful of people with megaphones, perhaps they should imagine how noisy it must be to live under apocalyptic Israeli military bombardment for nearly eight months. Of course, the US political establishment in Washington remains firmly committed to the idea that genocide is "self-defence", and continues to fling money and armaments at the Israeli military accordingly.

And yet folks on the ground are finally opening their eyes, as the truth conquers new terrain in the nation's capital and beyond – from the Potomac River to the Chesapeake Bay, you might say. Or better yet: From sea to shining sea, Palestine will be free.



# Let peaceful coexistence be guiding force of world order

Francisco José Leandro

**THE debate on the architecture of the international order should be shifted to those states that are ascending to the highest power status: the global powers. Indeed, global powers are defined not only by the nature and reach of their interests, but also by their attitude toward global cooperation based on principles and common responsibilities arising from their deeds.**

China is an emerging global power that has been pursuing its goal of building a global community with a shared future with restraint, responsibility and regard for common good.

The then premier Zhou Enlai put forward the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence during a diplomatic engagement with the Indian government in 1953. A year later, in 1954, China issued two joint statements respectively with India and Myanmar, confirming their commitment to these Five Principles in conducting their mutual relations and their respective relations with other countries

in Asia and the world.

In 1955, during the Bandung Conference, a set of 10 principles to promote peace and cooperation were adopted, including the original five of 1953. And in 1970, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 2625, which included the content of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, thus making them widely acceptable to the international community.

The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and their global evolution have had a huge impact on the development of diplomatic relations between China and a number of countries, namely those new sovereign states that gained independence from colonial rule in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. The five principles are still regarded as a pillar of diplomatic relations between China and the nine Portuguese-speaking countries. Yet new connotations need to be incorporated in the context of contemporary international relations to make the principles more effective.

tive.

Six decades later, capitalizing on the global significance of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, countries have been pursuing development, unity, coexistence and win-win cooperation. In this vein, win-win cooperation is preferred to the zero-sum games, and represents a commitment to collective action with collective gains and shared values and principles.

The concept of a global community with a shared future promoted by President Xi Jinping is becoming a hallmark of China, as it reflects the extended common interests of all societies and sets a vision for all major areas associated with global governance to follow. "To meet our common challenges and create a better future for all, we look to culture and civilization to play their role, which is as important as the role of economy, science and technology".

China has been making efforts to build communities with a shared

future in multiple forms and domains, and at multiple levels.

These communities embrace and embody the spirit of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and the extended vision of a community with a shared future for mankind, as shown in their practices, participation in global initiatives, and trade and cultural exchanges. Bearing in mind Macao's role as a platform that can help bring China and the Portuguese-speaking countries closer, it is possible to build a new community with a shared future with all the nine Portuguese-speaking countries.

The creation of such a platform will not only be a practical inspiration for building a closer and stronger relationship between China and the Portuguese-speaking countries, but more importantly will send a message to the rest of the world that it is possible to establish informal "spatial oasis" of principled sovereign relations even when there is no contiguity of land borders, therefore fostering a new type of international relations.

# Big Pharma's focus on profit is behind medicine shortages, superbug threat

Tim Bierley

**WHAT happens when we run out of medicines? Medical authorities are pondering this question as they struggle with shortages of a range of essential medicines amid a global drug supply crisis.**

Separately, England's former chief medical officer Sally Davies, warns us of the growing threat posed by drug-resistant superbugs. The antimicrobial resistance crisis could make the COVID-19 pandemic "look minor", Davies claims, if not met with urgent action, including the development of new antibiotics.

At first glance, these two crises seem to have little in common other than the serious threat they pose to human life. But they are, in fact, born out of a single problem: Big Pharma's prioritisation of profit, which disincentivises it from both keeping essential medicines accessible and developing new medicines we desperately need.

Take a look at the many issues with the insulin supply. People living with diabetes are currently facing long and anxious waits for essential insulin products in many countries. One of the world's largest insulin suppliers, Novo Nordisk, recently announced plans to stop production of a widely used long-acting insulin injection by the end of the year, seemingly opting to bolster its profit-raking weight loss drugs over its off-patent and price-controlled insulin products. Meanwhile, several essential formulations of insulin produced by leading drug-maker Eli Lilly have been out of stock for weeks due to what the company described as "brief delay in manufacturing." Together, Eli Lilly and Novo Nordisk control some 75 percent of the global insulin market. The uncertainty currently faced by diabetes patients the world over is testament to the danger of leaving our medicine supply in the hands of profit-driven medicine monopolies.

The growing threat from antimicrobial resistance is also a direct consequence of Big Pharma's focus on profit – the only difference is that at the root of this crisis are choices made regarding research and development, rather than manufacturing. "Superbugs" – bacteria, viruses, parasites or fungi that have developed resistance to usual treatments – have long been a concern for the medical community. Experts agree that the development of new antibiotics will be crucial to tackling the problem. Yet, shockingly, not a single new class of antibiotic has been invented since the 1980s. And this is a choice made by Big Pharma.

Pharmaceutical companies have long turned their noses up at producing new antibiotics because they do not believe such an endeavour would be sufficiently profitable. Rather than potentially lifesaving antibiotics, they are focusing their research and development efforts on so-called "Me too" drugs, which are developed through minor modifications to existing drugs and rarely represent a meaningful therapeutic advance, but promise continued profitability.

With vital drugs in short

supply and drug-resistant pathogens a growing danger, it may seem perverse that pharmaceutical companies are placing their bottom line above the health of everyday people. But at the end of the day, these companies are beholden to their shareholders, not global health. Our current model of medicine production which puts shareholder returns above all else means patients are beholden to these dynamics.

So what is the answer? It may be tempting to look for ways to make the medicines we need profitable to Big Pharma companies. Perhaps

mRNA Technology Transfer Programme. Developed in response to Big Pharma's shocking withholding of essential knowledge from Global South scientists during the COVID-19 pandemic, the programme enables these countries to scale up their domestic production capacities and prepare for future crises. Where the incentives provided by the monopoly patent system have led to high prices, vulnerable supply chains and lagging innovation, this project is instead built on the idea of sharing and collaboration. Some 15 countries have already signed up. Even in the US, the government is making moves to

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we can pay them a bit more for essential medicines or give them extra funding for antibiotics research? This may seem like an easy, if expensive, solution to a massive problem. This approach, however, has already been tried many times over – and it always led to prices rising higher and higher without any meaningful increase in accessibility. Rather than focusing on upping production, companies moved to hold medicines ransom to try and get more money.

In any case, humanity cannot pay its way out of these crises, because not every country has the means to feed corporate greed. What happens to patients in countries that cannot afford the ever-increasing price tag? The horrific "vaccine apartheid" we witnessed at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic is perhaps the best demonstration of how such a strategy plays out on a global stage.

So, if the solution isn't paying pharmaceutical companies more, what is it?

Ultimately, we need to end Big Pharma's control over our lives and future. We need to completely dismantle the financialised drug-production system that is leaving diabetes patients without access to insulin and exposing us all to the dangers of "superbugs". This may seem like a lofty goal, but across the world, governments are making promising moves in the right direction.

The World Health Organization is supporting Global South countries to share vaccine manufacturing know-how and patents among each other via its

limit Big Pharma's control over the development and manufacturing of the medicines we need. The Biden administration has come up with a roadmap that would allow the federal government to grant licenses to third parties for products developed using federal funds if the company holding the original patent does not make them available to the public on reasonable terms.

Here in the UK, Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) recently developed a gene therapy treatment for the rare but extremely dangerous "bubble baby" syndrome. It is hoping to license the treatment itself on a nonprofit basis – without any Big Pharma involvement.

Models like the one GOSH aims to pioneer will take investment, but as we know, the state is already spending significant resources on drug development and even more on meeting the cost of Big Pharma's extortionate mark-ups – and nonprofit models tend to make medicines at a fraction of the rate Big Pharma companies do.

We won't be able to replace the existing medicine production model overnight and we'll likely continue to rely on Big Pharma to bring medicines to market for some time yet. But as we face crippling drug shortages, and a looming threat from superbugs, we must start to think more boldly.

The Big Pharma model isn't working and is actively endangering the health of ordinary people around the world. It's time to invest in alternatives.

— Arab News

# After 70 years as partners, Saudi Arabia and Japan set for a quantum leap in relations

Dr. Ghazi Faisal Binzagr

**THE Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Japan enjoy a formal relationship and friendship that is almost 70 years old. A synergy of common interests and shared values has forged an interdependence between the two countries in many significant areas, including energy and energy security, trade and investment, and increasingly in their joint commitment to building an ecosystem for renewable energy and the environmentally friendly solutions of tomorrow that can successfully balance economic growth with economic sustainability.**

Beyond economics, the Kingdom and Japan are strongly aligned in global views that affirm peace and prosperity. Both countries believe in the need for strong-functioning multilateral institutions that can handle complex human challenges and dilemmas while providing peaceful means for the resolution of conflict to avoid war and destruction.

They believe in the values of wisdom, balance and consideration, rather than extremes and inflammation, as the rightful language for international diplomacy and negotiation. With such deep alignment of their temperaments and visions for how a healthy world should operate, the nations are global voices of reason and this underpins their privileged and special relationship.

Culturally, each country has a proud and long spiritual tradition steeped in civility and their contributions to human knowledge and expression in the humanities and arts, poetry and storytelling, science and philosophy.

Both countries embrace the modern while seeking to blend the past, present and future in a seamless process of progress that continues to reaffirm their elegant presence and significance. In so doing, they are uniquely positioned to reach out to each other through an ongoing platform built on mutual deep respect and appreciation, as they strive to affirm such values to benefit universal bridge-building and human cooperation and understanding.

It is in such deep dimensions of culture and civilization that I see yet another important dimension for the future of collaboration between the Kingdom and Japan, the time for which

has come; a global presence through which countries such as the Kingdom and Japan can join hands with other nations to stress the importance of respect for universal values while also celebrating culture-specific values and somehow finding the will and the ways to balance both.

Moving forward, the nations can also work together in efforts to achieve global peace and prosperity, and to build the systems, ecosystems, value-adding chains and supply chains that can thrive while delivering qual-

ity and reliability to the world. It is through the practice and promotion of common pragmatic values such as reliability and quality that the countries can best excel in their joint efforts. A case in point is the ways in which the Kingdom and Japan are working together, as partners, to address the global challenge of supplying sustainable

clean energy to the world at affordable prices to promote progress and prosperity for all, including developing nations. A hallmark of the partnership between Saudi Arabia and Japan is evident in the delivery of consistently reliable, high-quality energy solutions that are beneficial both to the economy and security.

The essence of the pragmatism underpinning their partnership is based on realistic goals and actions based on science and engineering principals, rather than fancy words or ideologies

supply chains that can deliver excellence to the world.

From the sourcing of the minerals and materials required, to the development of new means of production, to the building of new ways to deliver energy, both countries intend to work together to help build a better tomorrow for all.

Because both the Kingdom and Japan recognize that sustainable economics, good governance and the quality of life of their citizens are, and must be, intertwined, they are in the perfect position to affirm the importance of such an approach and values in global affairs.

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It is through the practice and promotion of common pragmatic values such as reliability and quality that the countries can best excel in their joint efforts. A case in point is the ways in which the Kingdom and Japan are working together, as partners, to address the global challenge of supplying sustainable

that fail to deliver.

When it comes to their partnership in the area of energy and energy security, solutions are always anchored by a portfolio of options that range from the traditional to the green, while slowly but surely shifting the balance in favor of the green while simultaneously building production capabilities and the

A common lesson to be learned from the legends and history of both countries is that "the paths of prosperous commerce and sustainable peace are one and the same." Such are the ways of the old and the wise in both countries, and such are the roots of the combined philosophy that the Kingdom and Japan can contribute to the world.

Jonathan Gornall

# The law of unforeseen consequences: What now for Iran?

**THE sudden, unexpected death this month of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, and the feverish speculation about the effect it will have on his country's immediate future, is a reminder that the consequences of geopolitical events can rarely be predicted.**

Iranians will go to the polls on June 28 to elect Raisi's successor. But his death also prompted widespread guesswork about who might be Iran's next supreme leader, the ultimate architect of the nation's political direction.

Raisi was in the running to succeed 85-year-old Ayatollah Ali Khomeini, who has been supreme leader since 1989. Following Raisi's death, many now consider Khomeini's son, 55-year-old Mojtaba, the most likely successor.

But whoever becomes president, and whoever ultimately succeeds Khomeini, Iran and its relations with the rest of

the Middle East stand at a crossroads — and, as the origin story of the Islamic Republic demonstrates, the direction it takes next is as likely to be determined by external as well as internal forces.

Iran has been a Shiite theocracy, at odds not only with the West but also its Muslim neighbors, since the Islamic Revolution swept to power in 1979, catching the region and the wider world by surprise.

The immediate causes of the revolution, and the end of centuries of monarchical rule in Persia, were a growing sense of unhappiness among the Iranian people with the Shah's perceived personal profiteering from the country's oil wealth and the activities of the SAVAK, his hated secret police, and alarm among the conservative clerical class at his secular, pro-Western program of modernization.

But it was events set in

motion by external forces two decades earlier that laid the groundwork for the Islamic Revolution in 1979 that created the Iran we know today and condemned the Middle East to decades of murderous meddling by Tehran.

In 1950, 12 years after oil was struck in Saudi Arabia, US-owned concession-holder the Arabian American Oil Company agreed, reasonably, to share its profits 50-50 with the Kingdom. Today, Aramco, which has been fully owned by the Saudi state since 1976, is one of the largest and most profitable companies in the world.

Across the Gulf in Persia, however, an inexplicably different story unfolded, with disastrous consequences.

At about the same time that the four US oil companies that originally owned Aramco agreed to share all profits evenly with Riyadh, in Persia the British government, the majority shareholder in the Anglo-Persian Oil

Company, rejected outright a request from Tehran for similarly fair treatment.

That alone was bad enough, and represented a strangely ill-considered provocation at a time when the UK's status as a world power was visibly shrinking, along with its once-dominant empire.

Britain's humiliating invasion of Egypt in 1956, a last, desperate throw of the imperial dice, is seen as the moment the sun finally set on the British Empire. However, its all-but-forgotten meddling in Iran two years earlier would ultimately have even more far-reaching consequences.

In 1951, the democratically elected government of Iranian prime minister Mohammed Mosaddegh announced that, in the absence of a fair deal from the British, it would nationalize the country's oil industry.

Britain's reaction was

the very definition of imperial highhandedness. The main concern of the UK government, struggling at the time to cope with the vast debts and costs of rebuilding it had inherited in the wake of the Second World War, was the loss of revenue from Iranian oil fields.

To get the US on side, it preyed on Washington's Cold War paranoia and talked up the specter of the Soviet Union, Iran's neighbor to the north, potentially infecting the country with its ideology of Communism.

The tactic worked. In 1953, Britain's MI6 and America's CIA engineered a plot to overthrow Mosaddegh and his government. As a result of Operation Ajax, hundreds were killed during fighting between the two sides, and the Western-backed Shah was installed to rule supreme.

It was a spectacularly

rash decision that would disfigure the landscape of the Middle East for generations, and to this day serves as a case study for students of politics in the perils of the law of unintended consequences.

In time, the Shah dismissed parliament and in 1963 introduced a series of unpopular reforms that led to widespread poverty and overcrowding in cities and were condemned as anti-Islamic by Iran's clerics.

A leading critic was Ayatollah Khomeini, one of the leaders of the Shiite community in the country. In 1963 he was jailed for a year before being exiled, settling first in Iraq and later in France.

It was from Paris that he returned to Iran in triumph on Feb. 1, 1979, welcomed by delirious crowds as the leader of the revolution that had driven the Shah into exile. The rest, as they say, is history; a history that is still playing out as

the world watches anxiously.

Before the Hamas attacks on Oct.7 last year, some progress had been made toward finally bringing Iran back into the family of nations. Decades of Western-led sanctions had merely provoked Tehran, hurting the Iranian people and strengthening the resolve of its leadership to persist with its destructive ideology of perpetual revolution.

It fell to Saudi Arabia, so often on the receiving end of the activities of Tehran's regional proxy militants, to seek a different path in March last year by extending the hand of peace and friendship and restoring diplomatic ties with Iran, in a Chinese-brokered deal that promised to end years of mutually energy-sapping enmity.

The events of Oct.7 and Israel's subsequent rampage of death and destruction in Gaza has doubtless stalled the conversation in the region, at





## Implementation of Safe City Project: SCCI chief offers full cooperation

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: President, Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fuad Ishaq has offered full cooperation to provincial government, police and law enforcement agencies for execution of the Safe City project in an effective manner to maintain law and order in provincial metropolis Peshawar.

Fuad Ishaq said it is highly essential to provide peace and conducive atmosphere for flourishing business and commercial activities.

In a statement issued

here on Wednesday, the SCCI chief was concerned over rising crime incidents, street crime, killing, looting/snatching at gunpoint and deteriorating law and order situation in provincial capital Peshawar.

He said despite unfavorable conditions, the business community continued business and trade activities, which is less than jihad (holy war). Therefore, he demanded to ensure protection of the lives and property of the business community and citizens.

He said members of the business community have

grave concern over the rising street crime, snatching at gunpoint, killing incidents, which has created a sense of insecurity among them.

Fuad Ishaq said it is the topmost duty of government, police and law enforcement agencies to ensure protection of lives and properties of the business community because it is imperative to provide a peaceful environment for promotion of business, trade and economic activities.

In order to eliminate the crime incidents, he urged a review of overall security

in Peshawar.

The SCCI chief suggested the government, police, LEAs and district administration should jointly devise a security plan in consultation with the chamber and business community.

Fuad Ishaq demanded an increase in police mobile and squad patrolling, snap checking points, deployment of trained police personnel and framing of long-term policies for maintenance of law and order in the city.

He demanded implementation of a Safe City Project on priority basis.

## China to collaborate with S. Asian countries for uplift and prosperity

ISLAMABAD (APP): Economic Counsellor of China to Pakistan Yang Guangyuan on Wednesday said that China is ready to collaborate with all South Asian countries including Pakistan, to build future development and prosperity.

Addressing the 2024 China-South Asia Business Council Exchange Symposium, he said that by capitalizing on the Belt and Road Initiative and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Project, we aim to enhance the economic stability and regional prosperity of both regions.

The event was organized by the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) and the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) in collaboration with the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry

(FPCCI).

The symposium aimed to strengthen China-South Asia cooperation under the Belt & Road Initiative and establish a platform for broader business opportunities between South Asian and Chinese enterprises.

Chairman of CCPIT Yunnan Sub Council Liu Qilin, in his remarks, emphasized the importance of industrial cooperation between China and South Asian countries in advancing green development.

"Against the backdrop of growing mutual trust in political affairs and sustained economic cooperation between China and South Asian countries, the China South-Asia Expo stands as a crucial platform reflecting the shared aspirations of the industrial and commercial sectors," he added.

Ashfaq Yousuf Tola,

dormer State Minister, applauded the efforts of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SAARC CCI), the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), and the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade for organizing the symposium.

Dr Erfa Iqbal, Additional Secretary, Board of Investment while addressing the symposium emphasized the urgency of bridging the existing gaps.

"With CPEC entering its second phase, it's critical to accelerate our progress. The current challenge lies in the lack of industrialization in Pakistan".

We need comprehensive proposals and B2B events from both the government and the private sector to achieve tangible results, she said adding that our

goal is for Pakistan to flourish, and the key to boosting our economy to join hands and create favorable conditions for growth.

Qurat Ul Ain, Vice President, FPCCI, elaborated on the critical role of industries cooperation in this context.

"China, as a leading advocate for green development, has made significant strides in renewable energy, promoting circular economy practices, and investing in eco-friendly technologies," she stated.

She said that South Asian nations, with their diverse ecosystems and rapidly growing economies are also embracing the green path.

Pakistan is committed to building renewable energy, sustainable agriculture and environmental protection, playing its part in this regional effort.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor displaying handmade baskets for packing fruits to attract customers at Fruit and Vegetable Market.

## 63 illegal gas connections disconnected

### F.P. Report

LAHORE: During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, disconnecting another 63 connections; Rs 1.65 million fine imposed.

In Lahore, the team disconnected 11 connections on illegal use of gas while another one on use of the compressor and imposed fine of Rs 0.82 million against gas theft cases. The team also lodged 1 FIR against gas pilfers.

In Multan the team disconnected 07 connections on illegal use of gas while another 05 on use of compressor.

In Karak the company disconnected 02 connections on account of direct use and illegal use of gas and amount of Rs 0.14 million have been booked against gas theft cases.

The regional team of Shiekhupura disconnected 05 connections on illegal use of gas and also booked an amount of Rs 0.2 million against gas theft cases.

In Faisalabad the team disconnected 02 connections on illegal use of gas and also imposed a fine of Rs 0.02 million against gas theft cases.

In Peshawar the team disconnected 26 connections on illegal use of gas and also booked an amount of Rs 0.07 million against gas theft cases.

In Bahawalpur the team disconnected 01 connection on illegal use of gas.

The regional team of Gujranwala disconnected 2 connections on illegal use of gas while another one on the use of compressor. The team also imposed fine of Rs 0.40 million against gas theft cases.

## Shipping activity at PQ

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity was report at the port where two ships, Maersk Valencia and PVT Venus carrying Container and Chemicals, berthed at Container Terminal and Engro Terminal respectively on Tuesday.

Meanwhile three more ships, Atlantic Ibis, MSC Positano and Milaha Raslaffan carrying Container and LNG also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim on today.

A total of 09 ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them a Bulk cargo carrier 'Sunny Bay' left the port on today morning while five more ships, Sea Steller, Atlantic Ibis, PVT Venus, Blue Bird and Maersk Valencia are expected to sail on Wednesday afternoon.

Cargo volume of 122,894 tonnes, comprising 94,347 tonnes imports cargo and 28,547 tonnes export cargo carried in 2,106 Containers (1,348 TEUs Imports and 758 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 08 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them four ships, Bateleuer, Milaha Raslaffan, Atlantic Ibis and MSC Positano & two more container ships, Maersk Cairo and Express Altair carrying LPG, LNG and Containers are expected to take berths at respectively EVTL, PGPC and QICT on Wednesday, while three more container ships, APL Southampton, MSC Lucy and Maersk Seletar are due to arrive at Port Qasim on Thursday.

## PSX witnesses bearish trend, loses 681 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Wednesday, losing 681.19 points, a negative change of 0.90 per cent, closing at 74,836.30 points against 75,517.49 points the previous day.

A total of 408,073,662 shares valuing Rs 16.500 billion were traded during the day as compared to 446,071,483 shares valuing Rs 16.406 billion the previous day.

As many as 405 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 85 of them recorded gains and 277 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 43 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were K-Electric Limited with 38,647,880 shares at Rs 4.91 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 22,383,107 shares at Rs 1.34 per share and Dewan Motors with 19,354,593 shares at Rs 41.42 per share.

PIA Holding Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 60.83 per share price, closing at

Rs 889.25, whereas the runner-up was Services Industries Limited with a Rs 43.83 rise in its per share price to Rs 918.63.

Hoechst Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 113.80 per share closing at Rs 1,358.70, followed by Hallmark Company Limited with a Rs 45.27 decline to close at Rs 534.26.

**Rupee sheds 10 paise against Dollar**

Pakistani Rupee on Wednesday lost 10 paise against US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.40 against the previous day's closing at Rs 278.30.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market, however, were Rs 277.25 and Rs 280 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by 11 paise to close at Rs 301.73 against the last day's closing of Rs 301.84, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen remained unchanged to close at Rs 1.77, whereas

an increase of 89 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs 355.27 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 354.38.

The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 02 paise each to close at Rs 75.79 and Rs 74.22.

**Gold rates up by Rs2,400 per tola to Rs242,700**

The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 2,400 and was sold at Rs 242,700 on Wednesday compared to its sale at Rs 240,300 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 208,076 from Rs 206,018 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs 190,736 from Rs 188,850, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola silver increased by Rs 100 to Rs 2,900 whereas that of ten gram silver went up by Rs 85.74 to Rs 2,486.28.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$13 to \$2,352 from \$2,339, the Association reported.

## NCCPL launches SCP for swift verifications

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: The NCC Smart CKO Portal (SCP) is a game-changer in the world of digital onboarding, revolutionizing how individuals engage in the onboarding process of securities market. This initiative reflects NCCPL's dedication to making account opening more accessible and user-friendly for the investors. The NCC SCP will allow investors to initiate and complete Know Your Customer (KYC) process without the hassle of visiting any office.

SCP has a streamlined and comprehensible design, facilitating investors in completing the essential basic verifications (NADRA, Biometric,

IBAN and Mobile Number) and documentation needed for account opening through a series of straightforward steps, ensuring a smooth and efficient onboarding process. This approach not only enhances the convenience for investors but also significantly benefits brokers as they will receive the verified basic information along with documentation through SCP as compared to conventional process.

Mr. Muhammad Lukman, CEO of NCCPL, emphasized, "NCC SCP empowers investors by providing them with control over their account opening journey efficiently. The portal operates round the clock, ensuring users can access its benefits at their convenience, thereby promoting a dynamic and efficient onboarding environment."

As per Mr. Imran Ahmed Khan, COO of NCCPL, "NCC SCP will enhance the customer experience while streamlining operations. Through the portal customers can efficiently establish their onboarding process, ensuring a smooth and hassle-free journey."

Shafiq Ahmed, CIO of NCCPL, said, "The portal has user-friendly interface, which enhances customer experience. Its simple design and built-in features empower users with enhanced functionality and efficiency, making account opening more accessible than ever before."

## PEC launches STEM education drive

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) conducted an event titled as launching of STEM Education Drive & Other PPDC Initiatives at Bahria University, Islamabad on Wednesday. Wherein, the Chief Guest was Engr. Muhammad Najeer Haroon, Chairman, PEC & the event was presided by Rear Admiral Zaka ur Rehman HI(M), DG Academics, Bahria University, Islamabad.

Rear Admiral Zaka ur Rehman HI(M), Director General, Academics, Bahria University, Islamabad, underscored the university's dedication for providing cutting-edge education and skill development opportunities that align with global standards. He applauded PEC and especially the working of PPDC committee for its comprehensive approach to student development, which includes academic excellence, professional

skills, and personal growth. Engr. Mir Masood Rashid's presentation emphasized the collaborative efforts required to make STEM education accessible and effective. He detailed the various components of the PEC STEM Education Drive, including partnerships with educational institutions and industry stakeholders to ensure a comprehensive and practical learning experience for students. He further briefed the audience about the ten (10) initiatives of PEC-Pakistan Development Committee (PPDC) i.e. STEM Education, Day Trip Learning, Annual Financing Scheme of Final Year Design Projects, Engineering Capstone Expo, PEC E-Library, Helping Industries by providing Internee Engineers, Graduate Internship Training, PEC E-Gateway, UNSDGS Adoption, Engineer Parliamentarians caucus. Engr. Muhammad

Najeer Haroon, Chairman, PEC with great enthusiasm announced the launch of our new STEM Education drive. He further elaborated that this initiative is a pivotal step in ensuring that our students are equipped with the critical skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in the ever-evolving fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. Our goal is to provide comprehensive resources, dynamic learning environments, and hands-on experiences that will inspire and engage our students. By nurturing their curiosity and creativity, we aim to build a robust foundation for their future careers and contributions to society. He also expressed his commendation for the innovative initiatives undertaken by the PEC Pakistan Development Committee (PDC) aimed at advancing engineering excellence and fostering sustainable development across Pakistan.

## Grid solar power plant at Nooriabad: Pakistan Cables completes commissioning of 2MW

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Cables, the nation's pioneer wires and cables manufacturer, has completed the successful commissioning of its 2MW captive solar power plant located at its new manufacturing facility in Nooriabad, Sindh.

The project was executed by Atlas Energy Limited for Pakistan Cables within stipulated timelines and has commenced operations as of April 23, 2024. The installed capacity of solar power plants is an investment in renewable energy initiatives by the Company. "We are committed to pursuing environmentally friendly initiatives in the future at our state-of-the-art manufacturing facility at Nooriabad, Sindh. We actively advocate use of renewable energy sources that save cost and con-



tribute to the circular economy", said Fahd K. Chinoy, Chief Executive Officer - Pakistan Cables Ltd.

Pakistan Cables is the first and only building material Company in Pakistan to have science-based emission reduction targets validated by SBTi. The Company's new state of the art manufacturing facility spread across 42 acres of land in Pakistan, is

equipped with cutting edge technology and equipment, set to transform the industry.

Earlier the Company also announced installation of Pakistan's first 69kV CCV line also at its manufacturing facility in Nooriabad, Sindh.

Pakistan Cables Ltd. founded in 1953, Pakistan Cables is the premiere and most reputable cable manu-

facturer in Pakistan. Being the only wire and cable manufacturer listed on the PSX since 1955, it is also a member company of the Amir S. Chinoy group. The company has the largest geographical footprint in Pakistan with presence in over 200 cities. It is ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015 and various cables type tested by KEMA, Netherlands.

## Malaysian High Commissioner for enhancing bilateral trade up to \$12b

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Malaysian High Commis-

sioner to Pakistan Mohammad Azhar Bin Mazlan Wednesday said that the current volume of bilateral trade between both countries stood at \$1.8 billion as compared to its existing potential of \$12 billion annually.

Addressing the busi-

nessmen at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), the Malaysian High Commissioner to Pakistan Mohammad Azhar Bin Mazlan said that the current volume of trade between the two countries was less than the mutual trade potential and that Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) can play a significant role in its advancement, said a press release.

There are many opportunities for development in the halal industry in Malaysia and Pakistan, in which the private sector of both countries should play their full role by taking tangible steps, he said adding that his country would extend full cooperation to Pakistan to become a regional hub of halal industry.

He said that currently, over 5,000 Pakistani students were studying in Malaysian universities and an Islamic environment was available for Pakistani students in Malaysia, especially the female students who can continue their education there with

full religious freedom.

Pakistan and Malaysia are strategic partners and this partnership is very important in the development and economic prosperity of both countries, he said adding over 200,000 workers work in different sectors and they have ample opportunities there.

Speaking on the occasion, former President Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Zubair Ahmed Malik highlighted the historical economic and trade relations between Pakistan and Malaysia by underscoring the need for frequent exchange of think tanks of both countries to further the existing relationship.

Secretary General United Business Group Zafar Bakhtawari, highlighting the significance of ASEAN States, underlined the need for grant of the status of a full dialogue partner to Pakistan, asserting that the direct air links between Pakistan and the ASEAN States will make a big difference in strengthening mutual trade ties.

## Court Notice

In the Court of Sidra Jalal Civil Judge-III/Illaq Qazi Matta Swat. Case No. 82/1. Institution 12/05/2024. Hearing date 22/06/2024. Muhammad Ishaq Khan Vs. Mukaray etc. Notice to defendant (1/1) Mst. Lakhta widow, (1/2) Muqam, (1/3) Shamshad, (1/5) Gul Zada, (1/6) Shahzada, (1/7) Alamzeb, (1/9) Alam, (1/10) Mahbooba, (1/11) Lal Bibi, (1/12) Basbibi, (1/13) Meena, (2/4) Mst. Gul Bibi, (7/1) Zeeshan, (7/2) Salman sons, (7/3) Afshan, (7/4) Mst. Liaba daughters Nisar Khan, (8/1) Farhan son, (8/2) Mst. Noora daughter, (8/3) Mst. Ghazala widow Khista Khan r/o Deeran Patty Matta Swat. Whereas, the above named cannot be served in ordinary manner it is therefore proclaimed or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court on 22/06/2024 at 8:00 a.m. Ex-parte proceeding will be initiated against you.

## Court Notice

In the Court of Kiran Noor Civil Judge-IV/Illaq Qazi District Swat. Case No. 130/1 year 1997. Next hearing date 31/05/2024. Ameer Khan Vs. Abdul Samad etc. Notice to defendant (1) Abdul Samad s/o Abdul Salam r/o Babo Kaly Hoti District Mardan. In above mentioned case the respondent can't be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if said respondents will not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8:30 a.m. dated 31/05/2024. Ex-parte proceeding will be held against the mentioned respondents under my hand and seal of this Court.





In brief

IUB beats WUM

MULTAN (APP): Islamia University Bahawalpur (IUB) on Wednesday won against Women University Multan (WUM) in Women Cricket Tournament first match being held under Pakistan Cricket Board at BZU. The tournament is being held at Bahauddin Zakariya University(BZU) from May 28 to June. On the first day, a match was played between WUM and IUB. IUB won the toss and decided to bat first, scoring 170 runs in 20 overs. Saba Khurshid scored 67 runs. In response, WUM scored 14 runs in 10 overs, and the entire team was all out. Saba Khurshid was named the Player of the Match and was recognized as an all-rounder. The next match will be held on June 1, between Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan and Islamia University Bahawalpur at Bahauddin Zakariya University.

Usyk, Fury heavyweight rematch

RIYADH (Agencies): Oleksandr Usyk will face Tyson Fury in a rematch on December 21 in Riyadh, the top Saudi organiser said on Wednesday, after winning their undisputed heavyweight boxing bout earlier this month. The undefeated Ukrainian won by split decision against Britain's Fury in the Saudi capital on May 19 in the first unification fight of the four-belt era. "The rematch between the undisputed champion Oleksandr Usyk and the champion Tyson Fury is now scheduled on the 21 of December 2024 during Riyadh Season," Turki Alalshikh, chairman of the General Entertainment Authority, posted on X, formerly Twitter. Britain's Lennox Lewis won the last undisputed heavyweight championship against Evander Holyfield in 1999. Both men were ringside as Usyk handed Fury, 35, his first defeat. The 37-year-old Ukrainian, who briefly served as a soldier after the Russian invasion, was also undisputed champion at cruiserweight and won Olympic, world and European honours as an amateur.

Lyon 'surprised' by Anderson retirement

SYDNEY (Agencies): Australia spinner Nathan Lyon says he is "surprised" James Anderson is retiring from Test cricket because he would still be England's "best bowler". Pace bowler Anderson, 41, will end his legendary international career in the first Test against West Indies in July after the England management told him they want to look to the future. Lyon is likely to line up alongside Anderson for Lancashire in the County Championship in the run-up to the Englishman's final Test. "Obviously Jimmy Anderson is in the conversation of being the greatest fast bowler of all time," Lyon told BBC Radio 5 Live. "Good luck to Jimmy and I look forward to playing with him at Lancashire, but I'm glad he won't be coming out to the next Ashes," Anderson, England's all-time leading wicket-taker, held talks in April with Test coach Brendon McCullum, captain Ben Stokes and managing director Rob Key. The hierarchy's decision to move on from Anderson is partly fuelled by a desire to plan for the next tour of Australia, in the winter of 2025-26, when Anderson will be 43. Off-spinner Lyon sits seventh on the list of leading Test wicket-takers, four places behind Anderson, and the two have played against each other in 22 Ashes matches.

# Pakistan clinch Sarsabz Volleyball Series

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan team secured a dominating 3-0 victory over Australia, in the second game of the three-match Sarsabz Volleyball Series 2024 here at the Liaquat Gymnasium of Pakistan Sports Complex on Wednesday. Demonstrating exceptional skill and determination, the Pakistan team outplayed Australia by 3-0 with set points of 26-24, 25-19, and 25-23. This impressive win marks Pakistan's second consecutive victory in the series, ensuring they clinch the series win with a match still to be played. This achievement was a testament to the hard work and dedication of the Pakistan volleyball team and the unwavering support from the Pakistan Volleyball Federation. The match began with a nail-biting first set, where both teams displayed remarkable prowess. Pakistan managed to edge out Australia with a close score of 26-24, setting the tone for the rest of the game. Building on their momentum in the second set, Pakistan dominated the second set with a score of 25-19. Their strategic plays and cohesive teamwork left Australia struggling to keep up. The final set was a testament to Pakistan's resilience and skill. Despite a strong challenge from the Australian team, Pakistan secured the win with a score of 25-23, sealing their victory in the match and the series. Chairman Pakistan Volleyball Federation, Chaudhry Muhammad Yaqoob, expressed his pride in the team's performance, saying, "This series win is a significant milestone for Pakistan volleyball. The team's hard work and dedication have paid off, and we are thrilled to see them perform at such a high level. We encourage all fans to come out and support the team in the final match." The third and final match of the series was scheduled for May 30, 2024, at 6:30pm. The Pakistan Volleyball Federation extends its gratitude to all the supporters and sponsors who have made this series possible. The support from the fans has been instrumental in motivating the team to achieve this remarkable feat.

## U23 KP Games Peshawar, Bannu secure wins

PESHAWAR (APP):Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Under-23 Inter-Regional Male Games got underway with Peshawar and Bannu secured victories against their respective rivals in the opening matches of the football competition being played here at Tehmas Khan Football Stadium on Wednesday. The three-day competition of the Regional Games was officially inaugurated by the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur. Advisor to the Chief Minister on Sports and Youth Affairs Syed Fakhar Jahan and other personalities were present on the occasion. 1850 male and female athletes will participate in 20 different sports. In which 770 female players are participating in 9 different games while 1150 male players are participating in 11 different games. On the first day, Peshawar and Bannu won their respective matches and qualified for the next round. The first match of the football was played between Peshawar and Hazara teams. Both teams showed a wonderful and quality game. In the 62nd minute of the game, Peshawar made excellent passes. Peshawar defeated Mardan 2-1 to reach the semi-finals, for Peshawar Alamgir and Siraj netted fine goals while for Mardan, Jabbar reduced the margin by one goal. In the cricket match played at Hayatabad Cricket Stadium, Bannu defeated Malakand by two wickets. While playing first, the Malakand team scored 84 runs in the allotted fifteen overs. Ilyas was outstanding with 25 runs. In response, Bannu achieved the desired target with the loss of eight wickets. In the second match, Mardan defeated DIK by five wickets. While playing first, Dera Ismail Khan scored 135 runs and Mardan chased the target for the loss of five wickets Niamat Ullah was the top scorer with his graceful 54 runs including nine boundaries and one six. Itif and Jibran scored 23 and 22 runs each.

## Bayern appoint Kompany to end long search for new coach

MUNICH (AFP): Bayern Munich's long search to fill their vacant head coaching position is over with the German giants naming Vincent Kompany as manager in a shock move on Wednesday. The 38-year-old Belgian, a surprise choice with his Burnley side relegated from the Premier League this season, has penned a three-year deal at the Allianz Arena. Normally in contention for the biggest names in the business, Bayern have been searching for months but have been knocked back by several candidates after their first trophyless season for 12 years. After failed attempts to lure Bayer Leverkusen boss Xabi Alonso, Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann and Austria's Ralf Rangnick, Bayern tried to hold onto Thomas Tuchel, who had agreed in February to leave in the summer. Tuchel however announced in May he "couldn't agree on terms" to stay with the club and would "stick to the agreement we had in February". Instead, Bayern have decided for Kompany, taking a risk on an inexperienced yet promising candidate in one of the biggest jobs in football. "I'm looking forward to the challenge of FC Bayern. It's a great honour to be able to work for this club - FC Bayern is an institution in international football," said Kompany in

a club statement. "I'm now looking forward to the basics: working with the players, building a team. Once the basis is right, success will follow." Burnley will reportedly receive £10 million (\$13 million) in compensation for allowing their manager to leave. "We understand the allure and prestige of a club like Bayern Munich and respect Vincent's ambition to explore new opportunities," Burnley said in a statement. Alonso 2.0? After a successful playing career where he captained Manchester City and the Belgian national team, Kompany returned to his first club Anderlecht to begin his managerial career. He moved to Burnley in 2022 and took them to the Premier League as second-division champions, before crashing back to earth over the past 12 months. Yet, he crucially retained the support of his old coach at City Pep Guardiola, who advised his former club to go for Kompany due to his leadership qualities and determination to play an attacking brand of football. "As a coach, you have to stand for what you are as a character," added Kompany. "I love having the ball, being creative - but we also have to be aggressive and courageous on the pitch." Coaching instability has



ISLAMABAD: Players of Pakistan and Australia Volleyball teams in action during 2nd match of Sarsabz Volleyball Series-2024 at Liaquat Gymnasium, Sports Complex. —APP Photo

## Punjab, KP qualified for semis in PM Handball League

PESHAWAR (APP): Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa qualified for the semi-finals of the Prime Minister Youth Talent Hunt National Handball League being played here at the University of Peshawar premises on Wednesday. Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa teams have qualified for the semi-finals of the Prime Minister Youth Talent Hunt National Handball League being played under the auspices of the Directorate of Sports University of Peshawar. In the League round matches Punjab Green defeated Balochistan Green by 33-17 and Sindh recorded a victory against the Federal Islamabad team by 11-8 while KP Green scored 37 against Sindh Green by 12 and won the match and Punjab Green scored 45 against Federal Green 8, KP White scored 20 against Sindh White 14. Punjab White defeated KP White by 37-12, while the match between the teams of Balochistan White and Federal White was equal by 18-18. On this occasion, the President of the Provincial Handball Association and Director of Sports Peshawar University Bahre Karam, Sajjad Khan, officials of Pakistan Handball Federation and representatives of the Higher Education Commission were also present.

## Islamabad, WAPDA, PAF victorious in Basketball tournament

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad, Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) and Pakistan Air Force (PAF) earned victories in the second round of All-Pakistan Muhammad Majid and Abdul Nasir Memorial Basketball tournament at Siddique Memon Sports Complex, Karachi. Karachi Basketball Association (KBBA) President Muhammad Yaqoob was the chief guest on the second day of the tournament, said a press release issued here. Islamabad outclassed the strong Police team by 87 points against 62 points in the second round of the tournament. Some brilliant game was witnessed during the match as Gibran Asif scored 26, Ali Kazmi scored 15 and, Momin Javed scored 14 points played a vital role in the Islamabad team victory, while Ali Raza scored 34 points for the police side. In the second match, WAPDA defeated Balochistan in a one-sided match with the difference of 69 points with the help

of 22 points of Zainul Hasan and 20 points of Aalee Jah. The match concluded with 108-39 points. In the earlier matches, Police beat Sindh Yellow by 62-32 points while Punjab Rangers beat Balochistan by 74-40 points. Late Muhammad Majid and late Abdul Nasir represented Pakistan as well as in national events for a long time and the purpose to organise the memorial tournament for the recognition of their great love and services to the game of basketball.

## Jabeur survives scare to reach third round

PARIS (Agencies): Women's eighth seed Ons Jabeur survived a scare against Colombian Camila Osorio to reach the French Open third round. The 29-year-old Tunisian, a quarter-finalist last year, struggled for consistency in a match which saw 12 breaks of serve. But, after Osorio had twice broken back in the deciding set, Jabeur held her nerve to serve out a 6-3 1-6 6-3 victory. Jabeur, seeking her maiden Grand Slam title, will meet Canadian 31st seed Leylah Fernandez or China's Wang Xiyu next. The three-time Grand Slam runner-up made the perfect start on Court Suzanne Lenglen, establishing a 3-0 lead with an early break. Jabeur eventually took the first set following a run of four successive breaks - but 22-year-old Osorio mounted an impressive response in the second as her opponent faltered to swiftly level the match. It was Jabeur who struck the first blow of the deciding set, yet twice the spirited Osorio responded to frustrate the world number nine. However, Jabeur was able to refocus and after breaking Osorio again in the eighth game she served out the win at the first opportunity, the relief evident in her celebrations after coming through a testing encounter. Alcaraz survives scare at French Open: World number three Carlos Alcaraz survived a huge scare at the hands of 176th-ranked Dutch qualifier Jesper de Jong to reach the third round after a four-set triumph on Wednesday. Wimbledon champion Alcaraz, who made the semi-finals at Roland Garros last year, scrambled to a 6-3, 6-4, 2-6, 6-2 second round victory over a player taking part in only his second Grand Slam main draw. The 21-year-old Spaniard was broken five times and hit 47 unforced errors before De Jong, playing his fifth match at the tournament, eventually wilted under the roof of Court Philippe Chatrier.

## Young Afghan side ‘among the favourites’ for T20 WC

KABUL (Agencies): A young Afghan side with an average age of just 25 have vowed to give audiences back home rare cause for jubilation at the T20 World Cup after a breakthrough performance at the 50-over showpiece. Kabul's skies were raked with fireworks when Afghanistan celebrated their stunning eight-wicket victory against Pakistan in the ODI World Cup in October. They finished sixth, ahead of defending champions England - who they also beat - stoking hopes for the T20 tournament in the United States and West Indies starting on Saturday. "In the past when we would defeat a bigger team, our victory was tagged as an 'upset'," 22-year-old Sediqullah Atal told AFP on the phone from their training camp in the West Indies. "The word 'upset' is no longer in the dictionary and we are ranked among the favourites," the left-handed opening batsman said, insisting his team is "no less than anyone". Afghanistan has been through decades of war, but the country's passion for cricket has never gone away. "When you have the support of 40 million people and they motivate you, it is a feeling of absolute delight," said 20-year-old all-rounder Nangeyalia Kharote. Delight of supporters It's "a matter of great joy" to represent his country, though they must now "match the high expectations" of supporters, he told AFP in Kabul ahead of his departure for the Caribbean. "The love from the Afghans both at home and abroad is remarkable," Sediqullah Atal added. The Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB), which manages the men's team, has the full backing of the country's Taliban government, which forced the United States and its allies out of the country before seizing power in 2021. Afghanistan's participation in the World Cup therefore comes with some controversy, skirting the International Cricket Council's rules which stipulate all Test-playing nations must have a women's side. The ICC has previously said the matter is "pend-

ing", allowing Afghanistan to compete - although England and Australia have refused to play them outside the World Cup. "They are our heroes" Despite decades of war and poverty Afghan cricket has strengthened, with new academies, sponsorship deals and tournament financing. Their first match at the 2024 World Cup is on June 4 against Uganda in Guyana. "Our team has arrived and are playing at a very high level in a short space of time," cricket enthusiast Afzal Khan, who trains at the Rashid Khan Cricket Academy in Kabul, told AFP. "They have struggled through lots of difficulties to bring the team and our cricket to this level." In an interview published by the ACB last week, Khan pledged: "We will shine well in this World Cup too, and match the expectations of our compatriots." Back home in Kabul, another young cricketer in training made those expectations very clear. Naseem Khan told AFP "this will be the best World Cup for Afghanistan".



CHELMSFORD: Nat Sciver-Brunt goes for the scoop, England vs Pakistan, 3rd women's ODI.





## In brief

### Police arrest nine gamblers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi district police arrested nine gamblers and recovered Rs 30,000 stake money, seven mobile phones, four gold rings and other items from their possession, said a police spokesman here on Wednesday. He informed that Taxila police conducted a raid and arrested nine gamblers namely Riasat, Nazakat, Amir, Qasim, Mushtaq, Tariq, Sarfraz, Ifran and Kamran, who were allegedly involved in betting while playing cards. Police recovered Rs 30,000, seven mobile phones, four gold rings and other items from their possession. A case has been registered against the accused while further investigation is under process. Superintendent of Police, Potohar, Nisar Nawaz said that gambling is the root cause of other evils and those involved in such crimes do not deserve any concession.

### 334,200 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 334,200 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 375,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1467.86 feet and was 69.86 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 150,900 cusecs and 151,500 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1186.00 feet, which was 136.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 66,900 cusecs and 25,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 213,300, 168,200, 92,700 and 37,300 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 94,200 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 38,700 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### 35 tandoor shops fined

RAWALPINDI (APP): The district administration has fined 35 tandoor shops with financial penalties worth Rs.1,35,000 for violating per loaf price as prescribed by the government. According to the details, the Rawalpindi administration is fully active in ensuring the implementation of the fixed prices of Patir and Naan. On directives by the Punjab government, the price of Patir Roti has been fixed at Rs.14 per loaf. During the visits by the District Magistrates in the last 48 hours, 142 tandoor shops were checked and 35 were found guilty of violation and were fined Rs.1,35,000. Since May 1, more than 4,000 tandoor shops have been checked across the district and a fine of Rs. 27,53,500 has been imposed for 827 violations. Moreover, one FIR was registered, 58 tandoor shops were sealed and 166 violators were also arrested since May 01, 2024.

### Bhatta Chowk cattle market

RAWALPINDI (APP): The biggest cattle market of the twin cities for Eid ul Azha, has been auctioned at Rs 109.9 million. The cattle market will be set up at Bhatta Chowk where the entry fees of Rs 3000 and Rs 2000 would be charged for large and small animal selling. According to the spokesman Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB) Rasheed Saqib, the contract was won by Riaz Hussain through Moin Khan with the highest bid of Rs.109.9 million. A total of 20 bidders participated in the auction which was held here on Wednesday.

# Ashrafi appreciates acceptance of Palestine state

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Ulema Council Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Wednesday appreciated the international development of accepting Palestine as an independent state by Spain, Ireland and Norway.

Addressing a press conference accompanied with prominent religious scholars, he asked the other European Union member states, the United Kingdom and the United States to follow suit and help stop the ongoing Israeli aggression on Rafah causing death and destruction in the region.

Ashrafi also lauded the unwavering efforts of Saudi leadership particularly Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman and Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan for an amicable resolution of the Palestine issue. He said the entire members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation were united on the stance that Palestine should be an independent state with Al-Quds its capital.

It was the outcome of a large number of sacrifices rendered by the Palestinian nation particularly since October 7, 2023, he added.

Ashrafi said Pakistan had stood by the people of

Palestine since the day one, and would continue its moral, political and diplomatic support to them.

He stressed that Palestine and Kashmir were two major issues of the Muslim Ummah and there would be no peace in the world without resolving them. As regards the prevailing political situation, he said the roles played by both Mujeeb-ur-Rehman and General Yahya Khan were well documented in the history raising a question mark on the loyalty of those who had sought India's help to disintegrate the eastern part of the country. How the person, who was supported by the Indian army and its intelligence agency, Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) to break the country into two units, could be a national hero, he asked.

The political figures should not distort the historical facts in order to misguide the innocent people and achieve their ulterior motives, he added. Ashrafi said the foundation of Pakistan's nuclear programme was laid down by Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and it was completed by General Zia-ul-Haq. The services of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif,

Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan for making the nuclear programme a success story could also not be ignored, he added.

He said Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was murdered for two reasons, first for legislation on the Finality of Prophethood and second to launch the nuclear programme. Ashrafi said Pakistan had become a nuclear power with collective efforts and the same spirit was needed today to get it out of economic crisis.

"We should not cross the limits in political differences which can not only cause social mess but also further deteriorate economic conditions," Ashrafi urged the government to take a stern action against those people who were spreading anti-state notions on social media.

Ashrafi highlighted the significance of the Special Investment Facilitation Council in attracting foreign investments from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and China. He expressed the hope for a significant influx of foreign investment in the coming six months, stressing the need for political stability to achieve the goal.



ISLAMABAD: Traffic police officials making driving license for APP employees at Associated Press of Pakistan Headquarters. —APP Photo

# Rubina Khalid reaffirms federal govt commitment

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Rubina Khalid Wednesday reaffirmed the federal government's dedication to alleviate poverty in Balochistan by providing substantial economic support to the women of the province.

This announcement was made during a high-level meeting with key stakeholders to discuss the coordination and implementation of BISP initiatives in Balochistan. The meeting was attended by Secretary IT Ayaz Khan Mandukhel, Secretary Industries Noor Ahmed Perkani, Secretary Colleges Hafiz Tahir, DG Benazir Income Support Programme Abdul Jabbar, and other relevant officials. The discussion centered on enhancing the effectiveness of BISP in the province and introducing new initiatives aimed at poverty reduction.

Rubina Khalid stated that her visit was in accordance with the directives of the President of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari, who has shown a keen interest in the welfare of Balochistan. "The President has instructed us to pay special attention to the needs of Balochistan, particularly focusing on the economic empowerment of its women," she emphasized.

Highlighting the importance of vocational training, Rubina Khalid announced the launch of a vocational training program designed to equip both women and men in Balochistan with the skills necessary for sustainable livelihoods. "This program is a testament to our commitment to providing quality training that meets global standards, ensuring that the people of Balochistan are well-prepared to compete in the modern workforce," she added.

Rubina Khalid also out-

lined the need for improving various sectors to combat poverty effectively. She called for enhanced efforts in processing, packaging, livestock management, and healthcare services.

"To reduce poverty, we must improve our skill programs and take concrete steps towards better processing, packaging, livestock, and healthcare facilities. The world demands trained and skilled people, and we are committed to fulfilling this need," she said. Besides, Chairperson Rubina Khalid also met Deputy Speaker Balochistan Assembly, Ghazala Gola.

During the meeting, the problems faced by women beneficiaries of BISP were discussed. Ghazala Gola assured Chairperson Rubina Khalid that the provincial government of Balochistan will play its full role in providing all possible facilities to the deserving women of BISP

in the payment centers. Later, Rubina Khalid along with Director General Balochistan Abdul Jabbar also visited BISP payment centers and Benazir Nashonuma Center in Nawakali and Sariab.

Rubina Khalid interacted with the deserving women who came there to collect the money and listened to their problems. On this occasion, Rubina Khalid while talking about the health of women said that the health of young women is badly affected due to the birth of more children or less interval in the birth of children. Therefore, proper interval in the birth of children is very important.

She said that due to non-availability of nutritious food in women during pregnancy, children suffer from fatal diseases like stunting. BISP is playing an important role for better health of women and their children under its Nashonuma program.

# Campaign against country's integrity intolerable: Aqeel

ISLAMABAD (APP): The government's spokesman on Legal Affairs Barrister Aqeel Malik on Wednesday said that statements against the integrity of the country by a certain political group are highly condemnable and intolerable acts.

Drawing the nexus of current political circumstances with the situation in 1971 was an enmity with the country, he said adding that the government would take legal actions against those who are part of such campaign.

Addressing a press conference along with Member National Assembly (MNA) Barrister Danyal Chaudhry,

he said that the political group was using all tactics for political benefit and to come into power again which was hurting the people of Pakistan. Barrister Aqeel Malik said that the tweet on X handler was made with the consent of the PTI founder.

The spokesman said that the PTI founder should share his government's performance as he has been in power for eleven years at KPK and three and a half years in the federation. He said that if the PTI founder was resembling himself with Sheikh Mujeeb then he should also tell who was

funding the latter in 1971.

Barrister said that the government wouldn't tolerate such false and negative propaganda against the integrity of the country. The PTI founder was inciting the people for his political gains, he said. He also condemned the torture of Khawar Maneka in court by PTI activists and declared it a sad incident.

Barrister Danyal said that political differences were part of politics but he never witnessed such a campaign. He said that government and state institutions were on the same page for the development of the country.

# Naila Kiani appointed goodwill ambassador

ISLAMABAD (INP): Leading female high-altitude mountaineer of Pakistan, Naila Kiani has achieved yet another milestone by being declared as Girls Education National Goodwill Ambassador by the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training.

Naila Kiani has an unparalleled record in mountaineering and in her new role, she aims to highlight the importance of girls' education across Pakistan and support initiatives by federal and provincial governments. She is the first Pakistani woman and the overall third Pakistani to have climbed 11 of the 14 highest peaks above 8,000 meters.

She holds the distinction of being the first Pakistani woman to climb an 8,000-meter mountain in Pakistan. Kiani is also the first Pakistani woman to summit Nanga Parbat, Gasherbrum I (G-I),

Gasherbrum II (G-II), Lhotse, Manaslu, Broad Peak, Annapurna, Makalu, and Cho Oyu.

She is among the ten mountaineers worldwide, and the only Pakistani, to have climbed multiple (seven) peaks above 8,000 meters in less than six months, in 2023. Furthermore, she is the fastest Pakistani, regardless of gender, to have climbed all eleven 8,000-meter peaks in less than three years.

She is the only female athlete to receive Sitara-i-Imtiaz, the highest civilian honour given to any female athlete in Pakistan.

Advocate for Girls' Education Naila Kiani's appointment as the National Goodwill Ambassador for Girls' Education is a testament to her commitment to empowering women through education.

She, being an aerospace engineer and a banker, believes that education is

the key to women's empowerment. As an ambassador, she will work tirelessly to raise awareness about the importance of girls' education, and support and promote initiatives by federal and provincial governments aimed at improving educational opportunities for girls.

It also aims to inspire young girls across the nation to pursue their dreams and achieve their full potential.

Meanwhile, commenting on her selection as Goodwill ambassador, Naila Kiani stated, "I am honoured to be appointed as the National Goodwill Ambassador for Girls' Education. Education is the only route to women's empowerment and success for our country. I am committed to using my platform to support and advocate for educational initiatives that ensure every girl in Pakistan has access to quality education."

## Action against beggars intensified; arrests 11

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Assistant Commissioners accompanied by Magistrates of the Federal Capital have intensified their efforts against the alms-seeker and arrested 11 professional beggars in various parts of the city.

Following the directives of the Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon, the AC's, Magistrates have carried out operations targeting professional beggars in the city, said the Spokesman of ICT administration.

In a recent sweep, the AC of Pothohar has arrested seven beggars. Similarly, the Assistant Commissioner of the City apprehended five beggars from PTCL Chowk, Faisal Masjid, and nearby areas.

The arrested individuals were taken to the police station, while minors among them were sent to the Edhi Center for care. These operations were part of a daily routine supervised by Assistant Commissioners to address the issue of begging in the capital, the spokesman said.

The campaign aimed at to reduce the presence of professional beggars and provide support for minors caught in the practice, he added.

# Govt cracks down on smuggling, hoarding

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a significant crackdown on smuggling, hoarding, and power pilferage, the government has made substantial progress in its zero-tolerance policy, yielding impressive results.

Since September last year, the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) has been instrumental in facilitating the recovery of billions of rupees and scores of arrests, PTV reported.

In a major anti-smuggling operation, authorities foiled the smuggling and

illegal movement of 3,036 metric tons of fertilizer.

Additionally, 281 metric tons of wheat and flour were seized from smugglers, preventing the smuggling of essential items.

The government's efforts have also led to the seizure of 34,640 metric tons of sugar, putting an end to illegal profiteering.

Furthermore, authorities recovered 2,503 metric tons of wheat, 56,948 metric tons of ghee, and 10,379 metric tons of sugar from market price manipulators.

The government's com-

mitment to upholding the rule of law and protecting Pakistan's economy is evident in the registration of 145,365 FIRs against individuals involved in power theft, resulting in the arrest of over 70,000 power thieves and the recovery of PKR 93 billion.

These achievements demonstrate the government's resolve to combat smuggling, hoarding, and power pilferage, ensuring the availability of essential items to citizens and safeguarding the national economy.

# ANF recovers 178 kg drugs in eight operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting eight operations across the country managed to recover 178 kg drugs and arrested three accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday.

He informed that 11 kg ice was recovered from a parcel sent to Australia via a courier office in Jhelum. In another operation, 3.4 kg

ice was recovered from a parcel booked for Dubai at a courier office in Karachi.

In the third operation, 950 grams ice was recovered from a passenger going to Doha at Multan Airport while 94 kg hashish was recovered near RCD Road Lasbela.

48 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of an accused rounded up M-I Islamabad. In the sixth operation,

15 kg hashish was recovered from the Panjgur area and 4 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of an accused netted in Dera Ismail Khan.

In the 8th operation, 2 kg ice was recovered from a parcel rounded up in Lahore. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.

# Authorities to take stakeholders on board

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Engineer Aamir Khattak here on Wednesday directed the authorities concerned to take all the stakeholders on board to make ban on plastic bags effective.

Chairing an Environment Department meeting the commissioner instructed the officers that the awareness sessions should be conducted before the giving deadline to ban the use of plastic bags. Awareness sessions should be conducted with stakeholders including manufacturers, recyclers and consumers, he added.

He said that the importance of compliance with the new regulations should be highlighted in the aware-

ness sessions and the citizens should also be offered alternative materials to single-use plastics. Community engagement sessions should also be arranged to discuss the harmful effects of the plastic bag use and their alternatives, he ordered.

The commissioner said that cloth bags could be used as an alternative to plastic bags besides promoting the use of paper, steel, or wooden cutlery. The process of manufacturing these bags at the local level would start a new economic activity, he added.

The purpose of this change is not only to protect the environment but also to protect human health, the commissioner added.

The implementation of Punjab Environmental Protection (Production and Consumption of Single-Use Plastic Products) Regulations 2023 issued by the Punjab Government is top priority of the administration, the commissioner said adding that all the stakeholders should strictly follow the regulations issued in this regard.

The commissioner said that the Price Magistrates in the district would be equipped with gauges to measure the thickness of the plastic bags to ensure the enforcement of the ban on the use of plastic bags. The plastic bags with a thickness of less than 75 microns would be confiscated from June 5, he warned.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor arranging and displaying children bath tubs to attract customers at F-10 in Federal Capital. —APP Photo



**Hanafi visits Balkh**  
KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, the Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs, recently visited Balkh province where he laid the foundation stone for a mosque at the 209th Al-Fath Army Corps and held productive meeting with the corps' officials. In addition to this, the Deputy Prime Minister toured the training center and various other departments, assuring the officials of the government's full support and cooperation.

**Sayed Mubin facilitated**  
KABUL (BNA): The Liaison Commission for Contact with Afghan Personalities has announced the return of Sayed Mubin Shah, former Deputy Minister of Finance, to the country. The commission wrote that Sayed Mubin Shah, former Deputy Minister of Finance, Afghan Commercial Attaché in Washington, policy designer and maker at the Central Bank, university professor, and Dean of the Faculty of Economics in the previous administration, has returned to Afghanistan.

Asia is comparable to a living body composed of soil and water. The heart that beats inside the body is Afghanistan. The destruction of Afghanistan would be the destruction of Asia. And in its progress and prosperity lies the well-being of Asia. - Allama Iqbal

# Ministry discusses Doha meeting



KABUL (Ariana News): Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Wednesday that its Strategic Studies Center has conducted a discussion on the upcoming Doha meeting and how the Islamic Emirate interacts with the international community. According to the ministry, Mohammad Zakir Jalali Director of the third

political department of the IEA MFA, employees of various departments and diplomats took part in the discussion. Jalali said in this discussion that compared to the first and second Doha meetings, a positive change can be observed in the interaction of the organizers and the hosts

with regards to the third meeting. He said the Islamic Emirate wants positive interaction with the international community; but does not want this interaction to be at the cost of political independence, religious and national values, and the dignity of the system and homeland.

## Turkey suspends agreement with Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Turkish presidency announced in a statement that the diplomatic visa exemption agreement between Turkey and Afghanistan has been revoked.

According to the statement from the Turkish Presidency, this decision, signed by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, will be implemented starting from June 1.

The decree signed by the Turkish president states: "The agreement between the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on the mutual exemption from visa obligations for holders of diplomatic passports, signed on September 29, 2007, and implemented by the Council of Ministers' decision on January 8, 2008, will be terminated as of June 1."

With the revocation of this agreement, Turkish and Taliban officials will now have to undergo the visa application process for mutual entry into Afghanistan and Turkey.

Turkey made this decision based on Article 3 of Presidential Decree No. 9, which outlines the President's authority regarding the approval of international agreements.

Turkey has not yet recognized the Taliban officially, but several Taliban officials have visited Turkey at the government's official invitation, and Turkey has accepted several Taliban diplomats.

Since the Taliban took over, their government remains unrecognized by the international community. However, several regional countries maintain unofficial ties with the Taliban administration. Countries including Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, China, and Russia have unofficial connections with the Taliban, despite the lack of formal recognition.

# Islamic Emirate seeks global recognition

KABUL (TOLONews): After the remarks by Iran's Deputy Ambassador regarding the Islamic Emirate's request for Tehran to take the lead in recognizing the caretaker government, Zabihullah Mujahid told TOLONews that Kabul seeks recognition from all countries around the world.

The spokesperson of the Islamic Emirate added that recognition is the right of the Islamic Emirate and Kabul desires close diplomatic relations with the international community.

Mujahid stated: "We ask all countries to recognize that it is Afghanistan's right. Upon recognition, we can achieve further progress. Any country that takes the initiative in this regard is commendable. Currently, there are also official interactions between Iran and Afghanistan, with embassies active in both countries."

Gholam Reza Najari, Iran's Deputy Ambassador in Kabul, previously stated that his country has close relations with the Islamic Emirate and that Kabul wishes Iran to be the first country to recognize the caretaker government.

In an interview with an Iranian media outlet, this Iranian diplomat described the lack of an inclusive government as one of the challenges facing his country's decision to recognize the Islamic Emirate.

Gholam Reza Najari said: "Iran, like other countries in the world, has not yet recognized the caretaker government of Afghanistan. Although the officials of this country wish for Iran to be the first country to recognize Afghanistan."

Zakiullah Mohammadi, a university professor, said: "An inclusive government should include specialists, and an inclusive govern-



ment should also involve other ethnic groups of Afghanistan."

Mohammad Bashar, a political analyst, said: "Political engagement or recognition is very important for a country and its regime; however, this should not come at the expense of values. The Islamic Emirate has met the global conditions for recognition."

The formation of an inclusive government,

ensuring human rights especially for women and girls, intra-Afghan dialogues, the non-use of Afghan soil against other countries, and the prohibition of cultivation, production, and trafficking of drugs are among the fundamental demands of the world for the recognition of the caretaker government. According to world officials, these demands have not yet been met in Afghanistan.

## Minaret of Jam: Ministry team arrives in Ghor for assessment

GHOR (Khaama Press): Cultural officials in Ghor province say that an expedition team from the Ministry of Information and Culture arrived in Ferozkoh City, the capital of the province, to assess the status of the ancient Minaret of Jam.

They aim to prepare future plans for consolidating this important historical monument and to clean up the sediment residues left by recent floods around the ancient Minaret of Jam.

Engineer Mohammad Hasib Nasimi, head of the Preservation and Restoration of Historical Monuments at the Ministry of Information and Culture and head of the delegation, met with the head of Information and Culture of Ghor to discuss the purpose of his trip and request more information about the current sta-

tus of the ancient Minaret of Jam.

Mawlawi Abdulhai Zaeem, head of Information and Culture in Ghor province, says that this delegation is expected to visit the site of the Minaret of Jam as soon as possible in coordination with the local administration and the provincial Information and Culture Department to assess the situation.

It is worth mentioning that the recent devastating floods in Ghor province, in addition to causing casualties and significant financial losses to the people, have also damaged historical artifacts, particularly the ancient Minaret of Jam, which is one of Afghanistan's most valuable historical monuments.

The Minaret of Jam, located in the Ghor province of western Afghanistan, is a remarkable example of Islamic architecture. It was built in the late 12th century during the Ghurid dynasty, which ruled over a vast territory in Central Asia and northern India. The minaret stands approximately 62 meters (203

feet) tall and is notable for its intricate brickwork and turquoise tiles.

Constructed around 1190 by Sultan Ghiyas-ud-din, the Minaret of Jam is considered one of the most important examples of medieval Islamic architecture in the region.

The minaret's location in the remote and rugged terrain of Ghor province of Afghanistan has contributed to its preservation over the centuries,

although it has faced threats from natural disasters and neglect.

Despite its historical significance, the Minaret of Jam has faced challenges, including threats from flooding, erosion, and looting.

In recent years, efforts have been made to preserve and protect the minaret, including its inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2002.



## Ghor and Herat mountaineers advocate for Ghor flood victims



GHOR (Khaama Press): The mountain climbing team of Herat province successfully climbed the Dewender mountain range for the first time in a 15-hour journey, starting from the village of Badamto in Karkh district to the hot springs of Obek district in this province.

Sayed Shujauddin Hashimi, the leader and organizer of this event,

who climbed the 3,250-meter Dewender peak, Safed Kooh, and Asmani peaks with this team, stated that the purpose of this event was to attract the attention of Afghan philanthropists to the flood victims and to aid those affected by the floods in Ghor province.

Members of the Herat province Mountaineering Federation also collected

monetary donations for the flood victims in Ghor province, which are to be sent to those affected.

Meanwhile, the Hindu Kush Eagles mountaineering team of Ghor province climbed the highest peak of Siah Kooh at an altitude of 3,800 meters on Tuesday, to advocate for the province's flood victims.

These Ghor moun-

taineers stated that their ascent aimed to draw the immediate attention of the international community and relief organizations to the recent flood victims in Ghor province.

Recently, Afghanistan has been struck by devastating floods, resulting in significant loss of life and property. These deadly floods have particularly affected the central and northern regions, causing widespread destruction and displacement.

The floods have resulted in numerous fatalities, with many people losing their lives and thousands more being displaced from their homes.

The humanitarian crisis caused by the floods is exacerbated by the challenging terrain and limited access to the affected areas, making relief efforts difficult.

The international community has been called upon to provide urgent assistance to address the immediate needs of those impacted by this natural disaster, including emergency shelter, food, and medical aid.

## Minister meet Turkish Charge d'Affaires

KABUL (BNA): Dr. Mufti Noor Mohammad Saqib, the Acting Minister of Hajj and Religious Affairs, met with Cenk Unal, the Charge d'Affaires and Acting Ambassador of Turkey in Kabul.

During the meeting, the Turkish Charge d'Affaires expressed satisfaction with the recent achievements and progress of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. He emphasized the importance of the religious and cultural ties between Afghanistan and Turkey.

Unal emphasized that Afghans and Turks share the same religion and sect, expressing his delight over the good and extensive relations between Turkey and the Islamic Emirate. He stressed the need for further cooperation.

He added that Turkey wants to maintain continuous cooperation with Afghanistan in matters of Hajj, mosques, and other religious fields through its Directorate of Religious Affairs.

For his part, The Minister of Hajj and Religious Affairs, warmly welcomed the Turkish Charge d'Affaires, expressing satisfaction with his positive outlook. He highlighted the significant progress of the Islamic Emirate and recalled his recent visit to Turkey and participation in the Consultative Conference of World Islamic Scholars.

The meeting also covered other important religious topics, discussing the strengthening and expansion of religious and scientific relations, the exchange of ideas between scholars of both countries, both sides emphasized the need to further develop and sustain cooperation in various fields.

## IE leader appoints new Acting Minister of Public Health

KABUL (TOLONews): The leader of the Islamic Emirate has issued a recent decree resulting in new appointments across various levels, including a ministry, deputy ministries, provincial leadership, and other institutions.

Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate, announced that these appointments affect the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Interior, and the provinces of Faryab, Samangan, Kandahar, and Helmand.

In these appointments, Noor Jalal Jalali, the former deputy of the Ministry of Interior, has been appointed acting Minister of Public Health, Rahmatullah Najib,

the former deputy of the General Directorate of Intelligence, has been appointed deputy of the Ministry of Interior, Abdul Ahad Fazli, the former governor of Samangan, has been appointed governor of Faryab, Mohammad Shoaib Rasalat, the former governor of Faryab, has been appointed governor of Samangan.

Furthermore, the decree also reads that Mohammad Sadiq Inqilabi, the former district governor of Gereschk, Helmand, has been appointed deputy governor of Kandahar, and Hayatullah Mubarak, the former deputy governor of Kandahar, has been appointed district governor of Gereschk, Helmand.

"The former administrative deputy of the Ministry of Interior, Mawlawi Noor Jalal Jalali, has been appointed acting Minister of Public Health, the former administrative deputy of the General Directorate of Intelligence, Rahmatullah Najib, as the administrative deputy of the Ministry of Interior, and the former governor of Samangan as the governor of Faryab," said Hamdullah Fitrat, the deputy spokesman of the Islamic Emirate.

Meanwhile, several political analysts view the changes within the Islamic Emirate's institutions as a fundamental aspect of effective governance, believing that these

appointments will contribute to improving the country's situation.

Salim Paigir, a political analyst, said: "We hope that today's appointments will benefit the people of Afghanistan. Whenever a minister is changed, the people should benefit from it. They should not be replaced without reason, as in the past."

Previously, based on the decree of the leader of the Islamic Emirate, new appointments had also been made in the provinces of Herat, Balkh, Faryab, Farah, Kandahar, and Nimroz, where several individuals had been appointed as governors, police commanders, and mayors.

## Uruzgan man struggles with economic hardship

URUZGAN (TOLONews): Mohammad Sadiq, a 56-year-old man from Uruzgan province with 52 children, has expressed his frustration to TOLONews about his inability to provide proper education and upbringing for his children due to severe economic challenges.

Living in a small rented house with his four wives, Mohammad Sadiq and his family of 57 members reside in the Kareez Kheiro area of Tarinkot, the capital of Uruzgan.

He lamented that the dire economic conditions prevent him from providing even a complete meal for his children.

Of Mohammad Sadiq's 52 children, 28 are sons and 24 are daughters, with only four of his daughters mar-

ried.

"I had my first marriage during the Mujahideen era, two marriages during the previous Taliban regime, and my fourth marriage during the Republic," he added.

Regarding his living conditions, he said: "Our living situation is very bad. They eat half a piece of bread at lunch and half a piece of bread at night, with nothing for breakfast."

Waresa, Mohammad Sadiq's daughter, described their living conditions: "We have nothing, we only eat dry bread. We even eat dry, stale bread from the previous night."

Hafizullah, Mohammad Sadiq's 19-year-old son, works at a bakery in Tarinkot for a salary of 6,000 Afghanis. Attending

school is Hafizullah's greatest wish.

Hafizullah told TOLONews: "Those who went to school and got an education, if they show us the way to education and teach us, we would be happy."

However, local Uruzgan officials pledged that they will provide food assistance and facilitate education for this man's children.

Mawladad Hassan, head of the Uruzgan economy, told TOLONews: "We are trying to help them as much as possible, and in addition, we have talked to UNICEF and are following up to create a class for them."

Mohammad Sadiq hopes that with an improvement in his economic situation, the number of his children will exceed one hundred.







MEXICO CITY: Demonstrators shouting slogans during pro-Palestinian 'Urgent action for Rafah' rally.

### Nikkah during Iddat case

## Judge writes to IHC for transfer of case

#### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: District and Sessions Judge Shahrukh Arjumand on Wednesday remarked that Khawar Manika and his counsel always tried to disrupt hearing on appeals of PTI founder Imran Khan and his spouse Bushra Bibi and requested the Islamabad High Court (IHC) to transfer the case regarding their alleged unlawful marriage to another court.

The judge wrote a letter to the IHC registrar after Manika and his lawyers created ruckus in the courtroom when he was due to announce his reserved verdict on the appeals. However, the judge retired to his chamber without announcing the decision. Judge Arjumand wrote that it would not be appropriate to decide the appeals as Manika has mistrust of the court.

When day's proceeding started, the judge asked about public prosecutor Rizwan Abbasi. His assistant told him that he had to appear before the Supreme Court. The judge remarked that Abbasi should have been in court in time. His

assistant replied that he had to argue against the appeal but had to go to the Supreme Court.

The assistant sought time till 10:30am but Advocate Abbasi did not turn up. The judge asked the assistant to consult his senior and inform the court what he wanted. Manika's counsel intervened and sought transfer of the case to another court. Judge Arjumand remarked that the request had already been turned down. The judge asked him to give a solid reason for transfer of the case. This was followed by ruckus in courtroom and judge Arjumand retired to his chamber without announcing the verdict.

An unpleasant situation developed outside a court in Islamabad on Wednesday when prior to pronouncement of the decision in the illegal nikah case against former prime minister and PTI founder Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi, PTI lawyers and party workers attacked Khawar Manika, the petitioner in the case.

PTI female workers threw bottles at Manika and even had a scuffle with

him, while PTI lawyers slapped him inside the courtroom. As the Islamabad district and sessions court did not announce its already reserved verdict in the Iddat case against Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi, the complainant, Khawar Manika – the former husband of Bushra Bibi – was assaulted outside the court.

Judge Shahrukh Arjumand went back to his chamber without announcing the verdict after Manika expressed distrust in the judge. As the judge left the courtroom, the PTI lawyers hurled bottles at Khawar Manika over using abusing language against the party founder and his wife.

The court had reserved its verdict last week on appeals filed by the PTI founder and his wife against their conviction in the Iddat case, which was the third and last in a series of verdicts announced just a few days before the general elections. A video clip on TV channels showed Manika, dressed in a white shalwar-kameez, walking outside court as men, who appeared to be lawyers, thrashed him.

### LHC instructs

## ECP to form additional election tribunals

#### F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court ordered the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to form additional election tribunals on Wednesday.

LHC's Justice Shahid Karim, while admitting for hearing a petition moved by senior lawyer and top PTI leader Salman Akram Raja, ordered the ECP to form additional tribunals of judges in light of the letter sent by Chief Justice Malik Shehzad Ahmed Khan. In its short order, the court observed that until the chief justice withdrew the list of names sent, the ECP could not form another tribunal.

Salman Akram Raja had approached the high court seeking the formation of additional tribunals. He had made the chief election commissioner a party in his petition. Raja had contended in the petition that election tribunals had been constituted in the high courts of other provinces, but no additional tribunals had been formed even after a letter from the LHC chief justice to the ECP which was causing a delay in the hearing on election-related appeals. The petitioner had sought the formation of additional election tribunals in the high court, through a legal order.

## IMF wants Pakistan to impose tax on stationery items

#### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has recommended the Pakistani government impose a tax on stationery items including books, pens, etc, sources said on Wednesday.

Sources in the finance department informed that the lender has asked the government end tax exemptions on books, pen, paper, sticky note paper, card board and other stationery items. Sources say that the FBR authorities will brief the prime minister tomorrow on the FY budget 2024-24.

According to budget proposals for the FY2024-25, Pakistan is likely to end exemption on sales and income tax, phase-wise. The government is also considering imposing a sales tax on tractors and pesticides, potentially leading to price hikes for these essential agricultural products.

Currently, under the Sixth Schedule of the Sales Tax Act, pesticides and their active ingredients registered by the Department of Plant Protection are exempt from sales tax. Earlier on Monday, IMF released an official statement following discussions with Pakistan. The statement confirmed that Islamabad has formally requested a new loan program from the IMF.

The IMF delegation, led by Mission Chief Nathan Porter, visited Pakistan and held extensive negotiations from May 13 to May 23 to discuss the country's economic improvements. The statement highlights that the Pakistani government is making serious efforts to increase revenue and emphasizes the need for fair tax collection from privileged sectors. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission assured Pakistan of its commitment to working together for sustainable economic growth.

# Heirs of officials martyred in line of duty will get plots: CM

#### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur has decided in principle that heirs of Police and other government officials martyred in the line of duty, would be provided with plots in the housing schemes of the provincial government, and directed the quarters concerned to compile data of the heirs of such government officials and determine the modalities for this purpose.

He decided that 500 plots already available within the various housing schemes would be provided to them through balloting. He was chairing the first meeting of the Housing Department, held here at Chief Minister's House Peshawar on Wednesday. Special Assistant to Chief Minister for Housing Amjad Ali Khan, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Amjad Ali Khan, Secretary Housing Dr. Ambar Ali

Khan, Director General Provincial Housing Authority Imran Wazir and other relevant officials attended the meeting.

The chief minister on this occasion, directed the authorities concerned to speed up work on the ongoing housing schemes and construction of residential flats in the province, adding that the cabinet's decisions regarding provision of land for housing societies and flats, should be implemented immediately; and suitable sites be identified in the districts where housing societies are required. He further directed them to adopt Public Private Partnership model for such development projects in order to meet out the housing requirements in the province.

He also directed to accelerate work on setting up Assets Management Company so as to ensure efficient utilization of government lands and to increase the revenue stream of the

province, adding that the company should have the membership of all concerned departments. He said that providing affordable residential facilities to the poor and middle class of the society is one of the priority areas of his government; needy people would also be provided with loans for construction of their houses, adding that Rs. 3.00 billion have been allocated in the budget of new fiscal year for this purpose.

Briefing about the development projects of Housing Authority, it was informed that work on seven different projects with a total estimated cost of Rs 46 billion, is in progress, whereas five other schemes under Annual Development Program are also under construction, which would be completed at estimated cost of Rs. 4.00 billion cumulatively. Similarly, it was told that eight new housing projects worth Rs. 88 billion, have been proposed in the different districts of the province.

# Increase govt employees salaries conditional on federal budget: PA

PESHAWAR (APP): The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has made the increase in the salaries of government employees conditional on the federal budget.

Finance Minister Aftab Alam said this while responding the criticism of the opposition to support the protest of All Government Employees Association (AGEA) in front of the provincial assembly in Speaker Babar Salim Swati in chair on Wednesday.

He said that the provincial government will decide how much the salaries of the employees will be increased after the federal government. The Finance Minister ensured the House that a committee will be formed to address their concerns, adding the chief minister has been contacted in this regard.

Earlier, Adnan Wazir of JUIF said that the provincial government should hold dialogue with AGEA to resolve the problem on priority basis. He said that their salaries were not increased according to inflation. He said that there are reports that beaten charge has been done by police which is injustice.

The Speaker Babar Salim Swati said that it is fake news and suerty has been given to them. Similarly, the opposition members termed the performance of the General Administration Department as poor and dis-appointing and said that KP House Islamabad is only a place for MPAs to use but we do not get rooms here as all the rooms have been occupied by bureaucracy and their families.

MPA Sobia Shahid of PML-N,

Riaz Khan and Rehana Ismail of JUIF slammed the KP government for daily tranfers of bureaucrats and expenses. Finance Minister Aftab Alam said that the fuel for Deputy Commissioners has been reduced from 600 liters to 390 liters per month. He assured that he will personally check the allotment of rooms in KP House.

Meanwhile, more than Rs16 billion demands of grants of different departments were presented and the House approved it. Minister Excise and Narcotics Khaleequr Rehman told the House that the provincial government is taking tangible steps to contol drugs. Awareness seminars are holding in educational institutions, he said. Later, the Speaker adjourned the proceedings till Thursday 2 pm.

# Imran ready to damage Pakistan, says Sharjeel

#### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Imran Khan – the PTI founding chairman – has been conspiring against Pakistan as his target isn't any institution or political party, said Sindh Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon who added that the concerns expressed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif were not baseless.

Talking to reporters, Memon said Imran had been launched against Pakistan and his objectives were not good for the country. Predictions made by famous personalities like Hakim Saeed and Abdul Sattar Edhi had come true, he said.

His social media (X) account is being operated from the Adiala jail, Memon alleged and said an anti-Pakistan post was recently posted from the same account – a reference

to the statement about Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, equating the PTI founding chairman with him and justifying the actions he took in connection with the Dhaka debacle.

The PPP leader questioned why the PTI remained silent after the social media post and why Barrister Gohar started giving justifications after 24 hours instead of first deleting the same.

The PTI was confused and didn't know what to do about the party leader, he remarked. Responding to different questions, the PPP senior leader said Imran was ready to damage Pakistan for the sake of getting into power again and recalled that Israel had reacted against his arrest.

When asked the same allegations were levelled

against Fatima Jinnah, Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, he reminded the reporter that the PPP and PML-N leaders had been arrested multiple times in the past, but no one attacked the state institutions like the PTI did on May 9.

No one reminds Saqib Nisar – the former chief justice – in good terms and he remained active facilitator of PTI, he said. Declaring all of the verdicts given by the former chief justice as questionable, Memon said he trampled upon the constitution and law of Pakistan at the behest of his friends. During the PTI government, Memon said, Imran had written off loans worth billions of his favourites, he blasted him for the policies he followed whether in power or not.



KARACHI: Sindh Minister Sharjeel Memon talking to media persons after inauguration of newly regulated Quick Management System at Civic Center Motor Registration Wing.

# PHC seeks response in BRT operating company plea

#### Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A two-member bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprised Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Waqar Ahmad ordered National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to submit response regarding the freezing of two bank accounts of a private company operating the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system in Peshawar, on Wednesday.

The company, LM KR Resources Pakistan, had filed a petition against freezing of accounts, which has created hurdles in the operations of BRT services.

The petitioner's counsel, Barrister Qasim Wadood and Babar Khan Yousafzai, argued that NAB had exceeded its authority by freezing the accounts without solid evidence. The company was being unfairly targeted and that the freezing of accounts had caused significant financial losses, they argued. The NAB deputy prosecutor general, Azim Dad, requested

time to submit a response, which was granted by the court. The case has been adjourned until June 12.

**Court adjourns hearing in FIA notice to Shandana case till June 5:** A divisional bench comprising of Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Sahibzada Asadullah adjourned hearing on Member National Assembly and leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Shandana Gulzar plea against notice issued by Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Cybercrime Wing, Lahore, till 5th June.

During the hearing, Additional Attorney General Sanauallah and petitioner's lawyer Moazzam Butt appeared before PHC. The Additional Attorney General informed the court that the FIA Cybercrime Wing, Lahore, had issued a notice to the petitioner, which is challenged before this High Court.

The Chief Justice, Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim asked the petitioner's counsel

why they did not challenge the notice in the Lahore High Court, as the notice was issued by the FIA Cybercrime Wing, Lahore.

The petitioner's counsel argued that the petitioner had held a press conference in Peshawar and shared a post on social media, which was the basis for the notice issued by the FIA Cybercrime Wing, Lahore. The counsel further argued that the notice is issued for political victimization. Chief Justice PHC Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim observed that the court would examine the case in detail and determine the jurisdiction in this case while adjourned further hearing till 5th June.

**Court orders to charge SHO Gulbahar in illegal raid:** Additional District and Sessions Judge (AD&SJ) Peshawar Ijaz Ahmed ordered registration of case against Station House Officer (SHO) Gulbahar Shakir Ullah along with other policemen involved in illegal raid on lawyer's residence, on Wednesday.

# IHC restrains telecom firms from intercepting phone calls

#### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court on Wednesday ordered telecommunication companies to refrain from recording phone calls for surveillance purposes, warning that they would be held accountable if their equipment was used for illegal surveillance.

The order came as Justice Babar Sattar of the IHC resumed hearing on a petition challenging the alleged audio leak involving former prime minister Imran Khan's spouse, Bushra Bibi, and Najam Saqib, the son of former chief justice of Pakistan Saqib Nisar.

During the hearing, Justice Sattar asked the lawyer representing the P a k i s t a n Telecommunication Authority (PTA) why they had not submitted their response. The lawyer replied that they were unable to submit their response due to the holiday. Later, Additional Attorney General Munawar Iqbal Duggal appeared alone on the roster. Justice Sattar inquired about the law under which citizens' calls were being recorded.

In response, the additional attorney general stat-

ed that under Section 54, the PTA had the authority to record calls. The court inquired which law authorised the PTA to conduct surveillance. The AAG said the legal framework allowed it.

The court demanded clarity on the law governing the recording of citizens' calls. It also instructed the AAG to provide a formal response and specify who had given permission and who had been authorised to record people's calls. The AAG sought some time to file a response. Upon this, the judge expressed annoyance, remarking, "How much time do you need?" and questioned the AAG when the petitions were filed.

The AAG responded that the pleas came in 2023. At this juncture, the judge remarked, "According to you, no one was allowed to record calls. If you retreat now, there will be consequences. The law states that the federal government can grant permission, but according to you, permission was not granted." The court questioned why, if the Prime Minister's Office, Ministries of Defence and Interior, and PTA had said no one was allowed, permission was granted.

The additional attorney general again requested some time. Justice Babar Sattar questioned the AAG if he did not know about today's hearing. The judge remarked that "these petitions were under consideration for a year. If the federal government lies in court, how will the matter proceed? Reports have been collected from the Prime Minister's Office and other institutions, and it has been stated in the reports that no one was granted legal interception permission."

At this, AAG Duggal said his [previous] response was limited to the audio leaks. Later, Justice Babar Sattar directed the additional attorney general to read the relevant sections of the Telecommunications Act. Justice Sattar stated that illegal surveillance was a crime punishable by law. "When the federal government submitted its response, the court took it seriously.

If telecommunication companies' equipment was used for illegal surveillance, they would be held responsible." The court ordered the telecommunication companies to refrain from recording phone calls for surveillance purposes. Later, the court adjourned the hearing.

# Pakistan commemorates Int'l Peacekeepers Day

#### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: On Wednesday, Pakistan joins the international community in commemorating International Peacekeepers Day, paying tribute to the brave men and women who have served in United Nations peacekeeping missions around the world.

Pakistan is one of the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping, with around 3,000 Peacekeepers currently serving in missions in the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Abyei, Central African Republic,

Cyprus, Western Sahara and Somalia. Since 1960, Pakistan has contributed 235,000 troops to UN peacekeeping operations in 48 United Nations Missions in 29 countries including almost all continents of the world.

Pakistan is proud of its long-standing commitment to UN peacekeeping. Our peacekeepers have demonstrated exceptional courage, professionalism and dedication to promoting peace and stability in conflict-ridden regions. Overall, 181 Pakistani peacekeepers have made the supreme sacrifice

in the line of duty.

On this International Peacekeeping Day, we honour their service and sacrifice for noble cause of global peace. Pakistan also remains committed to United Nations Uniform Gender Parity Strategy (UGPS) of United Nations for enhanced representation of women in uniform, Secretary-General's Action for peace (A4P) initiative, which seeks to improve the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping operations by enhancing their capacity, coherence and responsiveness.