

**Bilawal congratulates Aimal**  
F.P. Report

KARACHI: Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has extended warm felicitations to the newly elected President of the ANP, Senator Aimal Wali Khan. Chairman PPP, in his congratulatory message to Senator Aimal Wali Khan, expressed his confidence that the legacy of democracy and progressive ideology, rooted in the principles of Bacha Khan.



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# OIC calls for immediate ceasefire in Gaza

Urges UN to implement resolutions on Jammu & Kashmir

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on Sunday called for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and cessation of the all-out aggression against the Palestinian people in Gaza. The organization also stressed to provide humanitarian, medical, and relief aid, providing water and electricity, and opening humanitarian corridors to deliver urgent aid to the Gaza Strip in an unhindered and adequate manner.

"We affirm our solidarity in confronting the humanitarian catastrophe befalling Gaza Strip and its people due to the unflinching Israeli aggression for more than six months," the OIC said in its declaration issued on conclusion of the 15th OIC Summit Conference in Banjul, the capital of The Gambia.

The OIC called on the world to take action to stop the crime of genocide committed by the Israeli occupation against the Palestinian people in Gaza Strip and to implement the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice.

Reiterating its solid support for the Palestinian people in their legitimate struggle to attain their inalienable rights including their right to self-determination and to establish their sovereign state with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, the OIC called upon the international community to compel the occupying power to abide by international law, and United Nations resolutions and end its illegal occupation, colonization of and apartheid in the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

It also demanded for taking all measures to safeguard the Islamic identity of Al-Quds Al-Sharif from the illegal measures and policies as well as Judaization attempts of the occupier and the violations against the sanctity and the status of Al-Haram Al-Sharif.

The organization also urged the Palestinian brothers and sisters to unite in their struggle to achieve their objectives, under the banner of the Palestine Liberation Organization the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. It also paid tribute to the solidarity of African peoples and governments with the struggle of the Palestinian people, specifically the Member States of the OIC, and their firm stance to end the historical injustice that has befallen the Palestinian people,

based on their bitter experience with ending colonization and apartheid.

Reaffirm its continued political, moral and diplomatic support to the Kashmiri people, the organization called upon the United Nations Security Council to take effective measures to implement its resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir to enable the Kashmiri people to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination through a UN-supervised plebiscite.

It also reaffirm the urgent need to resolve the long-standing disputes including Palestine and Jammu and Kashmir as per United Nations' relevant resolutions and wishes of their people to avoid continuous threat to peace and security of the Middle East and South Asia.

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## Hamas says latest cease-fire talks have ended

Israel vows military operation in 'very near future'

JERUSALEM (AP): The latest round of Gaza cease-fire talks ended in Cairo after "in-depth and serious discussions," the Hamas militant group said Sunday, reiterating key demands that Israel again rejected. After earlier signs of progress, the outlook appeared to dim as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to resist international pressure to halt the war.

Israel closed its main crossing point for delivering badly needed humanitarian aid for Gaza after Hamas attacked it. Defense Minister Yoav Gallant claimed Hamas wasn't serious about a deal and warned of "a powerful operation in the very near future in Rafah and other places across all of Gaza."

Israel didn't send a delegation to the talks mediated by Egypt and Qatar. Egyptian state media reported that the Hamas delegation went for discussions in Qatar, where the group has a political office, and will return to Cairo for further negotiations on Tuesday.

Another threat to talks came as Israel ordered the local offices of Qatar's Al Jazeera satellite news network to close, accusing it of broadcasting anti-Israel incitement. The ban did not appear to affect the channel's operations in Gaza or the West Bank.

Netanyahu, under pressure from hard-liners in

his government, continued to lower expectations for a cease-fire deal, calling the key Hamas demands "extreme" — including the withdrawal of Israel forces from Gaza and an end to the war. That would equal surren-

der but Israel's government again vowed to press on with a military operation in Rafah, the southernmost Gaza city on the border with Egypt where more than half of Gaza's 2.3 million residents now seek shelter

had been targeting Israeli soldiers in the area. Israel's Channel 12 TV channel said 10 people were wounded, three seriously. It was unclear how long the crossing would be closed.

The head of the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, Philippe Lazzarini, called for an independent investigation and "accountability for the blatant disregard of humanitarian workers."

He also said Israel this week denied him entry to Gaza for a second time. The closing of Kerem Shalom came shortly after the head of the U.N. World Food Program asserted "full-blown famine" in devastated northern Gaza, one of the most prominent warnings yet of the toll of restrictions on food and other aid entering the territory. The comments were not a formal famine declaration.

In expanded remarks as the full NBC interview was released Sunday, WFP chief Cindy McCain said famine was "moving its way south" in Gaza and that Israel's efforts to allow in more aid were not enough. "We need more ability to be able to get more trucks in," she said.

"We have right now a mass on the outside border, about enough trucks and enough food for 1.1 million people for about three months. We need to get that in."

## Israel closes Kerem Shalom crossing as missiles fired from Gaza

GAZA (Agencies): Israel has closed the Kerem Shalom crossing with the Gaza Strip after 10 rockets were fired, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) has said. At least 10 people were injured in the attack by Hamas, Israeli media report. The crossing is one of the few routes to get humanitarian aid into Gaza. The attack comes as mediators in Egypt hold talks to broker a ceasefire - and to release Israeli hostages. Israel has said it will not accept Hamas's demands to end the Gaza war.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the proposed deal would keep Hamas in control of Gaza, posing a threat to Israel. Hamas sent a delegation to Cairo on Saturday. The main sticking point appears to be whether the truce will be permanent - as Hamas insists - or not.

It is thought the wording being discussed in the Cairo talks involves a 40-day pause in fighting while hostages are released, and the release of a number of Palestinian prisoners being held in Israeli jails. An adviser to the Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh said the group was looking at the latest proposal with "full seriousness". But he repeated a demand that any deal would have to explicitly include an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and complete end to the war.

der after the Hamas attack on Oct. 7 that triggered the fighting, he said.

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in a statement earlier said the militant group was serious and positive about the negotiations and that stopping Israeli aggression in Gaza is the main priority.

from Israeli attacks. Rafah is a key entry point for aid.

Kerem Shalom, now closed, is another. The Israeli military reported 10 projectiles were launched at the crossing in southern Israel and said its fighter jets later struck the source. Hamas said it

## Deputy PM, VC Zheng vow to complete CPEC projects

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar and Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China Zheng Jianbang on Sunday expressed their determination to complete all China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects and further upgrade this cooperation to achieve shared objectives.

During a meeting on the sidelines of the 15th OIC Islamic Summit Conference in Banjul, The Gambia, the deputy prime minister and foreign minister reiterated Pakistan's firm support to China's core issues and underscored the importance of enhanced mutually productive ties through close economic collaboration and cooperation.

Vice Chairman Zheng Jianbang reaffirmed

China's support Pakistan's sovereignty, territorial integrity and development, Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press release. "The two sides reaffirmed the All-Weather Strategic

Cooperative Partnership between Pakistan and China and exchanged views on deepening exchanges between the Parliament of Pakistan and the National People's Congress of China," it

was added. Dar and Zheng also discussed China's growing relationship with the OIC and underlined the importance of dialogue and understanding for mutual peace and prosperity.



# The Frontier Post

**BODY to question ex-PM**  
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A high-level committee investigating the wheat import scandal has decided to question former caretaker prime minister Anwarul Haq Kakar. The committee has already questioned former caretaker ministers Shamsad Akhtar, Gohar Ijaz, and former Punjab Chief Minister, as part of its probe into the scandal.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, accompanies Saudi Assistant Minister of Investment H.E Ibrahim Almubarak during his three-days visit to Pakistan at Nurkhan Airbase.

## Shehbaz felicitates Sadiq Khan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday congratulated Sadiq Khan on his election as Mayor of London for the third consecutive term.

The prime minister offered his heartiest felicitations to the newly elected Mayor Sadiq Khan 'on his hat trick', PM Office Media Wing said in a press release issued here.

As a hard-working British Pakistani, he not only raised the head of his parents high but also made every Pakistani to rejoice his victory with pride, he further observed.

The prime minister further said that his re-election for the third term also indicated his popularity and his devotion to public welfare.

He also expressed his best wishes for the future success of Sadiq Khan.

**PM expresses condolences on death of Prince Badr Bin Abdul Mohsen**

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday conveyed his heartfelt condolences to the Royal Family and the people of Saudi Arabia on the loss of an eminent poet Prince Badr Bin Abdul Mohsen Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud.

"His most popular song on Saudi Arabia's National Day will always remind us of his profound love for his country. His contributions to contemporary poetry in the Arabian Peninsula were truly remarkable and his legacy will continue to inspire generations to come," the prime minister said in a post on X account.

The prime minister also prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul and for the bereaved family to bear the loss with fortitude.

"May his words forever resonate in the hearts of poetry lovers around the world," he added.

## PTI leader Sher Afzal survives car accident

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Sher Afzal Khan Marwat, a prominent figure within the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, narrowly escaped a potentially fatal car accident on Sunday, as his vehicle suffered a double tyre blowout while en route from Dera Ismail Khan to Islamabad.

According to a report, Marwat and his companions were traveling when the incident occurred, miraculously emerging unscathed. However, the accident underscores the fragility of road safety in the region.

The episode comes amidst growing tensions within PTI, with Marwat's nomination as Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee drawing opposition from senior party members.

Asad Qaiser, Sheikh Waqas Akram, Junaid Akbar, and Zain Qureshi are reportedly vying for the coveted position, arguing that it should be bestowed upon more seasoned party members.

## Saudi trade delegation arrives in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): A 50-member high-level Saudi trade delegation led by the Deputy Investment Minister of Saudi Arabia, Ibrahim Almubarak, arrived here on Sunday with the aim of exploring various avenues of trade and investment to further strengthen and promote bilateral relations between the two countries.

Upon their arrival at Noor Khan Air Base, the Saudi dignitaries were welcomed by Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan and Petroleum Minister Musadik Masood Malik, said a press release issued by the Ministry of Commerce.

Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan highlighted that the three-day visit of the Saudi dele-

gation geared towards enhancing trade relations between investors from both countries and identifying trade and investment opportunities across various sectors of Pakistan's economy.

He said that the Ministry had selected numerous Pakistani companies in relevant sectors for Business-to-Business (B2B) meetings with their Saudi counterparts, adding that leading Pakistani companies would collaborate with 30 Saudi companies across different sectors.

The B2B meetings will specifically target sectors such as agriculture, mining, human resources, energy, chemicals and maritime. Moreover, discussions will extend to investment prospects in

other sectors including refinery, IT, religious tourism, telecom, aviation, construction, water and power generation, he said.

The minister emphasized that the objective of these discussions was to identify investment opportunities that would generate employment and boost exports between the two countries. He also noted that local companies would present their business and investment proposals to their Saudi counterparts.

The minister expressed optimism that several companies would be able to finalize business and investment deals during the B2B session, fostering greater economic cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

## Oversight board discusses polio eradication with CM KP



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A representative delegation of Polio Oversight Board led by Dr. Christopher Alias called on Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, here at Chief Minister's House.

Among Other members of delegation included representatives from World Health Organisation, UNISEF and other international partner agencies, whereas, provincial minister for health, Chief Secretary and relevant high ups of National Emergency Operation were also present on the occasion.

Various matters and initiatives related to polio eradication activities in the province, challenges being faced to this effect and future course of action were discussed in the meeting.

All the dignitaries on this occasion, reiterated their determination to continue their joint and integrated efforts till the complete eradication of polio virus from the province.

Expressing his views on the matter under discussion, the chief minister said that eradicating polio virus was although a big challenge but not impossible; we can eradicate this virus through collective efforts, adding that incumbent provincial government is fully committed to go all out in this regard.

He maintained that his government not only acknowledged the proactive role of partner organisations in eradication of polio virus from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but will extend its all out support to them so as to achieve the set targets in this regard.

He underlined the need for targeted approach in order to convince the parents and guardians refusing to administer anti-polio drops to their children, and added that elected public representatives, religious scholars and elders would be engaged for this purpose, with special focus on the most sensitive areas of the province.

"We can achieve the desired results positively by strengthening the mechanism of mutual consultation and coordination among local administrations and partner organisations", he remarked. The delegates on this occasion, lauded the leading role of Chief Minister for making polio eradication campaigns successful in the province and assured their full support to the provincial government for this purpose.

## Pakistan fast moving to become next tech hub

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States Masood Khan says our country is fast moving to become the next tech hub of the region.

He made these remarks while talking to the US business leaders, entrepreneurs, bankers and professionals, in Los Angeles. The Ambassador highlighted that there had been exponential growth in Pakistan's tech industry in past few years.

He said our economy is being digitized and we have unleashed a series of reforms not only to facilitate businesses but also to make them hugely profitable.

Talking to President Los Angeles (LA) Area Chambers Ms. Maria S. Salinas, Masood Khan said Pakistan is already hosting some eighty American enterprises and they find country's market rewarding.

He said we want US companies to scale up their

investments in Pakistan. Highlighting multi-billions Gulf investment in Pakistan, the Ambassador invited US business community to join hands with Gulf nations and form tri-lateral partnership for fully reaping dividends being offered by Pak economy.

Inviting the President LA Area Chambers of Commerce to visit Pakistan and also to encourage US business leaders, he observed that positive perception after their visit would build confidence.





KARACHI: People enjoy bathing at sea view picnic point after the heat increases in the city. —INP Photo

### Dr. Yasar Niaz selected for global prize

LAHORE (APP): Dr. Yasar Niaz Khan has been selected for the WSIS prize by the United Nations' World Union for Information Technology. Out of 1,049 projects from around the world, Dr. Yasar Niaz Khan's project received the most votes and was selected for the award. The Chief Technical Officer of Punjab Safe Cities has been recognized for his work on using artificial intelligence to improve the agriculture sector. The World Summit on the Information Society has congratulated Dr. Yasar Niaz Khan on his selection for the international award through a special message. The MD of Punjab Safe Cities Authority and staff have also congratulated Dr. Yasar Niaz Khan on his achievement. He will be awarded in Geneva in the last week of May.

### Awami Sculpture Garden to be set up at Nasser Bagh

LAHORE (APP): The Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) is setting up an 'Awami Sculpture Garden' at historic Nasser Bagh to harmonise recreational places including gardens with culture. A spokesman for the authority said on Sunday that under the Sculpture Garden project, different sculptures of arts would be beautifully decorated. He said that services of renowned artists including Imran Qureshi, Resham Hussain Syed and Rasheed Rana had been acquired. He said that sculptures would be made with clay, grass and other environment-friendly material, adding that the Sculpture Garden was part of PHA's initiative to promote culture of the country.

### LGH launches new Department of Nutrition

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore General Hospital (LGH) has taken a significant step towards public health education by establishing a new Department of Nutrition. The department aims to raise awareness about the importance of nutrition and the benefits of a balanced diet. The initiative, approved by Prof. Dr. Muhammad Al-Fareed Zafar, Principal of the Post Graduate Medical Institute (PGMI), was announced on Sunday by MS LGH Dr. Faryad Hussain. Under the guidance of Dr. Kashif Aziz, the department will feature 11 consultants from various medical specialties. These experts will provide valuable information on healthy eating habits to patients and their families, emphasizing the avoidance of junk and unhealthy foods. Prof. Al-Fareed Zafar highlighted that the modern healthcare approach extends beyond treatment to include counseling services.

## Fishermen community leaders call for provision of Fishermen Card

KARACHI (PPI): The fishermen community leaders at an event on Sunday demanded of the government to provide the Fishermen Card in return of their annual contribution of over four billion rupees in taxes. This demand was made at Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum's (PFF) 26th Foundation Day celebration held in Ibrahim Hyderi area of Karachi. The event paid homage to PFF founders Muhammad Ali Shah and Tahir Ali Shah for dedicating

their lives for the rights of fishermen. Addressing the gathering, PFF Chairman Mehran Ali Shah lamented the dire situation faced by Pakistan's fishermen, particularly in Sindh, where access to essentials like potable water, healthcare, education, and shelter remains elusive. He underscored the fishermen's overlooked status, despite their significant tax contributions, stressing their exclusion from recognition as vital contributors to Pakistan's

economy. Mehran urged the government to acknowledge fishermen as significant stakeholders in Pakistan's economy and prioritize their welfare accordingly. He said that the plight of Pakistan's fishermen underscores the urgent need for systemic reforms to address their fundamental rights and mitigate environmental threats. Government action is indispensable in ensuring the well-being and livelihood security of this vital community.

### Bilawal congratulates Naila Kiani

F.P. Report

KARACHI/ISLAMABAD/LAHORE: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has extended his warmest congratulations to Naila Kiani on her remarkable feat of scaling Mount Makalu, the fifth-highest peak in the world. According to the press release by Media Cell Bilawal House, Chairman PPP, in his message, said that it is a moment of immense pride for all Pakistanis as we celebrate Naila Kiani's historic accomplishment and her unwavering commitment to raising the Pakistani flag higher with each summit she conquers. Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari assured the nation, saying that as Naila Kiani adds yet another peak to her illustrious mountaineering career, the PPP reaffirms its commitment to supporting and promoting the endeavors of all Pakistani athletes, adventurers, and trailblazers who continue to make our nation proud on the global stage.

### PTV delegation visits Mazar-e-Quaid

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan Television (PTV) delegation has visited Mazar-e-Quaid at Karachi here the other day and paid the tribute to Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the father of the nation for his historic struggle to create an independent homeland for the Muslims of Indian subcontinent. Director News Arif Mahmood, Director Programs Orangzeb Afridi, Director Administration & Personnel Farhat Abbas Janjau, Director Current Affairs Choudhury Mohammed Saleem, GM PTV Karachi Amjad Hussain Shah, Manager PR Ali Asghar Arbab and others offered Fateha. The delegation also visited the museum at Mazar-e-Quaid where the personal furniture, cars, wardrobe, and other things of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah were displayed.

### KP people still await change: Azma

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari has said that people of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) are waiting for change for the last 10 years. In a statement issued here on Sunday, she said that condition of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa schools and hospitals was very poor. Azma said instead of focusing on welfare of people, the KP government was afraid of performance of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, who was working very hard for betterment of people of the province.

### 12 dead, 1324 injured in 1194 RTCs in Punjab

LAHORE (APP): At least twelve persons were killed and 1324 injured in 1194 Road Traffic Crashes (RTCs) in all 37 districts of Punjab during the last 24 hours. Out of these, 600 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 724 victims with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by Rescue Medical Teams thus reducing the burden of Hospitals. Furthermore, the analysis showed those 699 drivers, 38 underage drivers, 141 pedestrians, and 496 passengers were among the victims of road traffic crashes. The statistics show that 226 RTCs were reported in Lahore which affected 246 persons placing the Provincial Capital at top of the list followed by Multan 82 in with 90 victims and at third Faisalabad with 76 RTCs and 90 victims. According to the data 1109 motorbikes, 70 autorickshaws, 107 motorcars, 24 vans, 08 passenger buses, 22 truck and 88 other types of auto vehicles and slow-moving carts were involved in these road traffic accidents.

## CM Sindh pledges to maintain peace in city

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has vowed to maintain peace in Karachi at any cost, saying that the city has already paid a heavy price of bloodshed. "We have paid a heavy price for peace in Karachi by sacrificing citizens, political workers, police, rangers, and army personnel. Therefore, peace in the city is very important to us." He was speaking at the condolence meeting of Shaheed Akbar Nagori, the younger brother of former provincial minister Javed Nagori held at Kikri Ground, Lyari. The meeting was attended by Local Govt Minister Saeed Ghani, MNAs Nabil gabol, Qadir Patel, Senator Masroor Ahsan, MPA Asif Khan, and a large number of party workers, and people of Lyari.

Murad Shah stated that the PPP government had previously restored law and order in the city, and they would do the same to tackle the street crime challenge efficiently. In May 2015, a terrorist attack claimed the life of Akbar Nagori, a dedicated political worker, Murad Shah recalled the tragic incident. He also highlighted the immense sacrifices the people of Lyari, including men, women, and children, made to restore and strengthen democracy in the country. According to the CM, the people of Lyari are truly patriotic and politically aware. "They have actively participated in various political movements, including men, women, and even their children," he said.

The chief minister mentioned that the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto has instructed him to provide Layri's people with health, education, water, and sanitation facilities. He stated that most of the internal roads in Lyari have been developed, and health and education facilities have been improved in the area. Additionally, the Kikri ground, which holds historical significance, has been converted into a significant sports facility to encourage children and youth to engage in healthy activities. Murad Shah urged the people of Lyari to provide their children with a good education, enabling them to compete for jobs in Pakistan's Army, Navy, Police, and other prestigious national institutions.



LAHORE: Laborer busy in repair work of Punjab University at Old Campus. —APP Photo

## Govt to start 20 buses for female students

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training has taken an important initiative to solve the problem of transportation for female students and women teachers of the Islamabad Capital Territory Schools. According to the details, around 20 buses of federal educational institutions will be prepared and put on the roads with the support of the district administration. The female students and teachers of public and private educational institutions

will be able to travel for free in these buses operated in the urban and rural areas of the federal capital with the support of the district administration. These buses reserved for women and girls will be painted pink, it added. The Ministry of Federal Education has taken this step in view of the increasing dropout rate of girls from schools due to inadequate transport facilities, said the Secretary of Education while talking to Media persons. He went on to say that in the internal audit, it was

found that thirty per cent of the total 385 buses of federal educational institutions have been parked due to unusability. These buses were not being used due to lack of budget and drivers and for not repairing timely, said the Secretary Education. In future, women will also be allowed to travel in these vehicles subject to the availability of space, he added. He further informed that by June 15, these buses will be ready and will start providing services for female students and teachers.

## LESCO detects 77,055 power pilferers

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) has detected a total of 77,055 connections from where the customers were pilfering electricity in all its circles of five districts (Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara) in 227 days of grand anti-power theft campaign. The LESCO spokesman told media here Sunday that the company has also submitted FIR applications against electricity thieves, out of which 72,494 FIRs have been registered in respective police stations, while 30,434 accused have

been arrested. The LESCO has so far charged a total of 92,008,163 detection units worth Rs 3,409,932,500 to all the power pilferers. Grand anti-power theft operations against electricity thieves are being conducted on the directives of the Federal Power Division and the LESCO Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Engineer Shahid Haider is supervising these operations. The LESCO chief vowed that the operations would continue without discrimination until the complete end of electricity theft. The electricity pilferers as well as the LESCO

officers and employees who facilitate them are also being brought to justice. The spokesman added, the LESCO found 363 customers stealing electricity through various means and 121 cases have been registered against the accused, while 05 accused were arrested during the last 24 hours. On the 227th consecutive day of the anti-power theft campaign, he mentioned that large commercial consumers were found involved in electricity theft and all of them were also disconnected and charged with detection units.



LAHORE: A disabled man is selling balloons and Plastic footballs on bicycle struggling to earn a livelihood for family. —APP Photo



# Zubair thanks CM Punjab for helping KP flood-victims

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Peshawar Mayor Haji Zubair Ali expressed his gratitude to former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, praising them for their support and thanking them for their help in aiding the flood victims.

He acknowledged the assistance provided by the Punjab government in response to their appeals, noting that Provincial Health Minister Khawaja Imran Nazir personally visited the area and delivered food packages for around 2,800 to 3,000 families, which he distributed himself.

Mayor Haji Zubair Ali appreciated the support from the Punjab government during this difficult time and noted that their actions demonstrated a sense of brotherhood. He thanked them for sending relief supplies, including food packages, to help the flood victims. He also expressed appreciation for the help received from the Punjab government during the dengue outbreak in Peshawar, when then Punjab Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif sent aid teams to assist in controlling the outbreak.

Mayor Ali appealed for further assistance, particularly for farmers affected by the rains, to provide fertilizer, medication, and healthcare. He hoped that the Punjab government would continue supporting flood victims, especially in terms of agriculture, education, and healthcare.

Health Minister Khawaja Imran Nazir mentioned that relief packages were sent to Peshawar flood victims on the instructions of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. Nazir highlighted that Mayor Haji Zubair Ali had visited Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz in Lahore, explaining the flood victims' suffering, leading to the prompt dispatch of six trucks carrying food supplies sufficient for a month for each family.

Minister Khawaja Imran Nazir announced that a modern mobile hospital would be provided to Peshawar for a week, equipped with medical staff and supplies, with all expenses covered by the Punjab government. He emphasized that Peshawar residents are brothers and deserve support, regardless of political differences.

Nazir assured that the Punjab government would provide necessary support to help rebuild the affected areas and assist those in need. He noted the Punjab government's previous support during the dengue outbreak and reaffirmed their commitment to aiding Peshawar residents. Nazir encouraged unity in aiding the city's recovery and affirmed the Punjab government's willingness to provide the necessary resources.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi talking to different delegations from Peshawar which called on him on Sunday.

## KP to purchase 300,000 metric tons of wheat

Procurement worth Rs29bn from May 7: Minister

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Minister for Food, Zahoore Shah Toru, has announced that the provincial government has decided to purchase approximately 300,000 metric tons of wheat at a cost of around 29 billion rupees from local farmers. The wheat procurement campaign is set to commence on May 7th, with a focus on ensuring transparency and quality control measures.

Speaking to reporters, the provincial minister highlighted that the Department of Food has implemented various transparent procedures to facilitate wheat procurement. These include the formation of committees at the district level to oversee the process, installation of CCTV cameras at procurement centers, utilization of a procurement app, and the establishment of monitoring control rooms to address any complaints promptly.

Furthermore, Minister Zahoore Shah emphasized that the wheat procurement decision has been made in the best interest of local farmers and citizens. He assured that transparency would be maintained throughout the procurement campaign, in line with the directives of Prime Minister Imran Khan and Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Regarding quality control, district-level committees comprising officials from various departments have been formed to ensure the authenticity of purchased wheat. Complaints can be lodged through a designated helpline, and a procurement app has been introduced to facilitate real-time record-keeping.

Minister Zahoore Shah reiterated the government's commitment to prioritize the purchase of standard quality wheat from local farmers and assured that payments would be made promptly through the Bank of Khyber within 24 hours.

In a closing remark, the minister announced that the formal inauguration of the wheat procurement center by Chief Minister Mahmood Khan is scheduled for May 8th. It is worth noting that the Food Department has issued formal correspondence to all relevant authorities regarding the procurement process.

## Minister urges teachers to focus on provision of quality education

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Labour Department Fazal Shakoor Khan on Sunday said that provision of quality education in educational institutions run by the labour department is the topmost priority of our government.

He urged the teachers to work hard and focus on provision of quality education to laborer children studying in different schools of the labour department.

He was addressing as a chief guest in a prize distribution ceremony organized by Rahamkar Welfare Social Foundation at Working Folks Grammar School Kaka Sahib district Nowshera. Earlier, the provincial minister visited different sections of the school while the school principal briefed the minister regarding school administration.

The minister was also informed about various challenges and shortcomings faced by the school.

Fazal Shakoor assured the principal of solving the issues of the school, saying that the KP government is taking tangible steps for promoting quality education.

“Quality education is the need of the hour and without quality education, development is mere a dream for any society,” the KP labour minister stressed on getting quality education.

At the end of the ceremony, the minister distributed prizes in position holder students and uniform, bags and books to the orphan and needy students.

## Aimal Wali elected Central President of ANP

PESHAWAR (APP): Senator Aimal Wali Khan was unanimously elected as the Central President of Awami National Party while party chief Asfandyar Wali Khan will be the leader of party's movement in intra party elections and Central Council meeting held on Sunday.

Chairman Central Election Commission Mian Ifrikhar Hussain presided over the meeting.

Former Chief Minister Amir Haider Khan Hoti suggested the name of Senator Aimal Wali Khan for the presidency and all members of the Central Council approved it.

Senator Daud Khan will be the Central Senior Vice President while Dr. Muhammad Saleem Khan will be the Secretary General.

Jawad Khattak will be the Vice President while Ifat Kalsoom will be the Lady Vice President for Islamabad.

Pervez Khan (Swabi) from Pakhtunkhwa will be the Vice President while Dr. Noorjahan will be lady Vice President.

Faridullah Damar will be the Vice President while Salmi Kakar will be the female Vice President for Balochistan.

Syed Attaulah Shah will be the Vice President from Punjab while Qudsiya Shaheen Advocate will be the lady Vice president.

Anwar Zeib Khan will be the vice president for Sindh while Shazia Razaq Marwat will be the Vice President.

Muhammad Nadeem Qureshi will be the vice president while Madam Abida Khan will be the vice president for Saraiki Unit.

Ubaiddullah Abid will be Additional General Secretary, Aurangzeb Khan will be Deputy General Secretary while Javed Kakar will be Additional Deputy General Secretary.

Senator Haji Hidayatullah Khan has been elected as the Central Finance Secretary while Engineer Ehsanullah has been elected as the Spokesperson.

Sardar Hussain Babak will be the Foreign Affairs Secretary while Khadim Hussain will be the Culture Secretary.

Hussain Ahmed (Khan Nawab) from Pakhtunkhwa will be the Joint Secretary while Shagufta Malik will be lady Joint Secretary.

From Balochistan, Mohammad Anwar Khan will be the joint secretary while Shahina Kakar will be the woman Joint Secretary. Bahadar Khan will be the Joint Secretary from Punjab while Hudeba Rafique will be lady Joint Secretary.

Hanif Shah Agha will be the Joint Secretary while Arooj Ghafoor will be lady Joint Secretary for Sindh.

Qazi Izhar will be the Joint Secretary from Federal Capital Islamabad while Saima Bashir will be lady Joint Secretary.

## DG Info hails efforts of PPC in welfare of journalists

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Director General Information & Public Relations Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Imran visited Peshawar Press Club and participated in the swearing ceremony of the newly elected Cabinet and Governing Body of Peshawar Press Club.

Expressing his views on this occasion, DG Information Muhammad Imran said that Peshawar Press Club has always played a key role in the welfare of journalists.

The cabinet under the leadership of Arshad Aziz Malik is taking the lead in rendering services this year as well, maintaining the traditions and hoping that more work will be done in the welfare of journalists and promotion of journalistic values under his leadership.

While congratulating the press club cabinet and governing body members, DG Information said that Directorate General Information & Public Relations is trying to take steps for the welfare of journalists. He said that the Department of Information & Public Relations plays the role of an anchor between the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, journalistic institutions and the public, and this role will be further strengthened by working closely with the unions and press clubs in the province.

The swearing-in ceremony was held at Peshawar Press Club building, Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur was the chief guest. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Advisor on Information & Public Relations Barrister Dr. Saif also participated in the ceremony. Syed Abdul Jabbar Shah, Secretary Information & Public Relations Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa along with other officials also participated. Cabinet and governing body members took oath of office in the ceremony.

At the end of the oath-taking ceremony, honorary shields were distributed among the government officials and guests. President Peshawar Press Club Arshad Aziz Malik presented an honorary shield to Director General Information & Public Relations Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Imran in recognition of his excellent performance.

## 52 arrested for traffic violations

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The City Traffic Police detained 52 individuals during a crackdown on traffic violators in the provincial capital on Sunday.

According to details, on the directives of Chief Traffic Officer Saud Khan, the city traffic police officials were directed to curb violations across the city.

However, city traffic police officials carried out operations, during which 52 individuals were arrested in the Cantonment sector and two trucks loaded with goods were confiscated.

Chief Traffic Officer Saud Khan, said that strict legal action would be taken against those who commit violations to eliminate reckless driving.

He stated that violations cause severe difficulties for transporters and commuters. He further said that cars and motorcycles should be parked in parking stands, while the vehicles of those parking in non-parking zones would be impounded in the terminal.

## Dialogue only way to bring stability: Faiq

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Muhammad Faiq Shah, founder and chairman of the Amun Taraqqi Party said his party wants to strengthen national institutions and called for implementation of consistent policies in the country.

While responding to various queries during informal talks with a group of newsmen and different delegations on Sunday, Shah emphasized that dialogue is the only way to bring political and economic stability in the country.

“We invite people to support and go with us together for peace, economic stability, prosperity and development in the country instead of personal interests”. Faiq stressed it is highly essential that everyone should come forward and work jointly for the sake of the country's betterment, progress and prosperity.

## Peace Sports Gala organized

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Christian Student's Fellowship Peshawar organised Peace Sports Gala 2024 in Collaboration of Edwardes College Peshawar and Support by ANF Regional Directorate, LTS, District Administration Peshawar, DG Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, China Window Peshawar and Al Ikrum Sports Peshawar in which Christian Youth from Colleges and Universities (Minority community) participated in different indoor games.

The opening ceremony took place with a formal opening address by Dr. Sarah Saddar (Ex-Caretaker Minister and Member BOG Edwardes College). The whole day was filled with energy and enthusiasm to perform better. The event ended with a prize distribution ceremony in which certificates and trophies were distributed among the winners/runner ups and participants by Rt. Rev. Bishop Humphrey S. Peters, Dr. Shujaat Ali Khan (Principal Edwardes College), Dr. Naveed Ali (Vice Principal Edwardes College) and Mr. Wajid (Deputy Director ANF). Mr. Augustin Jacob (Board Secretary CSF Peshawar) on behalf of his team graciously provided the vote of thanks and appreciated and acknowledged the efforts of the CSF Team and Edwardes College and the supporting partners to make this event a success.



## Land degradation: A threat to food security

PESHAWAR (APP): As the sunrays bath village Mohib Banda in Nowshera district, Hussain Ali (28) – a poor farmer starts his tractor to level his farmland after it turned bumpy by the recent heavy torrential rains and flash floods in River Kabul.

Awakened early in the morning, Hussain after checking diesel in a tractor moved towards his agriculture fields that were rendered uncultivable by the gushing water in River Kabul and became busy in its leveling.

“First the 2010 and 2022 devastating floods generated from Swat, Dir and Chitral in River Kabul, had swallowed my two acre lands and now the recent flash flood made my five acres land unproductive,” said Hussain with sobbing eyes, fearing of his less wheat production this year after his crop was inundated by the flood water.

“Land degradation and desertification mostly caused by climate change-weather patterns emerged as big challenge before regional countries including Pakistan and it was the collective duty of developed countries to financially support countries which are highly susceptible to the climate change and desertification,” said Diyar Khan, project director, billion trees project while talking to APP.

Declaring land degradation is a growing threat to food security to regional countries including Pakistan, he said that every year it make around six million hectares land unproductive and cause about USD 42 billion economic losses globally that may lead to starvation and hunger due to water scarcity in next few decades if not controlled properly.

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) report revealed that more than 3.2 billion people, or two in every five, are affected by land degradation and desertification and up to 143 million

could move within their countries by 2050 to escape water scarcity and falling crop productivity mainly caused by climate change.

Also, UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) disclosed that the planet would reach a 1.5C increase in temperatures by 2030, leading to extreme drought, food shortage and floods.

Diyar Khan said about 45 percent of food consumed globally comes from the world's drylands and falling of agriculture productivity, food shortages and water scarcity in South Asia were likely to create food insecurity and warned that about 20 percent more productive land were likely to be degraded in South Asia in next few decades if desertification and floods were not controlled.

Professor Dr Muhammad Nafees of Environmental Sciences Department, University of Peshawar said that Pakistan was among 110

countries in the world where about two-third of agricultural land and around 80 percent of arid and semi-arid lands affected by land-degradation, desertification and drought.

He said Pakistan's population was increasing with over two percent growth rate that started exerting pressure on agriculture, houses and other socioeconomic sectors.

He feared that the country might face food's insecurity challenges in next few decades if the existing population was not controlled and climate change issue was not addressed.

The Sustainable Land Management Program (SLMP-Phase II), a project of Ministry of Climate Change revealed that around 1.5 to 2.5 million hectares of irrigated land, 3.5 to 4 million hectares of rain-fed agricultural, and 35 million hectares of rangelands were either becoming barren or non-productive due to desertification, land degradation and drought per year.

The underground water resources in the western dry mountains of Sindh and Balochistan are shrinking due to heavy exploitation of aquifer without any natural recharge besides excessive car washing pumping.

Dr Nafees said the lowering laying areas in Balochistan, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab located directly on banks of rivers were facing increased problems of land degradation due to climate change impacts, floods, improper land use practices, over-grazing, deforestation and excessive removal of vegetation for fuel.

He said damages of land degradation and desertification could be seen in Swabi, Mardan and Nowshera districts on Peshawar-Islamabad Motorway and Kohat, Karak, Lakki Marwat and DI Khan districts on Indus Highway where trees were uprooted.

“The unlawful cuttings of forests by local communities

for domestic consumption, timber mafia and conversion of agriculture land into residential colonies have aggravated the problem of desertification and land degradation in KP,” he added.

He said the rate of deforestation in national level was about 27,000 hectare per year especially in community owned natural forests of KP and Gilgit-Baltistan resulting an increase in dry-land areas and conversion of agricultural lands into deserts.

To combat desertification, land degradation and drought, the federal government has launched SLMP Phase-I in nine dry-land districts of Pakistan where over 12,000 hectares of degraded rangeland were rehabilitated through reseeded and community based restoration of the grazing management system.

Similarly, around 8,000 hectares of additional land were brought under sustainable rain-fed agriculture and water conservation measures.

Following successful implementation of SLMP Phase-I, the project was later extended to 14 desertification prone districts under SLMP Phase-II in 2015 to protect the fertile land from being converted into deserts.

The project was implemented in high desertification and land degradation prone areas of Chakwal, Bhakkar, Khushab, Layyah in Punjab, Tharparkar, Omakot, Sanghar in Sindh, DI Khan, Lakki Marwat in KP, Pashin, Kila Saifullah, Mastung, Katch and Lasbella in Balochistan.

Project Director, billion trees project said to counter land degradation, desertification and drought on basis of scientific management, KP's first Range Management Policy “REDD+” (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) strategy and Green Growth Initiative (GGI) was implemented, which are showing tangible results.





## In brief

### Water flow gradually rises

HYDERABAD (APP): The flows in the Indus River at Kotri barrage are gradually increasing with 24,505 cusecs water recorded upstream on Sunday. According to the figures shared by the Irrigation Department, the barrage released 1,200 cusecs downstream while the rest of the water was shared among its 4 canals. The barrage allocated 7,150 cusecs to Kalri Baghar Feeder Canal, which supplied water to Karachi, up from 6,050 cusecs on May 4, 4,705 cusecs on May 3 and 5,125 cusecs on May 2. Likewise, 7,675 cusecs of water was allocated to New Fuleli canal, 5,750 to Old Fuleli canal and 2,530 to Akram canal. Although the allocations for Akram and OID Fuleli canals have remained the same since May 1, albeit the later witnessing a drop to 3,300 cusecs on May 3, the water flows in New Fuleli have slightly increased from 7,025 cusecs on May 1 to 7,675 cusecs on Sunday.

### Public gathering on May 8 F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Former tribal agencies' have been merged into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa without approval of the majority of tribesmen. A public gathering has been planned to be organized at Babe-e-Khyber on 08 May, 2024 that will attend thousands of tribals. The views were expressed by the chairman of FATA Qaumi Jirga Bismillah Khan while addressing to a press conference in Landi Kotal press club on Sunday. Flanked by Malik Bahadar Shah, Malik Muhammad Shah, Malik Abdurrazzaq Afridi, Malik Hifzurrehman and others said that decision of merging was carried without consent of the tribesmen and choice of handful unrepresented people were imposed on majority of tribal who were not in favor of merging. Instead of yielding benefits, the replaced system deprived them of the amenities they enjoyed in the previous system and the will of unrepresented people were imposed on the majority of tribal who were not in favor of merging, he added. "Tribesmen are stick to their norms and values of the tribal society and any forcible scheme, suffer their customs is unacceptable," he added and said that they would strive hard to reinstate it. He also urged the Supreme Court to provide them justice and assist them to get rid of the alien system. They invited all the tribesmen from Waziristan to Bajaur to join their anti-merging public gathering to be held on 08 May 2024 at Babe-e-Khyber.

### Six arrested

FAISALABAD (INP): The Environment Department arrested six people over de-sealing the boilers of three sizing units in Small Industrial Estate at their own and sealed them again. Deputy Director Environment Joher Ali Randhawa along with police force and his team inspected the boilers. During the inspection, the boilers were found de-sealed at their own and by burning the prohibited material, the environment was being polluted. Under Punjab Environment Protection (Smog Prevention and Control) Rules 2023, the boilers were sealed against and six people were arrested. Deputy Director Environment made it clear that those involved in polluting environment would be given no concession at all.

# Muqam urges opposition to be constructive

BUNER (APP): Federal Minister for SAFRON and Kashmir Gilgit Baltistan Affairs Engr Amir Muqam on Sunday urged the opposition parties to adopt a constructive approach rather than wasting time on less protests with confrontational tactics.

He stated this during oath taking ceremony of newly elected body of Buner District Bar Council Association. The federal minister stated that these people got nothing from protests in the past and will never gain anything in the future, but only cause losses to the country. He said that what happened on May 9 was highly regrettable.

Engr Amir Muqam urged the lawyers to be vigilant and to reject those who seek to exploit them for political interests. However, he emphasized that they should play a constructive role in the interests of the country. He

emphasized that public service entails more than protesting; it involves addressing public issues, which is the true responsibility of elected representatives.

The federal minister stressed the need to abandon the blame game and instead, actively contribute to the country's best interests. He said that there was a clear indication of improvement in the economic situation, with all institutions and the government on the same page.

He also noted that inflation was an issue being faced by everybody. Engr Amir Muqam stated that overcoming inflation was a top priority for the government.

He highly praised the establishment of SIFC for its efforts in attracting investment. In response to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister's accusations against the Federal

government regarding resource allocation, he emphasized the equitable distribution facilitated by the National Finance Commission (NFC) award. Earlier, the federal minister administered the oath to the newly elected body of the Bar Council Association.

He congratulated the newly elected cabinet and expressed the hope that they would work for the welfare of the lawyers' community. Additionally, he announced a grant of Rs 2 million for the Bar Council Association and assured efforts for the provision of gas facilities and a motorway link road in Buner.

He emphasized that access to gas was a right for the people of Buner and Shangla. The Minister also expressed deep respect for the people of Buner and Swabi, stating that they have always honored and respected him.



MULTAN: A flock of pigeons picking food thrown by the people at roadside.

## Security arrangements for anti-polio drive reviewed

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Rural Tank Sharif Ullah Khan Kundi here on Sunday visited different Chowkis and other points to review the security arrangements made in connection with the ongoing anti-polio drive.

The DSP paid this visit following the instructions of District Police Officer (DPO) Abdul Salam Khalid to ensure safety of people's lives and property.

During the visit, the DSP inspected the alertness and weapons of personnel, police pickets and CCTV cameras.

He directed the on-duty officers and personnel to further improve the security arrangements, saying, the protection of people's lives and property was the prime responsibility of the police. So no negligence would be tolerated in this regard, he warned.

Moreover, he advised them to adopt all safety measures for self-protection including use of bullet-proof jackets and helmets. Besides, he said, the on-duty policemen should avoid use of mobile phones and keep a close eye on all suspects around them.

# Minister law announces Rs2mn for Aghosh

## F.P. Report

KOHAT: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Aftab Alam Afridi Advocate has said that helping welfare organizations, especially those patronizing and helping the orphans and poorest of the society, is rewarding in this world and the hereafter adding that as Muslims, we all should have to actively participate in this noble task.

This he said while addressing the ceremony held at Aghosh Al-Khidmat Kohat Campus as chief guest on Saturday evening. Central PTI Leader Shehryar Khan Afridi

MNA, Members Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Shafi Jan and Shah Turab Khan, Aghosh Al-Khidmat Kohat chief Hafiz Abid Hammad and other notables also addressed the event.

The ceremony beside others was also attended by the former MPA Muhammad Ali, important religious, political and social figures of Kohat, elders of the area, staff and students of the institution in large number.

The Law Minister maintained that participating in a ceremony of this important welfare institution of his native district as chief guest is a matter of great honour and pride for him, for

which he is personally grateful to its organizers.

The Minister while announcing a financial support of Rs.2 Million for the said institution assured that he will do his level best to bring a special grant from the provincial government for the construction and other welfare works of this key institution.

He will meet the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in this regard, he added. Aftab Alam Afridi appealed to the philanthropists of the province, especially Kohat, to help generously with organizations like Aghosh Al-Khidmat, because in it there is success in this world and the hereafter.

# 91 power pilferers nabbed in South Punjab

MULTAN (APP): Multan Electric Power Company (MEPCO) teams caught 91 power pilferers during separate operations launched throughout the South Punjab in a day.

According to the official sources, MEPCO teams accompanying task forces launched a special

crackdown against power pilferers to minimize line losses and to prevent power theft across the region.

During the crackdown in the last 24 hours, the teams raided different places in Multan, Vehari, Sahiwal, Rahimyar Khan, Muzaffargarh,

Bahawalnagar, Khanewal, and DG Khan and nabbed 91 power pilferers and registered FIRs against 65.

A sum of over Rs 5.9 million fine was imposed on the pilferers out of which Rs over Rs 5,00,000 also recovered from the pilferers.

# CM Balochistan lauds successful operations against miscreants

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti on Sunday expressed his satisfaction over the successful operation against miscreants in the Quetta and Kachi districts of the province.

The district administration, police, Levis and took timely action against the outlaws, Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti adding that the timely operation of the law enforcement agencies against elements hostile to peace is a manifestation of the professional performance of the force.

The CM, expressing

zero tolerance to the elements opposed to peace, said the elements that undermine peace will be dealt with strictly.

Protection of life and property of the people is

the constitutional responsibility of the government and the state knows well how to play its role in dealing with violent incidents and restoring peace, he remarked.



GILGIT: Federal Minister for Communication Abdul Aleem Khan taking to Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan during the minister's visit to GB.

# Waste Management – A persistent challenge for MWMC

MULTAN (APP): Despite claimed sincere efforts by Multan Waste Management Company (MWMC), solid waste management remains a persisting challenge for the agency with waste seen scattered in different residential areas of the city.

May it be issues like mounting population pressure and expansion of city, non-serious attitude of citizens or lack of capacity, these waste heaps in open pose challenges to human health and environment.

This tendency leaves thousands of residents at sick due to unhealthy air they breathe and the stinking smell oozing out of openly dumped waste incurring billions of rupees annually in terms of health budget.

"As populations grow and urbanization intensifies effective solid waste management becomes increasingly complex," remarked Mian Rashid Iqbal, Chairman Multan

Waste Management Company (MWMC). "Since life goes on, there is no end in sight to escalating volume of solid waste piling up each passing day."

"This situation requires a gigantic ceaseless mechanism powered by human resources and machinery," he said. "But, despite limited resources, we endeavor to keep the city arteries, cross-sections and residential areas clean."

Despite its establishment in 2012, the company still faces shortage of finances, manpower and machinery as mentioned by Mian Rashid. "We face deficiency of finances and manpower. We have only 1900 sanitary workers to cover 68 urban union councils against a minimum requirement of 3000."

He said out of total waste generated daily in the city, the MWMC could collect and dispose of 70 per cent and sometimes we have to borrow

money to continue its operation. Meanwhile, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) MWMC Shahid Yaqoob, was upbeat on future prospects of a cleaner environment in Multan.

"Although rapid population growth and urbanization make effective management of solid waste increasingly complex, yet we at MWMC are determined to sustainable waste management practices."

With recent acquisition of modern equipment by MWMC including over 100 loader rickshaws, 300 handcarts, 11 loaders, 11 trolleys, 310 containers and vacuum sweeper, the CEO was confident to take the performance to next level.

"We are trying to implement a comprehensive waste collection system by upgrading to modern techniques to mitigate pollution and reduce strain on land resources," he informed. "We are also conducting research pro-

grams and studies in collaboration with educational institutions to control plastic pollution."

As major financial contribution for company comes from the Punjab Government, it also finds windows from private sector like providing services to main vegetables market for Rs 900,000 per month and Nishtar Hospital residential colony for Rs 6000 per container and from penalties imposed on people, companies and hospitals on violation of waste disposal laws.

The MWMC also engages with communities to promote hygiene practices and sanitation, impart training to communities on proper waste disposal and support informal waste pickers to improve their livelihood.

Meanwhile, the Punjab Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) field staff also ensures compliance of set regulations and standards to govern waste management activities

within the district.

"The EPA Punjab field staff plays a pivotal role in ensuring effective solid waste management practices," claimed environmental expert Hameed Ahmad. "Since, the EPA does not directly handle waste collection or transportation, their oversight ensures that local authorities adhere to established guidelines."

Although the MWMC officials make tall claims of keeping the city clean, the resident have a different opinion with many living in less developed areas complaining about stuffy and adulterated vicinities.

"The company's operations in narrow streets of old Mohallahs including those in walled city, at times, falls short of expectations," said a citizen Shafiq Bhatti.

"We still wait a proper mechanism to lift waste from these streets and its proper disposal. Poor monitoring of sanitary staff was worsening

cleanliness situation in different parts of city."

He suggested to MWMC to take trade bodies and organizations on board for bettering waste collection and disposal mechanism. "Traders, vendors, hand cart owners and citizens should also be made responsible for ensuring a cleaner city."

Another citizen Tanvir Joyia has also complained that sanitary staff cleans only main roads and chowks while narrow streets and old city area remains out of focus.

"It is essential to focus all areas without discrimination. Health is equally important for every citizen," he said and remarked that various diseases like dengue, malaria, chest congestion, bronchitis and diarrhea could easily be controlled through cleaner environment.

He also suggested to recruit more sanitary workers to meet the shortage of manpower.

Dr Zulqarnain Haider, a Gastroenterologist cited that irregular disposal of waste in residential areas causes illness and residents living within 100 meter are more vulnerable.

"People living in dirty vicinities are more prone to diseases like malaria, dengue, asthma, throat and nose infection, allergies and reduced immunity," he stated.

He said uncollected and openly dumped solid waste also causes air pollution, water and soil contamination and land degradation. "Moreover open burning of waste also release toxic substances poisonous dioxin into air."

At a time when MWMC can collect 70 percent of total waste generated daily, the situation presents a grim picture impressing upon authorities to employ more resources for accomplishment of this task and ensure healthy environment for people.





India elections

Fake videos of Modi aides trigger police probes, arrests

MUMBAI (Reuters): Manipulated videos are taking centre stage as campaigning heats up in India's election, with fake clips involving two top aides of Prime Minister Narendra Modi triggering police investigations and the arrest of some workers of his rival Congress party.

In what has been dubbed as India's first AI election, Modi said last week fake voices were being used to purportedly show leaders making "statements that we have never even thought of", calling it a conspiracy "to create tension in society".

Indian police — already investigating the spread of fake videos showing Bollywood actors criticising Modi — are now investigating a doctored online clip that showed federal home minister Amit Shah saying the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party will stop certain social guarantees for minorities, a subject sensitive for millions of voters.

Shah retorted on X, posting his "original" and the edited "fake" speech and alleging — without providing any evidence — that the main opposition Congress was behind the video it created to mislead the public.

The minister said "directions have been issued to the police to address this issue."

Indian police arrested at least nine people, including six members

of Congress' social media teams, in the states of Assam, Gujarat, Telangana and New Delhi last week for circulating the fake video, according to police statements.

Five of the Congress workers were released on bail, but the most high-profile arrest made by the cyber crime unit of New Delhi police came on Friday, when they detained a Congress national social media coordinator, Arun Reddy, for sharing the video. New Delhi is one region where Shah's ministry directly controls police. Reddy has been sent into three-day custody.

The arrest has sparked protests from Congress workers with many posting on X using the #ReleaseArunReddy tag. Congress lawmaker Manickam Tagore said the arrest was an example of "authoritarian misuse of power by the regime."

Congress' head of social media, Supriya Shrinete, did not respond to messages and an email seeking comment.

Misinformation

India's election from April 19 to June 1 will be the world's largest democratic event.

With nearly a billion voters and more than 800 million internet users, tackling the spread of misinformation is a high-stakes job.

It involves round-the-clock monitoring by police and election officials who often issue take down

orders to Facebook and X as investigations start.

In India's most populous state of Uttar Pradesh, more than 500 people keep tabs on online content, flagging controversial posts and coordinating with social media companies for their removal when needed, police chief Prashant Kumar told Reuters on Saturday.

Another fake video that sparked a storm last week showed Yogi Adityanath, the state's chief minister, criticising Modi for not doing enough for families of those who died in a 2019 militant attack. Though fact-checkers said the video was created using different parts of an original clip, state police called it an "AI-generated deepfake".

Using internet address tracking, state police arrested a man named Shyam Gupta on May 2 who had shared the fake video post on X a day earlier, receiving over 3,000 views and 11 likes.

The police have accused Gupta of forgery and promoting enmity under Indian law provisions that can carry a jail term of up to seven years if convicted. Reuters could not reach him as he is currently serving a 14-day custody period.

"This person is not a tech guy. Had he been tech savvy, arresting him quickly would not have been possible," said police officer Kumar.



RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL: In an aerial view, cleaning teams work to clean the streets and beach of Copacabana on the day after Madonna's free show at Copacabana Beach on Sunday.

Australian police shoot boy dead

SYDNEY (Reuters): Australian police said on Sunday they had shot dead a boy after he stabbed a man in Western Australia's capital Perth, in an attack authorities said indicated terrorism.

There were signs the 16-year-old, armed with a kitchen knife, had been radicalized online, state authorities said, adding they received calls from concerned members of the local Muslim community before the attack, which occurred late on Saturday night.

The attack, in the suburb of Willetton, had "hallmarks" of terrorism but was yet to be declared a terrorist act, police said.

"At this stage it appears that he acted solely and alone," Western Australia Premier Roger Cook told a televised press conference in the state capital Perth, regarding the attacker.

The victim, stabbed in the back, was stable in hospital, authorities said.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said he had been briefed on the incident by police and intelligence agencies, which advised there was no ongoing threat.

"We are a peace-loving nation and there is no place for violent extremism in Australia," Albanese said on social media platform X.

The incident comes after New South Wales police last month charged several boys with terrorism-related offenses in investigations following the stabbing of an Assyrian Christian bishop while he was giving a live-streamed sermon in Sydney, on April 15.

The attack on the bishop came only days after a stabbing spree killed six in the Sydney beachside suburb of Bondi.

Gun and knife crime is rare in Australia, which consistently ranks among the safest countries in the world, according to the federal government.

Netanyahu govt votes to close Al Jazeera channel

GAZA (Aljazeera): Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet has voted unanimously to close Al Jazeera's operations in Israel, according to a government statement.

The cabinet vote on Sunday came after Israel's parliament passed a law allowing the temporary closure in Israel of foreign broadcasters considered to be a threat to national security during the months-long war in Gaza.

Netanyahu announced the decision on X, formerly Twitter. "The government headed by me unanimously decided: the incitement channel Al Jazeera will be closed in Israel," he posted in Hebrew.

In another X post, Israel's Communications Minister Shlomo Karhi said he had signed the orders against Al Jazeera, which would be effective immediately.

Karhi also ordered the seizure of Al Jazeera's broadcasting equipment "used to deliver the chan-

nel's content", including editing and routing equipment, cameras, microphones, servers and laptops, as well as wireless transmission equipment and some mobile phones.

The decision escalates Israel's long-running feud against Al Jazeera. It also threatens to heighten tensions with Qatar, which funds the media network, at a time when Doha is playing a key role in mediation efforts to halt the war in Gaza.

Israel has long had a rocky relationship with Al Jazeera, accusing it of bias against it and collaborating with Hamas. The Qatar-based network has repeatedly rejected the accusations.

Al Jazeera is one of the few international media outlets to remain in Gaza throughout the war, broadcasting bloody scenes of air attacks and overcrowded hospitals, and accusing Israel of massacres.

Last month, Netanyahu had said he would "act immediately to stop" Al Jazeera's operations in

Israel after its parliament approved a law that grants senior ministers powers to shut down foreign news networks deemed a security risk.

"Al Jazeera harmed Israel's security, actively participated in the October 7 massacre, and incited against Israeli soldiers," Netanyahu had posted on X.

The network accused Netanyahu of "incitement", holding the Israeli leader "responsible for the safety of its staff and network premises around the world, following his incitement and this false accusation in a disgraceful manner".

Al Jazeera's Zein Basravi, reporting from Ramallah in the occupied West Bank, said the Palestine-Israel conflict is "one of the main reasons that our network exists".

"So to have our journalists, our operations, threatened in this way ... Definitely, the worry here in the occupied West Bank is that we will be next," he said.

UAE steps up drive to eliminate mosquitoes after rains

DUBAI (Khaleej Times): The UAE will intensify efforts "to eradicate mosquito breeding hotspots and minimise mosquito infestation in various locations across the country", the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment (MoCCAE) announced.

The UAE recently experienced heavy rainfall, which increased the risk of mosquitoes proliferating in stagnant water and damp areas.

As part of the third phase of the Anti-Mosquito Campaign, the Ministry of Health and Prevention and the Emirates Health Services (EHS) are also actively promoting awareness regarding diseases transmitted by mosquitoes and how these can be prevented.

"(We) will utilise cutting-edge international technologies with the highest standards to control mosquitoes in areas where they are prevalent. Special attention is directed towards controlling mosquitoes in water pools, recognising their widespread presence in such environments," the MoCCAE said in a statement.

How the public can help  
The ministry asked all community members to collaborate with local authorities in facilitating mosquito control efforts.

Residents are urged to report any sightings or breeding locations of mosquitoes by calling the MoCCAE call centre at 8003050.

These locations — subject to investigation and control measures — include construction sites, stables, schools, farms, estates, gardens, parks, residential areas, race tracks, and areas that are damp because of water accumulation.

The public can help prevent and limit the spread of mosquitoes by eliminating stagnant water in irrigation basins, swimming pools, and fountains by either drying, covering, or moving them regularly, the MoCCAE said.

"The ministry will provide comprehensive information, guidance, and sup-

port to the community through various communication channels," said Alia Abdul Rahim Al Harmoudi, assistant under-secretary for the Sustainable Communities Sector at the MoCCAE.

"We will leverage our expertise, resources, and qualified teams to effectively manage any developments or changes contributing to the heightened spread of mosquitoes across various regions," she added.

"All materials used in mosquito control exclusively target mosquitoes and are not harmful for humans and animals," noted Eng. Othaibah Saeed Al Qaydi, director of the Municipal Affairs Department at MoCCAE.

The Ministry also underlined the importance

of repairing water leaks, which serve as a primary breeding ground for mosquitoes, and maintaining cleanliness in areas where rainwater accumulates.

"We emphasise on the vital role of national collaboration in tackling the biological challenges confronting us. This entails close cooperation among relevant authorities at both national and local levels to address health hazards comprehensively and safeguard the society on all fronts," noted HE Dr. Saif Juma Al Dhaheri, Director of the National Operations Centre at NCEMA.

The current drive is part of the third phase of the national anti-mosquito campaign, initially launched by MoCCAE in February 2022. It will continue until May 2025.



Carnation Revolution divides Portugal again, 50 years on

Lisbon, Portugal – The olive-green military vehicles are the same, as are the uniforms of the personnel riding them. It's even the same day of the week on this April 25 – a Thursday.

This is when it all started, on the shore of the Tagus River where the sun hangs like a bulb over the Portuguese capital and Europe's westernmost edge.

But the cheering crowds beside the road today, waving red carnations bought from flower ladies on Rossio Square weren't there 50 years ago. Nobody clapped their hands or posted photos on social media along with catchy hashtags.

On that brisk dawn, the streets were deserted while Lisbon still slumbered, while a revolt was taking birth. That morning, Portugal was still a fascist dictatorship that had fought three brutal wars in Portuguese Guinea, Angola, and Mozambique in its desperate bid to keep control over its African colonies. By the end of the day, Portugal's 42-year-old dictatorship, Estado Novo ("New State"), had been felled by a swift military takeover.

"We were professional soldiers, we'd been in wars and were trained to deal with stressful situations, but this was

something completely different," says former navy captain Carlos Almada Contreiras.

Contreiras was among the 163 military captains who in September 1973 had come together in secret at a "special farmhouse barbecue" to form the clandestine "Movement of Armed Forces" (Movimento das Forças Armadas, MFA). These were men who had fought the Portuguese dictatorship's colonial wars and knew very well that no military victory was close at hand; on the contrary, morale was in decline and an estimated 9,000 Portuguese soldiers had died since 1961.

On April 25, 1974, they turned their gaze towards Lisbon's political heart, intending to seize control of key military installations, political chambers and broadcasting facilities, as well as the airport. At the time, 50 years ago, nobody could predict the outcome of the day.

However, the rebels knew that "there was no turning back," says Contreiras.

It was now life or death – if the military action failed, the MFA conspirators would in all probability have been charged with high treason and quite pos-

sibly sentenced to death. But a victorious outcome might just bring a new dawn for a dying empire in its last throes.

Was he afraid? Contreiras takes a deep breath and recalls that morning when his life – and the lives of numerous others – changed forever. "I haven't thought of that," he says. "We had to act, otherwise we would continue to live in this dead political system, keep fighting these meaningless colonial wars."

In the end, and in less than a day, MFA gained full control over Portugal's military facilities and brought an end to the far-right dictatorship. Prime Minister Marcello Caetano bowed to the conspirators and Portugal's notorious secret police – PIDE – was dismantled.

The following year, 1975, a US-backed counter-coup in November would supplant the new government and the Carnation Revolution would come to an end. But the change it had brought about was permanent.

"The people of Portugal and millions of people in our African colonies were given their lives back," says Contreiras.

As Portugal celebrates 50 years of pluralistic democracy today, however, the long shadows of the country's authoritarian past are creeping back in the wake of the March 2024 elections, in which far-right political party Chega ("Enough") gained 18 percent of the vote and drove a wedge through the heart of the Portuguese two-party system, which had dominated the chambers of power since the 1970s.

A revolution is born  
On April 25, 1974, Portugal became world news. Newspapers around the world were drenched in bright images of celebrating Portuguese masses who took to the streets and placed red carnations in soldier's rifle barrels and uniforms. Portugal's "Carnation Revolution" is often described as a near-bloodless military takeover. But much blood had been spilled in the years leading up to that moment.

In the early 1960s, as most African nations fought for and won independence from their European colonisers, Portugal stood firm in its claim to the country's African "possessions". These were now dubbed "Overseas Territory" instead of "colonies" as a result of a 1951 rewrite of the constitution and

the country had responded to self-determination claims with brutality and repression.

Dictator and Prime Minister Antonio de Oliveira Salazar had established the "Estado Novo" in 1932 – a corporatist state rooted in anti-liberalism and fascism formed in the wake of the demise of Portugal's monarchy – and kept Portugal out of the second world war. Despite being a brutal dictatorship, Salazar managed to lead Portugal into NATO's anti-communist club in 1949 thanks to its control of the Azores Islands, a vital strategic outpost.

When the first colonial war had erupted in Angola in March 1961, soon followed by wars in Portuguese Guinea and Mozambique, Portugal was able to source weaponry – helicopters, fighter aircraft and petrochemical weapons like napalm – from allied nations, primarily the United States, West Germany and France.

Furthermore, during the Cold War, the Azorean military base became a vital strategic and geopolitical outpost in the mid-Atlantic, particularly for the United States, whose continued access to the military facilities depended on political and economic support to Salazar's authoritarian rule. The Azorean

military facilities became crucial for the United States during its military operations to aid the Israel forces during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War.

Finally, in the mid-1960s, the Portuguese dictatorship started to implode. The colonial wars had finally brought Portugal's economy to its knees, and large numbers of forced military conscripts were deserting – much to the embarrassment of the government – fleeing the country and becoming vocal proponents of antiwar movements in countries like France, West Germany and Sweden.

As a navy captain, Contreiras patrolled the Atlantic waters between Angola and Sao Tome. He recalls the first signs of dissent within the army. Within an authoritarian political system, the very thought of rebellion was unheard of. Therefore, the first whispers of change occurred in private exchanges.

"War fatigue and a longing for democracy finally caught up with us," he says. "As part of the navy, I experienced all war fronts, and it was a living hell."

A revolutionary seed was planted, he believes, and it grew into something larger – something irreversible. "The revolution was born out of the words

we uttered at sea." Along with the seemingly never-ending colonial wars, the Portuguese military had started to ease the way for more rapid military rank advancement and promotions in 1973 through a series of new laws to attract more men to pursue military careers.

Low-ranking officers who remained on the lower rungs of the career ladder despite many years of war service saw this as an existential threat. "We were both frustrated and nervous about the development," Contreiras recalls.

In the summer of 1973, the "Naval Club" had been initiated by the 200-odd military captains who were determined to protect their military careers and refused to be singled out as scapegoats for Portugal's declining successes in its colonial warfare. The initial programme called for "Democracy, Development and Decolonisation" and to achieve these goals, the clandestine movement realised the only way was through a military overthrow of the Estado Novo.

In September 1973, Chile's socialist president, Salvador Allende, was overthrown by military leaders in a US-backed coup. The Naval Club decided



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## Reneging on agreement inviting trouble to region

By repeatedly denying the existence of an agreement on managing the Ren'ai Reef issue with China, high-ranking Philippine officials are tarnishing the image of their own country. Their capriciousness only drives home the message that Manila is an unreliable, untrustworthy partner in negotiations.

The blatant denials from the Philippine side has prompted the Chinese embassy in the Philippines to talk at length about the "new model" agreement on Saturday and pose the questions: Why does the Philippine administration keep denying the agreement and why does the Philippines' Defense Ministry refuse to properly manage the maritime differences through dialogue and negotiations?

There is no need to rack one's brains to answer these questions as it is evident to all that managing the differences between the two countries and avoiding conflict does not suit the designs of Washington, which is muscling into the South China Sea by riding herd on Manila.

With Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr under the sway of the Joe Biden administration, there seems to be little hope of Manila acknowledging, never mind upholding, the "gentlemen's agreement" on Ren'ai Reef that the previous Philippine administration struck with Beijing.

The Marcos administration reaffirmed the "new model" agreement for the management of the situation early this year after multiple rounds of discussions with Beijing.

But Manila now refuses to admit not only that it made such an agreement, but also that it reaffirmed its commitment to it. With Washington eager to call the shots, Manila seems to have concluded that it can take advantage of this to hammer in the stakes of its claim by building a permanent facility on the reef. To ensure Manila responds to the crack of its whip, the Biden administration is also piecing together an anti-China clique in the region to back Manila's unwarranted territorial claims.

But no matter how hard they try, neither Washington nor Manila can change the indisputable fact that China's sovereignty, rights and interests in the South China Sea were established over the long course of history and are solidly grounded in law.

By inviting external forces into the bilateral dispute between China and the Philippines, Manila is not only worsening its ties with Beijing but also undercutting the efforts of the other members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to work with China to maintain peace and stability in the waters.

China and the ASEAN countries are actively advancing negotiations on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea. Needless to say, the Philippines' unilateral breach of trust and soliciting of external interference in the South China Sea is having a negative impact on the regional situation as a whole.

## Soliciting WHA for Taiwan exposes US duplicity

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken issued a statement on Wednesday saying the United States strongly encourages the World Health Organization to reinstate an invitation to Taiwan to participate as an observer at this year's WHO annual assembly.

This is a violation of what Washington has promised on the Taiwan question in the three joint communiqués it has signed with Beijing.

It also constitutes a challenge to the principle, upheld by the United Nations, that there is but one China, of which the government in Beijing is the sole legitimate representative. This principle is enshrined in the UN General Assembly Resolution 2758 and WHA Resolution 25.1. As such, it is at Beijing's discretion whether to solicit an invitation for the island's participation in the activities of international organizations as an observer.

The island attended the World Health Assembly as an observer from 2009 to 2016, when the island's authorities recognized the 1992 Consensus acknowledging that the island is part of China.

But the island's current Democratic Progressive Party authorities have stubbornly refused to uphold the 1992 Consensus and instead stuck to their separatist position. They are trying to assert, by whatever means they can think of, the false notion that the island is an "independent country". Thus the political foundation for the island's participation in the WHA no longer exists, as upholding the one-China principle is mandated by Beijing.

In his statement, Blinken emphasized the island's expertise and experience in public health, from which he said the world might benefit. He said that Taiwan's exceptional capabilities and approaches would offer considerable value to inform the WHA's deliberations, adding that time and again, Taiwan has demonstrated a capability and willingness to help address global health crises and support the global health community. By saying this, Blinken not only sought to denigrate the Chinese mainland's contributions in these regards, he was also trying to misportray the issue as a technical decision only.

Having personally reaffirmed the one-China principle on the part of the US during his visit to China in April, he cannot pretend that he does not know that this is a political issue.

The statement by the top US diplomat is simply another iteration of the Joe Biden administration trying to stir up trouble and further proof that it glibly talks the good talk while having no intention of walking its words.

The Taiwan question is one of China's first and foremost core interests, and there is no way Beijing will compromise on this issue.

By signaling its support to the secessionist forces on the island in this way, the Biden administration has not only done a disservice to the improvement of relations between the US and China but also further damaged the US' credibility by again highlighting it will breezily give its word to do something while having every intention of reneging on it.

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## Crackdowns on US college protests serve only to disenfranchise youth and miss the point

Hafed Al-Ghwel

American universities have historically been bastions of free speech and conduits for great social change, addressing pivotal moments in history with a blend of academic integrity, civic engagement and youthful ingenuity.

Today, campuses still enshrine the echoes and scars of the protests against the Vietnam War that sprang up across the nation several decades ago. These centers of higher learning, the stewards of the change-makers of tomorrow, quickly became hotbeds of anti-war sentiment, deeply influencing public opinion, national discourse and, ultimately, ending ruinous policy. Students used their campuses as platforms for peaceful protest and assembly, highlighting the power of the collective student voice in effecting societal shifts.

Equally notable was the role of colleges and universities during the civil rights movement, when campuses served as incubators of nonviolent protest. They became spaces where activists such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. found audiences eager for change in a country far removed from the ideals on which it was founded.

From the anti-Apartheid movement for divestment from South Africa, to Black Lives Matter or climate change, student-driven protests have consistently proved the instrumental nature of universities in championing the causes of liberty and justice. They have set precedents for the active participation of America's youth in national and global discourse, providing venues where even the most disenchanted can speak and be heard.

This storied legacy seems to be faltering, however, in the face of recent campus responses to the Palestinian solidarity movement, which has sparked widespread discourse and shows of dissent. Events that have unfolded at institutions such as Columbia University in New York serve as a stark illustration of how some of America's most esteemed centers of higher learning are failing to meet the moment.

On the morning of April 30, more than 200 pro-Palestinian demonstrators occupied Columbia University's Hamilton Hall, in an echo of the 1968 anti-war protests. Yet rather than engage in constructive dialogue or use these protests as a teachable moment, the immediate response by university authorities was to call in the police, leading to a series of escalations and arrests.

This decision not only exacerbated existing tensions but raised alarming questions about the current state of free speech on American college campuses. The arrests were part of a broader trend we are seeing across the country, with nearly 1,000 detentions reported nationwide in a matter of days in relation to the growing number of pro-Palestinian protests. This wave of confrontations and the resultant crackdowns by authorities stand in stark contrast to the expected role of universities as safe

spaces for open dialogue and debate.

Columbia is far from an isolated bruising; it is merely one conflagration in a globe-spanning wildfire of campus activism related to Israel's undeterred escalations in Gaza. Similar protests have surged, affecting more than 50 campuses in the US and spreading to universities in other countries, such as the Sorbonne in France and the University of Sydney in Australia, turning them into arenas for unprecedented levels of pro-Palestinian advocacy.

This widespread mobilization has become an enduring solidarity movement that transcends borders and illustrates a uni-

**Carefully curated and well-practiced statements from university officials, for instance, have become a reflection of what they believe the American public wants to hear, thereby disguising uncomfortable truths and sidestepping the responsibilities that they demand. As spontaneous and overwhelming as they are, the encampments, occupations, sit-ins and rallies are simply the most common forms of student activism and have been for decades. They are not devious ploys by well-practiced anarchists, as some would have us believe, in their attempts to discredit the movement and deny the agency of the students to step up where America has capitulated. Moreover, the responses to protests at Columbia and on other campuses have not only failed to stifle dissent, they have sown seeds of distrust among students and their surrounding communities. These suppressions highlight a distressing trend: the willingness of universities to prioritize public image and external pressure over the foundational values of academic freedoms and student engagement.**

**By clinging to the baton in lieu of dialogue, the unconscionable crackdowns on protests have left yet another ugly scar on the American psyche: an irrevocable maxim that only the causes held dear by a pliant majority ought to be championed. Aggressive responses to impassioned activism that is driven by the ideals upon which this country was founded undermine the core mission of all American centers of inquiry, which is to foster a diverse and inclusive arena for the exchange of ideas.**

versally resonant call for academia, at least, to take a decisive stance against the catalog of atrocities unleashed on helpless Gazans.

However, the rush to wield batons and deploy armored cars against students reveals a troubling schism in the compact between universities, their communities and the coun-

try at large. The fault lines signal a deeper crisis in university governance — namely, the handling of free speech, enforcement of campus rules, and the balance between collective security and individual rights.

In an era of heightened polarization and intense culture wars, universities are still struggling to safeguard the very civil liberties that enabled America to engage in collective soul-searching on its campuses some 60 years ago, which led to the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Worse, there is almost a collusive abdication of responsibility among America's tertiary institutions, the press and influen-

disguising uncomfortable truths and sidestepping the responsibilities that they demand.

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By clinging to the baton in lieu of dialogue, the unconscionable crackdowns on protests have left yet another ugly scar on the American psyche: an irrevocable maxim that only the causes held dear by a pliant majority ought to be championed.

Aggressive responses to impassioned activism that is driven by the ideals upon which this country was founded undermine the core mission of all American centers of inquiry, which is to foster a diverse and inclusive arena for the exchange of ideas. By choosing order over education, universities risk alienating their student populations, driving down student engagement and discouraging future activism.

Students, perceiving their concerns are being sidelined or outright silenced, might either withdraw from campus political life or escalate their actions, prompting further polarization. Such outcomes are detrimental to the kind of engagement, debate and exchange of differing viewpoints that universities take pride in and have enshrined in their curricula.

The crackdowns on protests and the manner in which universities such as Columbia have handled them illustrate a broader crisis of confidence in the role of higher education in society. By clinging to control measures rather than embracing dialogue, universities betray one of their core missions: to champion libertarian causes in their roles as custodians of free thought and inquiry.

Only by embracing their historic role as crucibles of social change can American universities, and other centers of higher learning around the globe, hope to regain the trust of their students and reaffirm their place at the forefront of societal evolution.

Columbia should be the first and only lesson we need on how not to engage with a rightfully enraged student body, serving as an example that ensures the causes of the future — of which there will be plenty — are not lost to the mis-

steps of the present.

## Israel and Hamas are stuck in a dangerous, deliberate stalemate

Yossi Mekelberg

Negotiations between Israel and Hamas over a ceasefire, the release of hostages and allowing more humanitarian aid to enter the Gaza Strip have been taking place mainly in Cairo, and for a reason. To begin with, the Qatari negotiators have become increasingly frustrated and disillusioned with both sides, to the extent that a senior Qatari official, Majed Al-Ansari, told an Israeli newspaper that his country has decided to re-evaluate its role.

Secondly, Egypt has its own interest in brokering an agreement between Hamas and Israel, as it would avert a threatened Israeli ground offensive in Rafah that would almost certainly result in many thousands of Palestinian refugees, and probably many Hamas militants, crossing the border into Egypt in search of a safe haven.

Of all the possible scenarios, this is the one Egypt dreads most, both for its humanitarian implications and because of the links between the Gazan Islamists and the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Egypt.

In one sentence, Al-Ansari summed up the general feeling about the negotiations between Israel Hamas when he suggested that neither side is convinced an agreement is in their best interest, and said: "Every time we get close to a deal there's sabotage, from both sides."

This suggests neither side trusts the other, with good reason, and so resorts to maintaining the current unresolved situation, or at least views it as the lesser evil. It is an approach that is shocking to the rest of us.

To be sure, one needs to distinguish between what the leaderships of these two sworn enemies see as being in their best interest and what would actually be beneficial for their people. A temporary ceasefire that brings about the release of the hostages, increased humanitarian aid entering the Gaza Strip, and the release of thousands of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails could create fresh momentum for the longer and more permanent ceasefire that is urgently needed. However, it would also increase the pressure on both leaderships to justify the fact that they have inflicted this physical, psychological and political calamity on their own peoples.

In Israel, anti-government protests, which understandably were suspended after the Oct. 7 attacks by Hamas, are once again gathering momentum, and many among the protesters are the families and friends of hostages.

Not all of the current protesters were necessarily supporters of the demonstrations last year that focused on preventing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government from weakening Israeli democracy through its attempts to compromise and reduce the powers of the judiciary. Rather, they are united by a strong sense of betrayal, firstly by the government's colossal failure to defend the country and its people on Oct. 7, and secondly for its inability to bring the hostages home after more than 200 days.

There is a strong sense among very many Israelis that in recent months there have been enough opportunities to reach an agreement over the release of the hostages but that Netanyahu, for his own reasons and personal interests, is employing delaying tactics to prolong the war as his only hope of clinging to power, thereby derailing such opportunities.

He knows that when the war is over, the demands for him to go will increase exponentially and there will be no escape from the immediate establishment of a state commission to investigate the war from

day one, an inquiry that in all probability will strongly question his suitability to remain in office.

Moreover, some of his even more extreme, war-mongering colleagues in government, who still believe that destroying Hamas is an achievable objective, are threatening to quit the coalition if the army does not enter Rafah.

By all accounts, such an incursion would be bound to result in even more mass killings of Palestinians, and the chance of any of the hostages being released alive, and lead to the further displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, in some cases for at least the third or fourth time since the war began.

In addition, because of the proximity of Rafah to the border, it would put pressure on Egyptian authorities to allow civilians caught in the cross-fire to enter the country, creating further tensions between Israel and the first Arab country to sign a peace agreement with it.

A certain degree of brinkmanship in negotiations is understandable but in this particular case one has to question the will on either side to reach an agreement at all, unless the other capitulates.

For Israel, the main achievement from a successful conclusion to the negotiations would be the release of the hostages — but there are strong elements within the Israeli government for whom this is not a priority.

On the Hamas side, although the most recent offer tabled was described by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and British Foreign Secretary David Cameron as "extraordinarily generous," in terms of the release of Palestinian prisoners and more humanitarian aid being allowed into the Gaza Strip, their main concern is an end to the war and this is not on offer.

One does not have to feel any sympathy for Hamas and its leadership to understand the logic behind their demand for an end to the war. As cruel as their mind games with the hostages and their families might be, this is currently the group's main asset in their negotiations with Israel; the more they release, the more vulnerable they become, with no guarantee that an Israeli offensive on Rafah will not take place.

In fact, in a Cabinet meeting this week, Netanyahu promised a military incursion into Rafah "with or without" a hostage deal. This can only be interpreted as the prime minister caving in to the most extreme elements within his coalition. One such minister declared this week that the release of a few dozen hostages would not justify failure to "complete" the war's objectives.

Under these conditions it seems the leaderships of both sides are more interested in deliberate procrastination to sabotage any hopes of an agreement.

In the absence of sufficient political will on the parts of Israeli authorities and Hamas to reach an agreement, it is left for the mediators to use whatever leverage they can bring to bear on the two sides to push them over the finishing line. This is in their best interests, too; if this conflict has managed to prove anything, it is that just when we think things cannot get any worse, they do.

Should the fighting spread to Rafah, a catastrophe is almost inevitable. This would escalate the fragile situation in the Middle East very quickly, adversely affecting domestic politics and societies throughout the region and far beyond.

This is reason enough to call for a united international front to do whatever is in its power to prevent such a horrific scenario, and to do it now.



# Future of the UK, and wider world, is boosted by Scottish National Party’s decline

The union of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland has appeared highly prone to rupture over the past decade or so owing, primarily, to the rise of the Scottish National Party.

However, the unexpected resignation last Monday of First Minister Humza Yousaf, the leader of the party, which rules the devolved Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh, underlines the fact that the almost two decade-long era of SNP control of Holyrood politics is ebbing fast.

The declining fortunes of the party are significant because not only has it enjoyed a very long period in control of the Parliament, dating back to 2007, the SNP also charged the debate over Scottish independence and came within a relative whisker of winning the 2014 referendum on whether or not Scotland should leave the UK.

This “near miss” should matter to the wider world because Scottish independence would damage the UK, including its ability to “punch above its weight” on the world stage. Losing the Scottish tax base, for example, especially at a time of huge fiscal challenges in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, would make it harder for the UK to meet its new plans to spend 2.5 percent of gross domestic product on defense in the wake of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Moreover, the UK’s large overseas aid budget and its extensive network of diplomatic and trade missions would also be affected. Collectively, this would undermine both the hard and soft power that has enabled the nation to punch above its weight for so long.

Scottish independence would also erode the UK’s voice in international forums, including the UN, G7, G8, G20 and NATO. It

could also, potentially, and perhaps most significantly, be seized upon by some nonpermanent members of the UN Security Council, or other UN member states, to catalyze calls for a review of the UK’s role as a permanent member of the council.

Certainly, reform of the Security Council is overdue. However, Scottish independence could have

Andrew Hammond

cessor Nicola Sturgeon, the nation’s longest-serving first minister. From at least 2014, following the independence referendum and the resignation of her predecessor Alex Salmond, she was the dominant Scottish politician, until her resignation last year.

While Sturgeon proved to be a formidable politi-

slumped to its lowest level in five years by the time Yousaf took office.

However, the issue of independence was the one on which the SNP most significantly failed to grasp the nettle. Its case was not helped by a clear ruling by the UK’s Supreme Court that the Holyrood legislature does not have the authority to unilaterally call a fresh referendum on the

or not to remain part of the union.

Latterly, Sturgeon’s favored tactic was either to wait for the next UK general election, which must take place by January 2025, and use a good result for the SNP to put pressure on the UK government to agree to another referendum, or to wait and portray the next Scottish Parliament election as a de facto vote on independence.

Given the declining popularity of the SNP, however, neither approach is likely to be a game changer. The party therefore still lacks a road map for delivering the independence that would unravel the UK, one of the world’s longest and most successful political unions. Any new referendum is now unlikely to take place until the 2030s, at the earliest.

Certainly, Scotland has legitimate concerns about the “thin” Brexit deal agreed between the UK and the EU in 2020. However, the failure of the SNP project is welcome because it was potentially leading Scotland, and the wider UK, down a political and economic black hole that would probably weaken all members of the union, given that their futures are better together.

For Scotland, there remain huge uncertainties about whether it would benefit significantly from independence, not least because of the deficit between tax revenues and public spending in the country, which it can better deal with as part of the union with England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

All of this underscores the fact that Scottish independence is a bad idea which would weaken the domestic underpinnings of the UK’s international influence. At a time of growing geopolitical and economic uncertainty, the future of Scotland and the UK is better together.

# Keep an eye on the Balkans: It’s the world’s next flash point

Luke Coffey

success of the 1995 Dayton Accords.

Two upcoming events could serve as a pretext for fresh instability in the region. The first potential flash point is a draft resolution being debated by the UN General Assembly that proposes to designate July 11 as the “International Day of Remembrance for the Genocide in Srebrenica.” In 1995, Bosnian Serbs, along with paramilitary units from Serbia, massacred more than 8,000 Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica after the UN declared the city a safe area.

Of course, Dodik and Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic have vehemently criticized the resolution. This criticism from people such as Dodik is unsurprising; there are many officials in Republika Srpska and Serbia who downplay what happened in Srebrenica in 1995. Dodik has said that reports of Serbia’s involvement in

ic progress, the preservation of the Serbian language and the Cyrillic alphabet and common cultural heritage.”

The political elite in Serbia have often discussed their vision for the so-called “Serbian world,” with Belgrade as its center. There is concern that the vote in the UN General Assembly, combined with the staging of the so-called Easter Assembly, could convince Dodik that the time is right to declare independence from Bosnia and Herzegovina and form a union with Serbia.

Such a move would be disastrous for the region. Redrawing borders based on ethnic and sectarian lines would open up a Pandora’s box. The Balkans already went through a tidal wave of border changes in the 1990s. During this period, more than 100,000 people died and millions were displaced during sectarian conflicts.

The effects of redrawing the borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia

***Raising the stakes even higher, Dodik has stated that should UN General Assembly adopt the resolution, he will seek out the next opportunity to secede from Bosnia and Herzegovina.***

***Considering his previous rhetoric on the issue of independence for Republika Srpska, his threats should be taken seriously.***

***Secondly, next week a so-called grand Easter Assembly of Serbia and Republika Srpska will convene in Belgrade (next week marks the Easter holiday in the Orthodox Christian world).***

***According to a statement by the Serbian government, “important decisions will be made about the survival of the Serbian people in their hearths, their economic progress, the preservation of the Serbian language and the Cyrillic alphabet and common cultural heritage.” The political elite in Serbia have often discussed their vision for the so-called “Serbian world,” with Belgrade as its center.***

the deaths of nearly 8,000 Bosnian Muslims are “untrue,” and many of the victims are “still alive.”

Raising the stakes even higher, Dodik has stated that should UN General Assembly adopt the resolution, he will seek out the next opportunity to secede from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Considering his previous rhetoric on the issue of independence for Republika Srpska, his threats should be taken seriously.

Secondly, next week a so-called grand Easter Assembly of Serbia and Republika Srpska will convene in Belgrade (next week marks the Easter holiday in the Orthodox Christian world).

According to a statement by the Serbian government, “important decisions will be made about the survival of the Serbian people in their hearths, their econom-

would be felt elsewhere, too. This is particularly true in other regions of the Balkans, such as Kosovo, with its Serbian minority, Macedonia, with its ethnically Albanian regions, and even Serbia, with the Muslim-majority Sandzak region and Vojvodina region.

Since the 1990s, the international community has invested a lot of blood and money to ensure that the Balkans remains peaceful and stable. Even countries as far away as Argentina, in Latin America, Morocco, in North Africa, and the UAE, in the Middle East, have served as peacekeepers in the region over the years.

With the present focus of the international community on Ukraine, Iran, Taiwan and Gaza, it should not ignore the Balkans. Over the next few weeks, things will start to heat up there.

# How Israel’s rogue soldiers were let off the hook

It has been two weeks since reports first emerged that the US intended to impose sanctions on the Netzah Yehuda battalion of ultra-orthodox soldiers in the Israeli army for human rights violations in the occupied West Bank.

The reports raised expectations that the Biden administration was at last standing up to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his far-right extremist government on the issue of international and human rights law, imposing penalties for the first time on an Israeli military unit.

The Leahy Laws, introduced in 1997, prohibit the US State Department and Defense Department from providing military assistance to foreign security force units that have been credibly implicated in a serious abuse of human rights, until the host government takes effective steps to bring the responsible people to justice.

Before the Gaza war, a State Department special panel investigated allegations about the conduct of

five Israeli military and police units that operate in the occupied West Bank, and recommended their disqualification from receiving US aid. Secretary of State Antony Blinken was asked during a press conference in Italy last week about the recommendations and he gave the impression that sanctions would follow in a matter of days.

The Netzah Yehuda, established in 1999, comprises ultra-orthodox men and religious nationalists from the settler movement. They are a separate unit to accommodate their religious beliefs, including a refusal to serve with female soldiers. When the unit was based in the West Bank it was accused of numerous human rights violations against Palestinians. One case in particular attracted Washington’s attention. Omar Assad, an 80-year-old US citizen, was bound and gagged and forced to lie on his stomach for up to an hour after being detained by Netzah Yehuda troops at a checkpoint near Ramallah in January 2022, and died from stress-induced cardiac

Dr. Amal Mudallali

arrest.

In June 2023, the Israeli military said the soldiers involved in the incident would be reprimanded but would not face criminal charges because there was no medical evidence that they had caused Assad’s death. Israel temporarily moved Netzah Yehuda to the Golan Heights but the unit returned to Gaza and the West Bank after the October attack by Hamas.

The Israeli newspaper Haaretz described proposed sanctions on Netzah Yehuda as a “big deal” that sent “an unambiguous political message.” But it added: “Israel’s entire political echelon needs to be held accountable. The US should say so unequivocally ... instead of sanctioning a rogue battalion, the US should focus on Netanyahu and his ministers.”

Predictably, however, the official Israeli reaction was to reject sanctions, which Netanyahu said would be “the height of absurdity and a moral low” that he would “fight with all my strength.”

The Israeli army said the Netzah Yehuda soldiers were “currently participating in the war effort in the Gaza Strip ... professionally and bravely conducting operations in accordance with the IDF Code of Ethics and with full commitment to international law.” Benny Gantz, a member of the Israeli war cabinet, told Blinken that sanctions would be a mistake because they would harm Israeli’s international legitimacy at a time of war, and because Israel’s judicial system was “strong and independent.”

The State Department appears to have buckled under the pressure. In a letter to House Speaker Mike Johnson, Blinken said he planned to postpone “a decision on blocking aid to the unit to give Israel time to right the wrongdoing.” Blinken said the Israeli government had not so far adequately addressed the abuses by Netzah Yehuda, but had “presented new information regarding the status of the unit and we will engage on identifying a path to effective remediation.”

The decision came at a time when a coalition of lawyers, including at least 20 who work in the Biden administration, wrote to Attorney General Merrick Garland and general counsels across the administration arguing that its actions in Gaza do not comply with US and international law.

The delay also coincided with Blinken’s visit to Israel last week, and the continued American opposition to an Israeli ground offensive in Rafah, where up to 1.5 million Palestinian civilians have sought refuge.

The delay in a decision to impose sanctions on Netzah Yehuda was received with dismay by human rights advocates, who say that selectivity and leniency toward human rights violations in one place sends the wrong message, not only to the perpetrators but also to the whole world. It encourages impunity and disregard for the rule of law, and impacts justice — because, as Martin Luther King said as long ago as 1963: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

# Restoring AIUla’s natural balance, advancing sustainable desert tourism

AIUla, the ancient oasis in the north-west of Saudi Arabia, is currently undergoing a comprehensive regeneration aimed at rejuvenating its native flora and fauna. This is crucial for reinstating the ecological equilibrium and embracing international conservation standards while fostering sustainable tourism practices.

The Royal Commission for AIUla is spearheading these efforts, with the belief that conserving biodiversity is foundational to the creation of a successful tourism destination. Collaborations with organizations such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature ensure that we also leverage global expertise for sustained success.

Supported by rigorous

scientific research and meticulous planning, these initiatives entail the restoration of fragile desert ecosystems and the reintroduction of native species. During the latest animal-reintroduction program, launched in 2023, about 1,000 animals from four species — Arabian gazelle, sand gazelle, Arabian oryx and Nubian ibex — were released into nature reserves in AIUla, including at Sharaan, Wadi Nakhlah and Gharameel. Ultimately, we aim to reintroduce the critically endangered Arabian leopard into the wilds of AIUla.

Central to our vision is the development of AIUla as a world-class ecotourism destination, where visitors can experience the wonders of nature while contributing to its conservation.

We are committed to promoting responsible tourism practices that enable visitors to explore AIUla’s desert landscapes while educating them

led by knowledgeable local guides, and implementing strict guidelines for wildlife viewing and

***We are committed to promoting responsible tourism practices that enable visitors to explore AIUla’s desert landscapes while educating them about the importance of preserving biodiversity and respecting wildlife habitats. By offering guided nature walks and tours led by knowledgeable local guides, and implementing strict guidelines for wildlife viewing and photography, we ensure that visitors can experience the beauty of AIUla’s desert while minimizing disturbances to its delicate ecosystem. Furthermore, AIUla prioritizes eco-friendly infrastructure, from low-impact accommodations to carbon-conscious transportation options, thereby ensuring harmonious coexistence with nature.***

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Stephen Browne

ecosystem.

Furthermore, AIUla prioritizes eco-friendly infrastructure, from low-impact

Our focus on native plants cultivated at AIUla Plant Nursery and Seed Bank exemplifies this dedication and plays a pivotal role in reforestation efforts

The nursery’s efforts have led to the planting of nearly 300,000 trees and bushes, with the involvement of the community, which fosters a strong sense of stewardship among the people of AIUla. AIUla’s rich botanical tapestry is also the subject of the next publication, “AIUla Flora,” from luxury publisher Assouline. The tome showcases the natural splendor of this ancient oasis through original photography, illustrations and artwork covering more than 80 diverse species, both native and introduced, that are thriving in AIUla’s landscape. Some plants have an interesting history of use in Bedouin crafts or tradition-

and cuttings from more than 80 species of plants and produces seedlings from more than 60 species.

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al medicines, while others are prized for culinary reasons.

By integrating conservation efforts with responsible tourism practices, other destinations in Saudi Arabia and around the world can join AIUla in striking a balance between visitor enjoyment and environmental stewardship.

Through collaboration with local communities, conservation organizations and tourism stakeholders, we have a model for sustainable tourism that not only preserves AIUla’s natural heritage but also contributes to the well-being of its inhabitants.

Together, we can ensure that future generations have the opportunity to experience the wonders of AIUla’s desert while safeguarding its ecological integrity.





# SCCI, FPCCI agreed to jointly raise KP traders' issues with centre

## F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: President, Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Fuad Ishaq and Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) president Atif Ikram Sheikh reaffirmed commitment to jointly raise Khyber Pakhtunkhwa business community issues with central government.

Both sides have agreed to initiate collective efforts to raise KP business community issues particularly attainment of the province constitutional rights about electricity, gas and other natural resources and issues attached with cross border trade.

According to the details, the FPCCI president Atif Ikram Sheikh held a meeting with SCCI president Fuad Ishaq here at the chamber house, said in a statement issued here on Sunday.

The meeting discussed KP businessmen issues, particularly pertaining to hurdles in trade and business, gaining constitutional rights on gas, electricity and other natural resources.

The participants vowed to take up all matters with

government and relevant authorities and resolve them amicably.

The business community affirmed to initiate vigorous struggle for KP rightful share on gas, electricity, oil and other natural resources.

Atif Ikram Sheikh who accompanied by Chairman Coordination of the FPCCI Malik Sohail Hussain, former president SCCI Zahidullah Shinwari and Sohail Javed told the meeting that uninterrupted electricity and gas supply to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is constitutional right and assured FPCCI will take up this matter with government efficient manner.

Highlighting several issues of KP' business community, Fuad Ishaq said gas, electricity, mine and mineral reserves and trade with Afghanistan are the key potentials of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He said KP has the first right to exploit its indigenous natural resources, oil, gas and electricity under article 158 of the constitution of the country.

He, however, lamented that despite being a net exporter and surplus gas production, KP has been put into the RLNG basket and giving rates to KP

equal to major provinces, which is totally unfair and unacceptable.

In the prevailing situation, Mr Ishaq said industrial growth has been slowed down and many production units were near to closure which may trigger further unemployment in the province.

The SCCI chief called for extracting natural resources by using modern techniques and technology to improve their quality and standard, saying that promotion of this important sector would generate further economic activities and employment opportunities in the province.

He demanded the review of IPPs agreements to overcome the energy crisis in the country.

Fuad Ishaq informed that the Peshawar Expo Centre project was initiated in his previous presidential tenure, which is in process of near completion and would require Rs3.45 billion to complete the project.

In this regard, he said SCCI is taking up the issue of the required funds for Expo Centre Peshawar.

In the meanwhile, the businessmen forum hosted a dinner in honour of

United Business Group Patron in chief S.M Tanveer and FPCCI President Atif Ikram Sheikh held in the residence of SCCI' president Fuad Ishaq.

The dinner was attended by businessman forum leader former senator Ilyas Ahmad Bilour, former president FPCCI Ghazanfar Bilour, leading businessman Senator Mohsin Aziz, Senator Nauman Wazir, SCCI SVP Sanaullah Khan, Vice president Ejaz Khan Afridi, FPCCI Coordinator and former president of the chamber Haji Muhammad Afzal, ex-president FPCCI Zubair Tufail, former vice president Zafar Bakhtawari, former vice president ICCI Khalid Chaudhry, members of the SCCI executive committee Affaf Ali Khan, Hamza Ibrahim Butt, Faisal Afzal, Monawar Khurshid, former presidents Zahidullah Shinwari, Riaz Arshad, Malik Niaz Ahmad, Haji Muhammad Asif, Faiz Muhammad Faizi, former SVPs of the SCCI Imran Khan MOhmand, Muhammad Iqbal, and former vice president Junaid Altaf, and members of business community, traders, importers and exporters.



SARGODHA: A vendor displaying loquat on his cart to attract customers.

## 82 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 82 connections; Rs 2 million fine imposed.

In Lahore, the regional team disconnected 16 connections on illegal use of gas. The team imposed fine of Rs 0.45 million against gas pilfers.

In Multan 8 connections were disconnected on illegal use while another 2 on use of compressor.

In Peshawar and Karak the company disconnected 40 connections on account of direct use of gas and illegal use of gas and the amount of Rs 1.5 million have been booked against gas theft cases. The team also lodged 1 FIR against gas pilfers.

In Bahawalpur the team disconnected 8 connections on use of compressors.

In Mardan the team disconnected 8 connections on illegal use of gas and team also imposed fine of Rs 0.1 million against gas theft cases.

## FBR set plan to register shopkeepers

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has announced plan to automatically register shopkeepers through its own staff who remained evaded to participate in the Trader-Friendly Scheme.

Media reports indicate that millions of traders across the country evade direct tax payments, prompting the FBR to initiate measures to address registration discrepancies. Surveys will be conducted nationwide to facilitate registration, with dedicated teams deployed for on-the-spot registration checks. Specialized teams will conduct field visits in respective cities to oversee the registration process.

Traders were offered the opportunity to contribute to the country's economy through minimal tax payments under the Trader-Friendly Scheme.

However, apprehensions about being ensnared in the tax net led many traders to refrain from registration altogether. Despite the expiry of the registration deadline for the FBR's Trader Dost Scheme, millions of traders remain outside the tax net.

## 40th carpet expo to be held in Lahore

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Carpet Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PCMEA) Senior Vice Chairman Usman Ashraf has said that the 40th three-day international exhibition of handmade carpets will be held in Lahore in the second week of October this year.

"In view of the large number of foreign buyers hailing from different countries, this will be a big event and we are hopeful that all relevant institutions including the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan will provide full financial and technical support for its success."

He expressed these views while addressing the 7th zonal committee meeting at the association's office here today.

Chairman of Carpet Training Institute (CTI) Ejazur Rehman, senior central leader Abdul Latif Malik, senior member Riaz Ahmed, Major (Retd) Akhtar, Saeed Khan, Faisal Saeed Khan were also present.

Vice Chairman Usman Ashraf briefed t about his recent visit to America and the meetings with the buyers of Pakistani carpets.

He said they appealed to the government to make our proposals for the promotion of exports and solving the long-standing problems a part of the budget for the next financial year.

In the meeting, the date of the 40th International Exhibition in Lahore this year was discussed and a consensus was reached on the proposal to hold the exhibition in the second week of October.

It was decided in the meeting that like last year, buyers from China, America, Great Britain, Hungary, Turkey and other countries will be invited to participate in the exhibition. For the success of the exhibition, effective communication will be made with Trade Development Authority Pakistan and other related institutions and there is a strong hope that the government institutions will fully patronize the global exhibition in the context of promoting exports.

He said that looking at the success of the last year's exhibition, it can be concluded that in this year also, wide-scale contracts will be signed by foreign buyers, which will strengthen our economy.

Usman Ashraf said that official committees will be formed regarding the preparations for the exhibition and along with this they will also formulate an effective strategy for communication with foreign buyers and 'we are expecting buyers from new countries to participate in the exhibition.'

He said that Pakistan Carpet Association is committed to make this coming exhibition a big success again and to materialize this, all the members of the association will play their individual and collective role. He further said that the government recognizes that our economy cannot develop without promoting exports, while on the other hand other government institutions including the State Bank are creating obstacles in the way of exports.

He said, "We have sent comprehensive proposals from the platform of PCMEA to solve long-standing problems and promote exports, we appeal to the government to make our proposals a mandatory part of the budget document for the next financial year."

## NPO launches program for uplift of gemstone sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Productivity Organization (NPO) initiated a technical assistance program for the gemstone sector in collaboration with the Asian Productivity Organization (APO) Tokyo, Japan for the development of sector.

Consultancy and workshops focused on gemstone identification, certification, cutting and polishing techniques with experts from the Gems and Jewelry Institute, Thailand, said a press release issued here Sunday.

Sessions held in Peshawar, Gilgit, Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Lahore aimed to enhance stakeholder capacity and foster economic growth through knowledge sharing and skill development.

The program involved industry professionals, associations and international experts, promoting collaboration and economic prosperity in the gems and jewelry sector.

The experts shared

knowledge and hands-on skills and practices for enhancing the capacity of the stakeholders, paving way for broader collaboration and propelling towards sustained economic prosperity.

The objective is to promote international standards in gemstone products; provide comprehensive knowledge of cutting, polishing, designing and heating techniques; and enhance understanding of best practices and technological advances in gemstone value chains.

Engage relevant associations such as PGJTEA, APCEA and PGMA, industry experts, business professionals involved in the sector with the international experts to learn latest techniques and processes thereby leading to overall productivity enhancement within the sector.

The Asian Productivity Organization, Tokyo, Japan's team was led by Program Officer, accompa-

nied by senior international resource persons from Gems and Jewelry Institute, Thailand.

The delegation held consultancy sessions in Peshawar, Gilgit, Rawalpindi, Islamabad and Lahore. In Peshawar the delegation visited Gems and jewelry training center (G&JTC), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa TEVTA, Gems and Jewelry Center of Excellence, UET Peshawar and visited potential gemstone market.

The delegation also visited and conducted sessions at lapidary training center under GB administration with the assistance of PGMA association and later visited Pakistan institute of Fashion design, Lahore.

A session on structural reforms and sharing of best practices in gems and jewelry sector was also held at Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) and Rawalpindi Chamber of commerce and Industry (RCCI).

## SLIC's 2023 business growth uncovers Pak's untapped potential

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: The State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan (SLIC) has disclosed its outstanding financial accomplishments for the fiscal year 2023. Under the leadership of Shoaib Javed Hussain, CEO of SLIC, the corporation has achieved remarkable milestones, establishing itself as a financial powerhouse in Pakistan.

### Key financial highlights of 2023:

Total Annual Income surged to an all-time high, exceeding PKR 526 billion, marking a substantial +37% increase from the previous year, highlighting SLIC's strong revenue generation capabilities.

Total Annual Premium Income witnessed a notable uptick, surpassing PKR 338 billion, reflecting an 18% increase compared to 2022, demonstrating the corporation's ability to attract and retain a diversified portfolio of policyholders.

Investment Income crossed PKR 257 billion in 2023, with substantial investments in Government Securities and the Pakistan Stock Exchange, contribut-

ing to the growth and stability of Pakistan's capital markets.

The profit before tax for the year 2023 increased to PKR 24.5 billion which is +18% increase over the year 2022. The profit after tax was PKR.14.7 billion in 2022.

Total Assets under Management for the year 2023 increased to PKR. 1.93 trillion which is +20.5% increase over the year 2022.

### Business performance by segment:

The Individual Life segment achieved record-breaking New Business premium collections, surpassing PKR 26.9 billion in 2023 (PKR 20.1 billion in 2022), showing a growth of +34% signifying strong customer demand for SLIC's diversified range of protection and savings products.

The Group Life and Pensions segment achieved a milestone by recording PKR 12 billion in New Business, further strengthening SLIC's product offerings and market position.

SLIC launched its corporate and individual health plans in 2023, diversifying its product portfolio with a

commitment to meet protection needs of all Pakistanis across all strata of society

SLIC continues its strong delivery on the Government's Social Health program, showcasing service to the people of Pakistan as its paramount ethic.

### Payouts and profit allocation:

On the basis of the strong financial performance in 2023, SLIC has announced a special one-time policyholder profit bonus, the State Life Khushali Bonus of PKR 10 billion, symbolizing SLIC's commitment to rewarding its policyholders.

The Total Profit Bonus allocated to policyholders in 2023 is PKR 119.7 billion in 2023, showcasing a substantial +23% increase from last year, reflecting SLIC's strong financial performance.

The profit bonus allocated to its UAE branch policyholders in 2023 has also increased to PKR 1.74 billion, an increase of +84% from last year, demonstrating sound financial performance of the UAE branch office.

Policyholder Claims

Payouts were PKR 247 billion in 2023, marking a significant +41% increase from the prior year, emphasizing SLIC's dedication to honouring its promise to policyholders.

The corporation announced a special cash dividend of PKR 0.5 billion to the Government of Pakistan, increasing its total cash dividend to PKR 2.5 billion, an increase of +25% from 2022.

### State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan:

State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan (SLIC) is the leading life and health insurance provider in Pakistan serving over 180 million Pakistanis. SLIC's fiscal achievements for 2023 is another year of exceptional growth, financial resilience, and strategic foresight, positioning the corporation as a leader in the insurance and financial services sector in Pakistan. The results not only showcase SLIC's strong financial performance but also its firm commitment to serving and protecting the financial interests of its customers, stakeholders and the nation as a whole.

## Pakistan Furniture Council to take part in Riyadh Intel expo

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) will take part in a 3-day Riyadh international expo starting from May 21 to explore business opportunities and find new global markets.

PFC Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq stated this in a meeting with a delegation of furniture manufacturers and exporters led by

Muhammad Araib here on Sunday.

He said: "This fair attracts thousands of global exhibitors, investors, importers, exporters and buyers from all over the world which showcase their products."

He said Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) would exhibit its international quality products to capture their share in

international market.

It is an excellent opportunity to showcase Pak products and develop business deals with international buyers.

He added that this expo also offers professional buyers a sourcing platform with wide variety of products ranging from basics to the most creative and qualitative.

Mian Kashif hoped for

getting orders from foreign buyers and said main purpose of attending the foreign fairs was to help strengthen the national economy and TDAP was facilitating the manufacturers of export products.

He said: "I will also hold meetings with tycoons for investment to avail government unprecedented special package for foreign investors".

## BMP for lowering production cost to promote industrialization

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's (FPCCI) Businessmen Panel (BMP) has called for promoting industrialization and enhancing exports through lowering cost of production, paying early refunds to solve liquidity crunch and relaxing import policy for industrial raw material.

The FPCCI former president and Businessmen Panel (BMP) Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar said that business community was facing tough challenges because of limited business. In this context, he sought attention of the government for formulation of regional, provincial and central level task force, and formulation of sector wise

regional policies which would help the government address the problems confronted by exporters.

He suggested that One Window Operation should be introduced for the replacing the lengthy procedures that involve interaction of manufacturers with various agencies. The government agencies were harassing the textile industry every day. Social Security, EOBI and other taxes should be merged and deducted at the source.

Mian Anjum Nisar asked the government to appreciate the role of industry for its potential to harvest maximum benefits, providing mass employment to the jobless population of the country. He also sought government's attention for formulating aggressive marketing plan and hurdle-

free policies as well as urgent decisions in favor of exports while taking on board major stakeholders.

He called for concerted efforts for exploring new markets both traditional and non-traditional in order to introduce home made products. He urged the government to announce favorable policies and allow duty-free import of raw material and accessories.

This move will attract investors and help in setting up new industries in the country which will create wide opportunities for employment. We directly need a stimulus economic plan coupled with relief package by the government to maximize production. He also emphasized the need for seeking technical know-how from China and other countries for the sake

of innovation, and improvement of products.

The BMP chairman said the sustainable solution to Pakistan's problems lies in reforms, as we can see very large inefficiencies in tax collection. So, the tax compliance must be improved and tax base be broadened. This cannot be achieved with a single policy change, but by a systemic approach, he added.

He observed the government preferred direct taxation to meet revenue shortfall as opposed to re-sorting to increasing indirect taxes because direct taxes tend to be more progressive in nature; therefore, the burden on the lower income strata of the population is lesser. He emphasized that concentrating on import substitution is imperative to narrow import bills and cer-

tain imported products such as oil are of a fixed nature; therefore, the government needs to enhance focus on import substitution industries, as chemicals, agriculture and steel are potential industries.

He said that undertaking structural reforms require political will. He said that enacting structural reforms, such as improvements in tax collection system, bureaucracy and ease of doing business requires major political will and strict implementation of policies, he added.

The BMP chairman urged the government to solve their problems on a priority basis in consultation with the traders. The BMP's mission was to create a stable economy and prosperous business community, he

added.

He also called for promoting industrialization and enhancing exports through lowering the cost of production, paying early refunds to solve liquidity crunch and relaxing import policy for industrial raw material. He said the business community was facing problems like unannounced load shedding, parking, departmental proceedings, overbilling and expensive electricity and gas in the markets. He asked the government to appreciate the role of trade, industry and exporters, providing mass employment to the jobless population of the country.

The chairman stressed the need for reforms, with a keen focus on value-addition for a sustainable economic growth, recommending the government to raise

exports to double digit of the GDP, as Pakistan's exports have bounced back after witnessing decline.

Mian Anjum stressed that focus should be on promoting exports and restricting imports alongside making domestic industry more competitive and subsequently expand its export market.

He said that exports of goods and services are an injection into the circular flow of income leading to a rise in aggregate demand and an expansion of output, helping raise per capita incomes and reduce extreme poverty especially in developing economies like Pakistan.

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In brief

Pak squad reaches England

L O N D O N (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan women's cricket team touched down at Heathrow Airport, London on Sunday via Dubai to play white-ball series against England. The national team departed from Karachi earlier today for the series, featuring three T20Is and three ODIs. Pakistan's women's team and management were welcomed by Dr. Muhammad Faisal, the High Commissioner of Pakistan in England. The squad will leave for Leicester shortly to play a warm-up match against ECB Development XI on 9 May. The first T20I will be played on 11 May in Birmingham. Notably, the ODIs in the series are part of ICC Women's Championship 2022-25 and this will be Pakistan's eighth and final series in the current event cycle. Pakistan are currently sitting in fifth position with 16 points in the 10-team ICC Women Championship 2022-25 standings. The top five teams from this championship, along with hosts India, will directly qualify for the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025. Pakistan women squad for England tour Nida Dar (captain), Aliya Riaz, Ayesha Zafar, Diana Baig, Fatima Sana, Gull Feroza, Muneeba Ali (wk), Najha Alvi (wk), Nashra Sundhu, Natalia Parvaiz, Rameen Shamim, Sadaf Shamas, Sadia Iqbal, Sidra Amin, Tuba Hassan, Umm-e-Hani and Waheeda Akhtar Player support personnel: Nahida Khan (manager), Mahtashim Rasheed (interim head coach), Saleem Jaffar (bowling coach), Taufeeq Umar (batting coach), Hanif Malik (fielding coach), Syed Nazir Ahmed (media manager), Rabia Siddiq (physiotherapist), Zubair Ahmed (analyst) and Hina Munawar (chief security officer)

Sinner may play French Open

ROME (AFP): Australian Open champion Jannik Sinner said Sunday that he will only compete at the French Open if he is fully fit after being forced to withdraw injured from this week's Italian Open. Italian world number two Sinner announced that he was dropping out of his home tournament in Rome on Saturday as he failed to recover from a right hip injury which forced him to retire from the Madrid Open last week. "I will only take part in Roland Garros if I am 100 percent fit," said Sinner at a press conference held in Rome. "I don't want to go into details (of the injury), we thought initially that it wasn't anything serious but the scans showed that there was something that wasn't right. "One thing is sure, if I've not 100 percent recovered I will take more time out as I do not want to lose three years of my career. "It hurts (not playing) but making sure my body heals is the most important thing." Sinner, who holds a 28-2 record on the season, added that he would out of action "for a week, a week and a half". "My preparation for Paris won't be optimal because I won't have much time, but what is sure is that I will give everything in order to be in a position to play," he said. Sinner had been a doubter for the Italian Open which starts on Wednesday and is the last big tournament before the French Open, the second Grand Slam of the year starting on May 26.

Pakistan to face India on Oct. 6 in women's T20 World Cup clash

DHAKA (AFP): England will face South Africa in the opening match of the ICC Women's Twenty20 World Cup to be held in Bangladesh later this year, the International Cricket Council announced on Sunday. The event will run from October 3 to 20 in the capital Dhaka and the north-eastern city of Sylhet, with warm-up matches starting on September 27. Hosts Bangladesh and the top six teams from the previous edition in South Africa — Australia, England, New Zealand, South Africa and the West

Indies — qualified automatically for the tournament, with Pakistan joining them as the next best ranked team. Ireland, the UAE, Sri Lanka and Scotland are in contention for the remaining two places, with the semifinals of the qualifying tournament being held in the UAE. Six-times winners and current world number one Australia will play in Group A alongside India, New Zealand, Pakistan and a Qualifier 1. Neighbours and rivals India and Pakistan will face

off on October 6. Group B will feature South Africa, Bangladesh, England, West Indies, and Qualifier 2. "Over the last six to seven years we have seen women's cricket grow exponentially," ICC chief executive officer Geoff Allardice said at the announcement of the fixture list and trophy unveiling in Dhaka. "This is going to be a very special tournament," he added. It will be the ninth edition of the tournament, with Bangladesh previously hosting in 2014.

Azlan Shah Hockey Cup

Pakistan register crushing win over South Korea



IPOH (Monitoring Desk): In a display of sheer prowess and determination, Pakistan's national hockey team secured a consecutive victory in the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup by defeating Korea 4-0 one-sidedly on Sunday in Ipoh, Perak. Led by the stellar efforts of Hanan Shahid, Arshad Liaquat, Ghazanfar Ali, and Sufyan Ali, each contributing a goal, Pakistan dominated the field, leaving their opponents struggling to keep pace. The relentless offensive strategies coupled with a solid defense left no room for Korea to stage a comeback. Pakistan made an explosive start as Hannan Shahid secured the first

goal just three minutes into the game with a powerful field goal, setting the tone for the encounter. The momentum continued to swing in Pakistan's favour as Arshad Liaquat added to the scoreboard, netting another field goal in the 20th minute of the match. With a relentless display of skill and determination, Ghazanfar Ali further extended Pakistan's lead with a third field goal in the 27th minute, leaving the Korean defense struggling to keep pace. As the match progressed into the third quarter, Pakistan's solid defense held firm, denying their opponents any opportunity to close the gap. The score remained

unchanged at the end of the third quarter, with Pakistan maintaining their commanding 3-0 lead. In the final quarter, Pakistan sealed their victory with a clinical performance, as Sufyan Khan converted a penalty corner into a goal in the 50th minute, putting the match out of Korea's reach. Remember, Pakistan defeated Malaysia with a last-minute winner by Abu Mahmood on Saturday. The nine-goal thriller saw some of the best goals as the Green Shirts managed to emerge triumphant 5-4 after a long 60 minutes. Pakistan's next match is now against Japan on May 7 at the same venue.

PAF, Army gain points in PTF Tennis Trophy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Air Force and Pakistan Army gained valuable winning points in the 1st PTF Inter-Department Tennis Trophy 2024 here at PTF Tennis Complex, Garden Avenue on Sunday. On the 3rd day, Pakistan Air Force continued to fly with the win against SNGPL, whereas Pakistan Army brushed off Pakistan Navy, and gained valuable winning points in their bucket. Yousaf Khalil (PAF) faced resistance from the upcoming youngster Ahtesham Humayun (SNGPL) in the first singles. In the first set, Yousaf Khalil comfortably took advantage of his playing experience, broke the 3rd and 7th game of Ahtesham, and wrapped up the first set at 6-2 in 25 minutes. In the second set, youngster Ahtesham, after losing the first game, changed his strategy, exhibited an excellent game, and got back in the game by breaking the 8th game of experienced Yousaf Khalil and levelled the score 4-4 all. In the 9th game both the players played superbly to take the lead and ultimately Ahtesham kept the game in his favour by hitting some excellent ground shots down the line. In the next game Yousaf came back aggressively and broke the 11th game of Ahtesham to build up the winning lead 6-5 and by holding the 12th game finished the match at 7-5. In the Doubles match the duo of Shoaib & Yousaf (PAF) did not allow their counterpart Ahmed & Saqib (SNGPL) to stay on the court and eliminated them in 6-1 6-4 just in a 50-minute match. In the second singles Muhammad Shoaib took a flying start beginning the match by breaking the 3rd, 5th, and 7th game of Saqib

Hayat (SNGPL), finished the set at 6-1, and kept the same pressure in the second set and finished the match 6-1 6-1 just in 39 minutes. In the first singles Capt. Arham Attique (Army) outclassed Faizan Fayyaz (NAVY) 6-1 6-4 in 1 hrs 10 minutes battle, whereas in the second singles Muzammil Murtaza (Army) crumpled Asad Zaman (Navy) in a straight set match 6-2 6-2. In the Doubles Pakistan Army faced tough resistance from Pakistan Navy team. In the first set, Abdullah Adnan and Salar Khan (Army) struggled hard to save the set as Navy duo Asad Zaman and Faizan Fayyaz took the lead 4-1 by breaking the 4th game of Salar Khan(Army) but the duo of Army played well and broke back 7th and 9th game of Faizan and Asad respected in which Faizan hit 4 double faults in a game. In the second set both the teams again played in the same fashion and ultimately Army team took advantage of double faults hit by the Navy team and captured the second set and match 6-4 6-4. The match lasted 1 hr 10 minutes. Results: Pakistan Air Force (PAF) beat SNGPL (3-0), Singles-1: Yousaf Khalil (PAF) beat Ahtesham Humayun (SNGPL) 6-2 7-5. Singles-2: Muhammad Shoaib (PAF) beat Saqib Hayat (SNGPL) 6-1 6-1. Doubles: Muhammad Shoaib, Hamza Roman (PAF) beat Saqib Hayat, Ahmed Babar (SNGPL) 6-1 6-4. Pakistan Army beat Navy (3-0), Singles-1: Capt. Arham Attique (ARMY) beat Faizan Fayyaz Khan (Navy) 6-1 6-4.

Pakistan grab 6 medals in South Asian Rope Skipping C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan team bagged two Gold and four Silver Medals in the South Asian Rope Skipping Championship 2024 at Nepal. According to Shariq Siddiqui Secretary General Pakistan Rope Skipping Federation, the South Asian Rope skipping Championships was held in Nepal from May 4 to 5. The teams who featured in the championship includes Pakistan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan. In U-10 Girls, 10 Bounce Hoop, Mawra Sauced of Pakistan got the Gold Medal. In U-13 boys, 30 Second Speed event, Muhammad Hussain won Gold Medal in Double event and Silver Medal in 3-minute endurance. In U-13 Girls Free Style Speed event, Syeda Wareesha won a Silver Medal. The championship had 18 categories while Pakistan team took part in 6 categories. Pakistan contingent comprised Muhammad Saleem Team Manager and players Hafsa Saleem, Marwa Kamran, Syed Wareesha, Muhammad Hussain. Pakistan Rope Skipping team has qualified for World Junior Rope Skipping Championship 2024 in the USA. Pakistan Rope Skipping team would head back home on Monday at Karachi. Singles-2: Muzammil Murtaza (ARMY) beat Asad Zaman (NAVY) 6-2 6-2. Doubles: Abdullah Adnan, Salar Khan (ARMY) beat Asad Zaman, Faizan Fayyaz Khan (Navy) 6-4 6-4. Monday's match schedule: Pakistan Army Vs Wapda; Pakistan Air Force Vs Pakistan Navy.

Naila summits Makalu to become first Pak woman to ascend 11 8,000m peaks

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's Naila Kiani has achieved another historic milestone when on Sunday she successfully summited Makalu, the 5th highest peak in the world at 8,485 meters. According to information received here, Naila ascended the peak at approximately 8:50 am Pakistani time. This remarkable feat also makes her the first Pakistani woman to have summited this incredibly difficult mountain. Naila in a statement thanked all the nation for the prayers and good wishes. She also thanked Sherpa Gelgen Dai from Imagine Nepal, who supported her every step of the way, making the achievement possible. This latest success highlights Naila's exceptional endurance and determination. Naila is a remarkable



Pakistani woman, known for her achievements as a high-altitude mountaineer. She holds the distinction of being the first Pakistani woman to climb eleven of the world's highest peaks, all of which are above 8,000 meters. Notably, she achieved this feat in less

than six months, making her one of only ten mountaineers worldwide and the sole Pakistani to have climbed multiple peaks (seven) over 8,000 meters in such a short timeframe. Additionally, Kiani holds the record as the fastest years. Beyond her mountaineering prowess, Kiani has excelled in various fields. She is an aerospace engineer, having studied at the University of London, and has held a prominent position as an Associate Vice President at HSBC bank. She is also a competitive boxer and a dedicated mother of two toddlers. Despite her busy life, she continues to push boundaries by scaling some of the world's most challenging peaks. Kiani is a role model and a goodwill ambassador for several organizations supporting women's education and youth empowerment through sports. Her contributions to mountaineering and her commitment to social causes have been recognized by the government of Pakistan, which awarded her the Sitara-i-Imtiaz, the highest civilian honour for a female athlete in the country.

Naqvi announces \$100,000 cash prize for each player if team wins

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi announced that each player will receive a hefty amount of \$100,000 if the Green Shirts win the upcoming T20 World Cup scheduled in June this year. Naqvi made the announcement during his meeting with the national players on Sunday at Gaddafi Stadium. The PCB chief spent two hours with the players to boost the morale of the team ahead of their departure for the tours

of Ireland, England, and the T20 World Cup. Mohsin Naqvi also hosted a luncheon for players and officials at a local hotel. "I hope you will raise the green flag high this time. Play without any pressure and give your best in the field," Naqvi said while meeting the players and team officials. "The victory will be yours and defeat will be mine," said the PCB chief. Mohsin Naqvi said that all the players are united and Shaheen Shah Afridi will give an excellent per-

formance in the World Cup. He added that nation has many expectations from you and you will have to give your best in the field. Naqvi also presented special green shirts to Muhammad Rizwan for completing 3,000 runs in T20 matches, and Nasim Shah for taking 100 wickets in T20 matches. The Chairman PCB also assured resolving the issues of players on priority basis. Babar Azam will lead the team which will embark on the Ireland and England

tours on May 7 to prepare for T20 World Cup. It may be noted that a 15-member squad for the T20 World Cup will be announced after the first match against England on May 22. The series against Ireland will be played from May 10 to 14 and against England from May 22 to 30. The ninth edition of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup, which will be a 20-team event, will take place in the USA and West Indies from June 1 to 29.

Mardan win Prime Minister Youth Talent Hunt Handball League trophy

PESHAWAR (APP): Spirited Mardan clinched the trophy after defeating strong Peshawar in the final of the Prime Minister Youth Talent Hunt Boys Handball League played here under the aegis of Directorate of Sports University of Peshawar inside campus premises on Sunday. Vice Chancellor Agriculture University Peshawar Professor Dr. Jahan Bakht was the chief guest on this occasion. Registered University of Peshawar Dr. Yurid Ihsan Zia, Professor Dr. Shafiqur Rehman, HED, Director Sports Islamia College University Ali Hoti, Director Distance Studies Dr. Noor Zada, the selection committee nominated by Higher Education Commission Islamabad including Head Coach and selector Asim Rashid, Qaiser Javed Shakir, Arshad Hussain and Secretary Coordinator Dr. Noorzada, Director General Sports and Organizing Secretary Bahre Karam, officials, players and a large number of spectators witnessed the matches played for the first and third position respectively. In the dependable match, Mardan stunned host Peshawar by 21-16 to clinch the trophy. The teams of Mardan comprising Ghous Ali Shah, Mansoor Ali, Muhammad



Zohaib, Nouman Khan, Shahid Ali, Wisal Khan, Basit Zeb, Faisal Khan, Imran, Sherez Khan, Danial and promising Talha played very attacking game and did not give much time to Peshawar to settle down in the whole final match. The team of Peshawar, was in the lead till the end of the first session but later on Mardan dominated the proceedings and marched into victory at 21-16 goals. Peshawar players including Shafiullah, Shehzad Khan, Waqas Khan, Ahmad Hassan, Hasnain Zeb, Sheraz, Muhammad Shayan, Asad Khan and Shahzeb played well. The match was played

on hot note and Peshawar took the lead of 4-13 and 12-16 but later on Mardan managed their position and Talha along with Ghous Ali, Manshoor Ali and Muhammad Zohaib were the top contributors. Thus Mardan won the match by 21-16. Mardan got first position by remaining unbeaten, followed by Peshawar with three wins and one loss, Swat took third position by defeating Bannu by 22-15 and Hazara by 23-19 in the last League round matches. Bannu got fourth position with one victory against Hazara while Hazara did not win all matches and lost all four matches.

At the end, the chief guest Vice Chancellor Agriculture University Peshawar Professor Dr. Jahan Bakht gave away gold, silver and bronze medals along with first, second and third position trophies. A cash prize of Rs. 120,000 awarded to Mardan, Rs. 60,000 to Peshawar and Rs. 36000 to Swat on behalf of Higher Education Commission. Out of the League two selected teams would represent Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the forthcoming National Handball League to be played in Peshawar under the aegis of University of Peshawar from May 20, 2024 where in teams from all other regions across the country would participate. The selected teams including as under: Green Team: Mansoor Ali, Shakil Khan, Shiya Khan, Ghuous Ali Shah, Faisal Shah, Waqas Khan, Shehzad Khan, Muhammad Suleman, Zafar Ullah, Asad Khan, Muhammad Tahlal and Luqman Khan White Team: Muhammad Nouman, Zahoor Khan, Muhammad Rehan, Wisal Ahmad, Hassan Zeb, Nouman Khan, Muhammad Hasnain, Junaid Khan, Ammar Khan, Ahmad Hussain, Liaqat Ali Khan, Kashif Ullah, Syed Zohaib Ali Shah, Sheraz Khan.

Villa's top four bid rocked at Brighton, Chelsea rout West Ham

LONDON (AFP): Aston Villa's bid to finish in the Premier League's top four was rocked by a 1-0 defeat at Brighton, while Chelsea thrashed West Ham 5-0 to keep alive their hopes of European qualification on Sunday. A Villa win combined with a Tottenham loss at Liverpool in Sunday's late game would have sealed a Champions League place for Unai Emery's side. But Villa were unable to fulfil their part of that equation as Joao Pedro's 87th minute goal condemned them to a second painful defeat in four days. Ending Brighton's six-match winless run, Pedro headed in the rebound after Robin Olsen saved his penalty, which had been awarded for Ezri Konsa's foul on Simon Adingra. Surprisingly beaten 4-2 by Olympiakos in the Europa Conference League semi-final first leg on Thursday, Villa were well below their best once again.

Villa remain in fourth place, seven points clear of fifth placed Tottenham, who have two games in hand. Emery's men host Liverpool and travel to Crystal Palace in their last two games as they fight to return to the Champions League for the first time since 1982-83. At Stamford Bridge, Chelsea crushed London rivals West Ham to move above Manchester United into seventh place. Chelsea boss Mauricio Pochettino is fighting to convince the club's co-owner Todd Boehly to give him a second season in charge after his troubled debut campaign. Pochettino admits it is "not his decision" if he stays, but securing a place in Europe could be enough to avoid the sack. Cole Palmer put Chelsea ahead in the 15th minute with his 21st league goal of the season, the forward firing home after West Ham failed to clear.

Conor Gallagher doubled Chelsea's advantage after 30 minutes with a blistering volley after West Ham's Kurt Zouma deflected the ball towards the midfielder. Noni Madueke bagged Chelsea's third six minutes later as the winger turned in Thiago Silva's header from close-range. Nicolas Jackson piled on the misery for woeful West Ham in the 48th minute with a tap-in from Madueke's cross. The Senegal striker was on target again with 10 minutes left. The lopsided nature of defeat did little to quell speculation over the future of West Ham boss David Moyes, who has come under fire from fans for his perceived negative game-plans. Ninth placed West Ham have reportedly held talks with former Wolves boss Julen Lopetegui and could opt to move on from Moyes, whose contract expires at the end of the season.





## In brief

### 10 injured in road accident

ISLAMABAD (APP): A devastating road accident occurred in Kot Radha Kishan when a bus carrying factory workers plunged into a ditch, leaving at least 10 people injured on Sunday. According to rescue officials, the incident took place on Zafar Pathak, where the bus veered off the road and fell into a ditch. Rescue teams rushed to the scene and shifted the injured to nearby hospital, said a private news channel.

### Ant-Polio drive concludes

RAWALPINDI (APP): As many as 786,877 children under five years of age had been covered during a Week-long anti-polio drive that concluded here on Sunday. Talking to APP, District Superintendent Vaccination Dr Muhammad Nadeem said that the 100 per cent Polio vaccination target had been achieved successfully during the campaign started on April 29. He informed that 4,068 teams including 3,675 mobile teams, 870 area incharges, 330 fixed points and 245 Union Council medical officers participated in completing the task of inoculation. He added that children were also immunized at 163 transit points in the district. The health officer informed that all the refused or unattended cases had also been covered on the last day of the year's third drive.

### Five drug dealers held

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have apprehended five drug dealers and liquor suppliers and recovered more than 3.5 kg drugs from their possession during crackdown here Sunday, informed police spokesman. Civil Lines police held Mazhar and recovered 1.6 kg drugs from his possession. Similarly, New Town police arrested Ali and recovered 1.2 kg drugs from his custody. While, Race Course police apprehended Waqas and recovered 600 gram of charas from his possession. Following operation, Rata Amaral police recovered 380 gram of charas from Wasim. Naseerabad police recovered 10 liters of liquor from Anwar. Police have registered separate cases against the accused and further investigation was in progress. SSP Operations appreciated the performance of police team and said that the crackdown on drug dealers will be continued to end the drug scourge.

### Public parks being upgraded

RAWALPINDI (APP): All the public parks of Rawalpindi city were being upgraded to facilitate the citizens, said Director General (DG), Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) Rawalpindi Ahmed Hasan Ranjha. He informed that the authorities concerned had been directed to complete the up-gradation work of the city park swiftly. The DG said that the authority was utilizing all available resources for the development and up-gradation of the public parks to ensure quality recreational facilities to the citizens. Ahmad Hasan Ranjha said that special instructions had also been issued for the beautification and cleaning measures of the parks. He said that the renovation, up-gradation and cleaning facilities of the parks were being ensured and the up-gradation work at all the public parks would be completed within stipulated time frame. The DG also pointed out that apart from improving the cleanliness and security of the parks, all respective issues were being resolved to repair the walking tracks, lights, swings and benches etc.



ISLAMABAD: An attractive view of flowers blossoming and flourishing at F-9 Park in Federal Capital. —APP Photo

## Hajj without official permission forbidden

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Ulama Council (PUC) Chairman and Hajj Organisers Association of Pakistan (HOAP) Patron-in-Chief, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi has unveiled a comprehensive code of conduct in a bid to ensure a smooth and hassle-free pilgrimage experience for private Hajj pilgrims.

He, in a recent press talk, emphasized the importance of booking Hajj journeys only through authorized organizers, cautioning against fraudulent activities perpetrated by unauthorized groups through social media platforms. He urged intending pilgrims to remain vigilant and avoid falling prey to such scams, which exploit the religious sentiments of innocent people for monetary gain.

Moreover, Ashrafi addressed the issue of unauthorized pilgrimage by Pakistani diaspora in Saudi Arabia, emphasizing that performing Hajj without official permission is strictly prohibited according to Islamic principles and the law of the land. He warned that individuals caught without proper authorization would face consequences, potentially tarnishing the reputation of the country.

Highlighting another concern, Ashrafi discouraged pilgrims from engaging in disruptive behavior,

such as taking selfies and videos during Hajj rituals, which could inconvenience fellow pilgrims. He stressed the importance of focusing on religious duties and maintaining decorum for a seamless pilgrimage experience.

In addition, Ashrafi urged pilgrims to refrain from engaging in political activities during the Hajj season, particularly at Haramain Sharifain and other sacred sites in Saudi Arabia. He underscored that such actions are not only contrary to Islamic teachings and Shariah but also reflect poorly on Pakistan in the international community.

Ashrafi also commended the government's efforts, particularly Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, for their support in facilitating Hajj pilgrims. He acknowledged the army chief's initiatives to stabilize the exchange rate and safeguard the livelihoods of those dependent on Hajj-related industries.

The code of conduct, grounded in the Holy Quran and the Hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), underscores the necessity of undertaking Hajj with Halal wealth, refraining from disputes, and embodying dignity and humility throughout the pilgrimage. It

highlights the sacredness of the Hajj period and the significance of sincere intention solely for the pleasure of Allah.

Pilgrims are urged to acquire comprehensive knowledge of the rituals and seek guidance when needed. They must adhere to the guidelines set by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony and appointed leaders of Hajj and Umrah groups, prioritizing obedience to Allah and His commandments.

Saudi Arabia's efforts to facilitate pilgrims are acknowledged, including the Route Makkah programme benefiting Pakistani pilgrims. Patience is emphasized in facing challenges, be it delays at airports or congestion on roads.

Throughout their stay in Makkah and Madina, adherence to regulations is paramount, with specific directives for women and individuals with disabilities.

Regarding the stoning of the Jamarat, pilgrims are advised to follow scholars' guidance and avail themselves of provisions for ease. The code of conduct aims to ensure a spiritually enriching and harmonious pilgrimage experience, rooted in devotion, humility, and obedience to Allah's commandments.

## Authorities directed to ensure transparency in exams

RAWALPINDI (APP): According to a board spokesman, the chairman and the Controller of examinations as per the vision of Chief Minister Punjab, Maryam Nawaz had launched a grand operation against the cheating mafia. He informed that in the light of the directives of the Punjab Government, the Chairman, the Controller and district administration officers were visiting different exam centres across the division.

He said that the board was utilizing all available resources to ensure transparent conduct of the examinations. On violations of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), strict action was being taken and first information reports (FIRs) were also being

lodged against the invigilators, he added. He further informed that as per the vision of Chief Minister Punjab, Maryam Nawaz and in the light of the directives of the Government of Punjab, the Chairman along with Member Punjab Assembly, Coordinator to Chief Minister Punjab, Mrs. Shazia Rizwan visited different examination centres here the other day and inspected all the arrangements.

Mrs. Shazia Rizwan also inquired about the arrangements made by the education board for the candidates appearing in the examination. She said that the intermediate examination was being conducted in a transparent and peaceful

environment and in the light of the directives of the Punjab government.

She also appreciated the efforts of the chairman and the controller of examination for the excellent arrangements. She said that the board and the administration were making all-out efforts for transparent examinations.

The Chairman said that a strict strategy and zero-tolerance policy had been adopted against the booty mafia and all the examination centres were being closely monitored daily with the help of the district administration. He said that the Education Board had also finalized arrangements for Intermediate Examination Part-I which would start from May 7.

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## Naqvi pays tribute to martyred police Constable

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Sunday paid tribute to Constable Usman Ghani, who was martyred by terrorists firing near Shan Khel Karuna in the limits of SMA police station in Tank.

"Constable Usman

Ghani earned high status of martyrdom" said the minister adding that Martyr Constable Usman Ghani laid down his precious life for the peace of the country.

KPK Police is on the frontline in the war against terrorism, he said. The minister further said that

the martyrs of KPK police have written the history of sacrifices with their blood.

He said that the sacrifices of the martyrs will not go to waste. With the strength of unity, we will completely eradicate the scourge of terrorism, he added.

## ANF recovers 30 kg drugs in seven operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting seven operations across the country managed to recover 30 kg drugs and arrested eight accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman.

He informed that 2710 intoxicated tablets were recovered from a parcel booked for New York at a courier office in Rawalpindi. 80 heroin-

filled capsules were recovered from the possession of a passenger going to Dubai at Islamabad Airport.

15.6 kg hashish was recovered from an accused rounded up in Mandi Bahauddin while 7 kg opium and 2 kg Ice were recovered from two suspects arrested near Lapkas Toll Plaza Quetta. 1.2 kg opium and 1.2 kg hashish were recovered from two

suspects netted from Faisalabad Road.

In sixth operation, 1 kg hashish was recovered from an accused arrested near GT Road Jhelum while in seventh operation, 1 kg ice was recovered from the possession of an accused in Balochistan. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and investigation are under process.

## Raids being conducted to check prices

RAWALPINDI (APP): The administration was conducting raids to check prices of essential items including 'Rotti and Naan' to provide relief to the citizens, said Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rawalpindi, Hasan Waqar Cheema.

He said that on the instructions of Chief Minister Punjab, Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the price of 100 grams of Rotti was fixed Rs 16, while the price of 120 grams of Naan was fixed Rs 20. He said that the government was taking all possible measures to ensure imple-

mentation of the fixed prices of 'Rotti and Naan'.

Hasan Waqar Cheema said strict action was being taken against profiteers, selling 'Rotti and Naan' at higher prices than the prescribed rates. The DC said, objective of the administration was to ensure implementation of fixed prices of 'Naan and Rotti'.

After the reduction in flour prices, the rates of 'Naan and Rotti' were reduced, he added. Hasan Waqar Cheema said that the benefit of the reduction in flour prices was being passed on to the people.

The DC informed that a

crackdown was launched against the profiteers and the tandoors were also regularly being checked.

The DC said that the administration was making efforts to implement the officials rates and provide relief to the citizens.

The District Administration spokesman informed that the DC along with the raiding teams also visited different city areas and checked implementation of the official prices of the essential items.

The shopkeepers found indulged in profiteering were imposed heavy fines, he informed.

## Railways earn Rs 66 bln in nine months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has achieved an unprecedented earning of Rs 66 billion in the first nine months of the current financial year 2023-24, despite facing a financial crisis due to floods in the monsoon season.

"The department is expecting to generate revenues up to Rs 80 billion by the end of this financial year through the consistent efforts and hard work of the Railway workers," official sources in the Ministry told APP.

They said that during the first nine months of the last financial year (2022-23), the department earned around Rs 39 billion, a historic increase in revenue during the same period of the current financial year (2023-24).

According to the data, they said that out of the revenue of Rs 66 billion, revenue was derived from passenger and freight trains while other sectors of the department also contributed to the total revenue.

At present, they said that Pakistan Railways is operating around 96 passenger trains, up from the previous year when 86 trains were running. Similarly, during the previous year, on average it operated 3.75 freight trains while the number reached seven freight trains this year.

The sources said the department emphasized that the issue of delay in payment of salaries to employees has now been resolved and things will be more streamlined, once work on the Mainline-I

(ML-I) project kicks off.

To a question, they said that Pakistan Railways has beefed up precautionary measures to reduce passenger train accidents and only six minor accidents with no causality took place on the entire railway network in the country during the last three months.

The drastic decrease in accidents has been witnessed due to the efforts being undertaken to reduce trespassing at unmanned level crossings and unauthorized locations, they added. "Our staff is continuously monitoring the railway tracks across the country and conducting thorough inspection of the trains as the safety of the passengers is the top priority of the department," the sources said.

## Vehicle theft gang busted, six stolen vehicles recovered

RAWALPINDI (APP): In a significant operation, Police have successfully apprehended a notorious gang comprising three members, involved in vehicle theft.

Police have also recovered a stolen Toyota Corolla along with five Mehran cars from their possession.

The arrested accused have been identified as Yasin, Tahir, and Ijaz, who were involved in various incidents of vehicle theft in the area.

New Town police have registered separate cases against all of them and further investigation was in progress.

Superintendent of Police (SP) Rawal extended his congratulations to the New Town police for their swift action in nabbing the culprits. He said that the accused will be presented in court and will be punished. Furthermore, the other accused of the gang will also be arrested.

He made it clear that it is the prime duty of the police to protect the lives and

## IFA carries out 1158 inspections; imposes fines over Rs 3.5 mln in ICT

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) Irfan Nawaz Memon has chaired a monthly performance review meeting in a bid to ensure food safety to citizen of the Federal Capital.

During the meeting, Deputy Director Operation of IFA, Dr. Tahira Saddique briefed the attendees on the authority's activities over the past month, revealing significant strides in the fight against unsafe food.

The IFA carried out 1,158 inspections over the last 30 days, resulting in fines totaling Rs 3,546,000. These fines were imposed on businesses found selling harmful food products or low-quality items. Additionally, more than 4,944 liters of hazardous health oils and other unsafe items were destroyed during various raids.

Director Memon stressed the importance of ensuring food safety and

directed the team to intensify their efforts to license food-related businesses.

The initiative will be carried out in two phases. In the first phase, the focus will be on raising awareness about the necessity and benefits of obtaining a food license. The second phase will involve taking action against businesses that fail to comply with licensing regulations.

Dr Tahira said the IFA's ongoing efforts reflected a broader commitment to public health and consumer safety. Through increased inspections, hefty fines, and proactive awareness campaigns, the authority aimed to create a safer environment for consumers and hold businesses accountable for their products. The authority's measures were part of a larger strategy to clamp down on unsafe food practices and promote higher food quality standards in the region, she added.



Embassy denies ties to Zakia

KABUL (TOLOnews): Afghanistan’s embassy in India acknowledged the alleged smuggling of 25 kilogram gold by the consul general of Afghanistan in Mumbai. The embassy in a statement said that the individual (Zakia Wardak) was not affiliated with Islamic Republic of Afghanistan’s mission in the country. The mission has been concluded in November 2023 and any individuals purportedly representing our former Republic subsequently operated under the auspices of the Taliban.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Shawwal 27, 1445 — Monday, May 06, 2024

Traffic accident kills four

FARYAB (Khaama Press): Local officials in Faryab province say that as a result of a traffic accident in the city of Maimana, the capital of this province, four individual lost their lives. The Traffic Department in Faryab province said in a statement that this incident occurred in the “Katakot” area of Maimana city. This department stated that the cause of the traffic accident was the deviation of a “Folder” type motorcycle from the road.

Ban on opium cultivation cost farmers \$1.3 billion

KABUL (Ariana News): The ban on opium cultivation precipitated a staggering \$1.3 billion loss in farmers’ incomes, equivalent to approximately 8 percent of the country’s GDP, the World Bank said in a new report. The bank said that over the past two fiscal years, the real GDP of Afghanistan contracted by 26 percent, and the country’s economic outlook remains uncertain, with the threat of stagnation looming large until at least 2025. According to the report, structural deficiencies in the private sector and waning international support for essential services are anticipated to impede any semblance of economic progress. Half of Afghanistan’s population lives in poverty and 15 million people face food insecurity, it noted. “Afghanistan’s long-term growth prospects depend on a significant shift from its previous reliance on consumption-driven growth and international aid to a more resilient, private sector-led economy that capitalizes on the country’s strengths,” said Melinda Good, World Bank Country Director for Afghanistan. “For a sustainable future, Afghanistan needs to address harmful gender policies, invest in health and education, and focus on the comparative advantages it has in the agricultural and extractive sectors.” The World Bank pointed out that the increase in Afghanistan’s trade deficit is another challenge for the country’s economy. According to the bank’s report, in 2023, Afghanistan’s imports increased by 23% and reached \$7.8 billion.

Abdul Kabir emphasizes safety of Afghan peoples



KABUL (BNA): In a meeting held at Sepadar Palace, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, the Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, met with Abdul Zaher Qadir, a respected former member of the Senate. The meeting revolved around discussions on the protection of Afghan citizens’ dignity, the current security situation, and the importance of unity and cooperation among the people and the government. During the meeting, Abdul Zaher Qadir commended the Islamic Emirate’s diligent efforts in ensuring nationwide security and acknowledged the positive changes witnessed in several parts of Afghanistan, which have brought satisfaction to the people. He also shared valuable suggestions and advice with the Deputy Prime Minister, emphasizing the need for strengthening unity among Afghans and fostering closer cooperation between the government and its citizens. Responding to the discussions, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, on behalf of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, reiterated the firm commitment to protect the dignity and honor of all Afghans. He reassured that the lives of all Afghans within the country are safe and stated that it is the responsibility of the Islamic Emirate to ensure their security and well-being. Furthermore, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir extended a warm invitation to all Afghans residing abroad, urging them to return to their homeland and live with dignity. Mawlawi Abdul Kabir emphasized that the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan welcomes the advice and suggestions of its citizens, encouraging open dialogue and participation from all sectors of the society.

IEA sets up delegation over Badakhshan protests

KABUL (Ariana News): The Islamic Emirate has announced the appointment of a delegation headed by Chief of the Army Staff Fashihuddin Fitrah, amid protests in Badakhshan province over the killing of a local resident by security forces during poppy crackdown. Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesman of the Islamic Emirate, emphasized in a statement that the decree banning poppy cultivation extends to all regions without exception. “Regrettably, there have been incidents where offenders attempted to attack the security forces involved in the fight against poppy cultivation, resulting in tragic events,” he said. The delegation includes Shamsuddin Shariati, the head of overseeing and monitoring directives and commands, Mullah Abdul Haq, deputy minister of narcotics control, Mullah Rahmatullah Najib, deputy general director of intelligence, and Abdul Momin, chairman of the Badakhshan Ulama Council. Darayem district of Badakhshan has seen protests against the Islamic Emirate in recent days. The Ministry of Interior has confirmed that one of the local people was killed in a clash with the forces tasked to destroy poppy fields in the district.

Ministry commits to resolving conflicts



KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Mohammad Ali Jan Ahmad, the Deputy Minister of Tribal and Border Affairs, expressed his commitment to addressing the challenges faced by the Joint Commission for the Resolution of Nomade and Hazara Conflicts. The meeting took place at his office, where members of the commission presented their concerns and suggestions to the authorities. During the gathering, a representative from the commission highlighted the crucial role and responsibilities of the committee while sharing a range of issues faced by nomadic communities and the Hazara tribes in Maidan Wardak Province. The representative emphasized the need for comprehensive cooperation from the Ministry of Border Affairs and tribes to effectively resolve these issues. Expressing his gratitude for the commission’s efforts in mediating conflicts between nomads and local residents, Deputy Minister Mawlawi Mohammad Ali Jan Ahmad acknowledged the significance of their work. He assured the commission members that he would employ all available resources and efforts to tackle the identified problems within the framework of the law and established principles.

IEA attends OIC summit in Gambia

KABUL (Ariana News): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) announced Sunday that its delegation is attending the 15th summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in the Gambian capital Banjul. The two-day summit of the heads of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation started on Saturday. World leaders from the 57 member countries of the OIC and beyond are expected to attend, said the OIC in a statement ahead of the summit. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a statement said that its spokesman and head of the department of international organizations of the ministry are representing the IEA at the OIC summit. The statement said that in addition to participating in the general session, the delegation will meet with high-ranking officials of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and representatives of its member countries to discuss various issues.

Govt asked to support industry

KUNDUZ (Pajhwok): Officials of the Carpet Weavers Union (CWU) in northern Kunduz have asked the government to support the carpet industry by holding exhibitions, building industrial parks and providing raw materials. CWU Head Abdullah Kalantar said the weavers produced over 28,000 square metres of carpets during the past one year. Kalantar added carpet production could increase in this province if industrial parks are built and weavers provided with raw materials. He said: “We request from the government of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) to complete the works of the carpet weavers’ industrial park, because it had positive impact on our production range.” A number of Kunduz carpet weavers made similar requests. One of the weavers was Abdul Rahman, he said: “The quality of the imported yarn to Afghanistan is low, if yarn is produced domestically, it would improve the quality of the product and would block the way of capital flight from the country. Seddiqullah, another carpet weaver believed that the set-up of a separate industrial park for the carpet weavers play an important role in the improvement of this business. Mohammad Rahim Seerat, Kunduz Commerce and Industry Department Director said efforts are underway to provide carpet weavers with good quality raw materials, set-up a special industrial park and address their problems. Seerat said: “We support the industrialists of this province, efforts are made to resume the works of the half-finished industrial park, we talked with some donor-organizations, they promised their cooperation in this regard.” According Carpet Weavers Union (CWU) figures Kunduz City, the provincial capital, Qala-i-Zal, Dasht-i-Archi, Chahardara, Gul Tepa and Imam Sahib districts produced most of the Kunduz carpets and in the provincial capital of Kunduz.

IEA welcomes Turkey’s halting of trade with Israel



KABUL (Ariana News): Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi has welcomed Turkey’s move to suspend trade with Israel over its war on Gaza. Muttaqi expressed his appreciation during a meeting with Turkish Charge d’Affaires Cenk Unal in Kabul, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement released Sunday. The meeting also focused on bilateral relations, recent positive developments in Afghanistan, the visits of political and economic delegations to Afghanistan from several countries. FM Muttaqi underlined the commencing of trade with Turkey through the Lapis Lazuli route and opening of joint exhibitions in Turkey and Afghanistan. According to the statement, the Turkish envoy said that they are happy with the recent developments in Afghanistan, and joined efforts need to be made for the further expansion of Turkey-Afghanistan relations. He added that in the next few days, Turkish Airlines will commence its flights to Kabul. The two sides reiterated promoting synergy to meet the expectations of the people of the two countries, given the historical backdrops and good bilateral relations, the statement said.

Richard Bennett concerned about media restrictions in Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLOnews): Richard Bennett, the United Nations Human Rights Council’s Special Rapporteur for Afghanistan, has expressed concern about the increasing restrictions on media in Afghanistan. On the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, Bennett described journalism in Afghanistan as essential and called for international support for journalists in Afghanistan. The UN Special Rapporteur for Afghanistan stated, “Journalism is essential. I’m concerned about the increasingly restrictive media environment & arbitrary arrests of journalists. I urge the international community to provide support to Afghan journalists.” Meanwhile, UK for Afghanistan and Karen Decker, Chargé d’Affaires of the US Mission to Afghanistan, have also emphasized the importance of hearing the voices of journalists in separate messages. Karen Decker, said: “ Afghan journalists are Afghan voices amplifying Afghan messages. They need to be heard. This WorldPressFreedomDay, we stand united in protecting press freedom worldwide.” The UK for Afghanistan stated on the social network X, “On Media Freedom Day Britain continues to call for a free and independent media in Afghanistan, including a role for female journalists. This is vital to ensure accurate reporting on key issues such as climate change.” Mohammad Raqib Fayaz, a journalist, said, “The media play a very important role in securing governmental reforms, maintaining order, and eradicating societal irregularities.” Mohammad Laeeq, another journalist, said, “Meetings of consonance between journalists and officials should be created, and in due time, officials should provide information to journalists.” The Islamic Emirate has always emphasized its support for journalists in the country. Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate, told TOLOnews, “The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan cooperates with media activities and collaborates with all active media in the country. We hold meetings with the Ministry of Information and Culture.” However, some journalists describe the media in the country as a bridge between the people and the government and call for timely access to information. This comes as Afghanistan has fallen 26 places in the Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders, due to deaths and arrests of journalists, ranking 178th in this index.

Agricultural exhibition and farmers festival held in Kabul



KABUL (TOLOnews): The Agricultural Products Exhibition and Farmers Festival, organized by the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock in Badam Bagh, Kabul, concluded. Officials at the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock have declared the exhibition successful, noting that several cooperation agreements were also signed between the private sector and exhibitors. Sadr Aazam Osmani, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock, said about the exhibition: “The Ministry of Agriculture collaborates with farmers in marketing and exporting domestic products.” The exhibition featured 263 stalls displaying agricultural products and produce from across Afghanistan, with more than 50 of these allocated to women and enterprising girls. However, some exhibitors also considered the event to be fruitful. Shayesta, who participated in the exhibition from Kapisa to find a market for her products, said: “The products we produce are of high quality from our local materials that we purchase to make food items.” Laii, another businesswoman, told TOLOnews, “Our sales are low. We want the Islamic Emirate to help market our products internationally, but currently, we lack the capability because we do not receive support.” Other exhibitors emphasized the importance of more domestic and international exhibitions organized by the Islamic Emirate. Wahab, an exhibitor, said: “We are pleased with the Ministry of Agriculture for organizing this exhibition here and allowing our fellow citizens to see our local products.” Meanwhile, another exhibition showcasing various domestic sectors’ products will be held in Kabul next week by the Chamber of Industries and Mines in cooperation with the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. It is reported that producers and industrialists will display their products in over 800 stalls for one week.

500 private schools opened across country

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Union of Private Schools of Afghanistan told TOLOnews that over 500 private schools have been established across the country in the current solar year. Azim Maidanwal, the head of the Union of Private Schools of Afghanistan, reported that approximately one and a half million students are currently enrolled in private schools nationwide. The head of the Union of Private Schools of Afghanistan said, “This year, approximately 500 to 600 private schools have been established in the center and provinces. In areas where there were previously no private schools, now hundreds of students have access to education.” Meanwhile, many teachers and students are pleased with the quality of education in private schools and are urging the Ministry of Education to provide more support private schools. Selgi Rahimi, a teacher, told a TOLOnews reporter: “The government should pay more attention to the private sector so that children in remote areas, who are deprived of education, can go to school and receive an education.” Abdul Rahman, a student at one of Kabul’s private schools, said, “Our learning process is going very well, and we are currently receiving both practical and theoretical education at school. The private sector should provide more opportunities for students.” Zahra, another student at a private school, said: “The quality of our education is good, and our lessons are progressing regularly. The quality of education in public schools should also improve.” Mansoor Ahmad Hamza, spokesperson for the Ministry of Education, stated that the ministry has exempted private schools from the 1402 solar year tax. According to Hamza, the Ministry of Education is committed to solving the problems of private schools. The spokesperson for the Ministry of Education added, “In the solar year 1400, the Ministry of Education exempted the private schools from taxes and fines that were imposed on them, and officials of this ministry are keen to support the private sector and solve their problems.” The Union of Private Schools also reported that there are about three and a half thousand private schools across the country.



# PKI announces protest march towards Lahore on May 10

MULTAN (APP): Pakistan Kissan Ittehad (PKI) announced to hold march from Multan to Lahore on March 10 to register their concerns and protest regarding the wheat issue.

While holding press conference here Sunday, Chairman Pakistan Kissan Ittehad Khalid Khokhar stated that the march would be attended by thousands of the peasants.

He added that farmers would join protest march with their families, tractor trolleys, and animals. The protest will continue till imposition of agriculture

emergency in the province, he said.

About the agriculture emergency, he stated that government would have to announce start of wheat purchase, low electricity tariff and decrease in Urea fertilizer prices. About recent wheat crisis, he alleged that decision was wheat import was based on corrupt practices.

When a bumper stock was available in the country, there was no need to import wheat, he added. He called for punishment to the persons involved in the mega scandal.

Khalid Khokhar stated that the farmers were under immense tension due to lack of wheat purchase. Farmers are not in position to sow next important crops including cotton and rice, he said and added that Pakistan used to export material worth 31.5 billion dollars annually.

However, the export of nearly 22 billion dollars is comprising of agriculture products, he added. In case the farmers do not focus on next crop, there can be decrease in country's exports, he feared.

He lamented that coun-

try's agriculture sector had always been ignored. However, food security was one of the major issues across the globe. Khokhar added that the spending on agriculture sector was only 0.8 percent of the total GDP. How can a country progress if the spending on agriculture is too meager, he posed question.

The Chairman Pakistan Kissan Ittehad expressed concern stating that society did not give due regard to farmers. He however urged civil society, lawyers, students, journalists and others to join farmers protest.

## PTI incited people to come on streets on May 9: Sharjeel

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport and Mass Transit, Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control Sharjeel Inam Memon has said that the Red Line BRT is an important project of the Sindh government, the problems related to the BRT project have been solved; only a few remaining issues will be resolved soon.

The BRT project will be worked on in three shifts. Our priority is to provide relief to the public. The Red Line BRT will be Pakistan's first biogas-powered bus service. Talking to the media on the occasion of the visit to the construction work of the Red Line BRT, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the work on the Red Line BRT will start in 2022.

In response to a question, he said that May 9 is the blackest and worst day in the history of Pakistan.

On that day, chaos was incited, encouraging people to burn and vandalize. The PTI incited people to come

to the streets and damage property, burning buses, torching ambulances, and even a place like Jinnah House was not spared. He said that terrorist activities were demonstrated on May 9. I want to say to the people that any leader or party that encourages arson or misleads the youth for power should not be listened to.

He said that innocent children and sisters were used by Imran Khan on May 9. Those who were used by Imran Khan on May 9 are all in jails, while Imran Khan's own children are roaming in the cold winds in London. The fate that happened to those who were involved on May 9th, the same fate will happen to those who threaten to attack Islamabad. In response to a question, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that there are some problems with electric buses. Load shedding is being done where the buses are charged. We have discussed with K Electric about not conducting load shedding.

In response to another question, Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam

Memon said that if the People's Party is not in the federal ministries today, it does not mean that the People's Party is creating any obstacle in the democratic process. He said that the People's Party is bound by the decisions of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) on whether to become a part of the federal government or not.

As a responsible party, the People's Party will stand with the government for the interest of the people and the nation, and for the country's development. We stand with the federation in every decision for the country's development. In response to a question, Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the contractor, consultant, and Asian Development Bank are reviewing the cost of the Red Line project together. Cost changes will be at the discretion and through consultation with the consultant.

Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon reviewed the ongoing construction work of the Red Line BRT at Malir Cantt,

Mosmiyat Chowrang, Gulshan Iqbal, and Numaish Chowrang. Officials also briefed the senior minister regarding the construction progress. Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon instructed the authorities to expedite the construction work and complete it as soon as possible. On this occasion, Secretary Transport Asad Zamin, Acting CEO of Trans Karachi Shumaila Mohsin, GM of Trans Karachi Pir Sajjad Sarhandi, and others accompanied Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon.

Work on the project was stopped during the caretaker government due to inflation, and the caretaker government turned a blind eye to the project.

He said that the transport sector is of great need to the city. Solving the problems of the people is our first priority. The Sindh government is seriously working on all the projects.

The government has directed to complete the Red Line BRT work on Jinnah Avenue within three months.



CALIFORNIA: Pro-Palestinian demonstrators remove belongings from an encampment after police arrive on the campus at the University of Southern California Sunday.

## Swearing-in of Punjab Governor cancelled

LAHORE (PPI): Sundry's swearing-in ceremony of newly appointed Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan has been cancelled. Now he will take oath on May 7 at 6 pm, officials said on Sunday.

Sardar Salim Hyder Khan is nominated by PPP for Governor of Punjab and President Asif Ali Zardari has accorded his approval to the appointment.

The president approved the appointment of Punjab Governor under Article 101 (1) of the Constitution of Pakistan.

The newly-proposed Punjab Governor Sardar Salim was a member of the National Assembly of Pakistan from 2008 to 2013 on a PPP ticket. He hails from Tehsil Fateh Jhang from District Attock. In November 2008, he was inducted into the federal cabinet of Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani and was appointed as Minister of State for Defence Production where he served until February 2011.

## Pakistan backs Palestine as UN's full member

F.P. Report

BANJUL: Pakistan has expressed deep concern over Israel's ongoing brutal military onslaught against the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank.

The concern was shown by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar while addressing the 15th OIC Summit Conference held in Gambia on Sunday.

He also expressed Pakistan's support for Palestine's admission as a full member of the United Nations, resumption of the peace process for realization of the two-State solution and establishment of a viable, contiguous and sovereign State of Palestine on the basis of pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. Highlighting Indian atrocities in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, especially after India's illegal and unilateral actions of 5 August 2019, the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister urged the OIC to implement its Action Plan on Jammu and Kashmir.

He also urged the OIC to demand that India ends all human rights violations; release Hurriyat leaders; and reverse its illegal demographic and other unilateral laws.

## Death toll in southern Brazil flood rises to 66

PORTO Alegre (AFP): Authorities in southern Brazil raced against the clock on Sunday to rescue people from raging floods and mudslides that have killed at least 66 and forced more than 80,000 to flee their homes.

Across Porto Alegre, the capital city of Rio Grande do Sul state, people stood on rooftops hoping to be rescued, while others in canoes or small boats navigated streets that had turned into rivers.

Civil defence officials said at least 101 people were missing in the latest in a string of catastrophic weather events in the South American giant.

Viewed from the air, Porto Alegre was completely flooded, with streets under water and the roofs of some houses barely visible.

According to the local municipality, the Guaiba River, which flows through the city of 1.4 million people, reached a record high level of 5.3 metres, well above the historic peak of 4.76 metres that had stood as a record since the devastating 1941 floods.

Water was still advancing into economically important Porto Alegre and

hundreds of other localities, with increasingly dramatic consequences. Rain was intermittent on Sunday morning, but was expected to continue for another day at least as floodwaters kept rising.

In addition to the tens of thousands forced from their homes, Brazil's civil defence agency said more than a million people lacked access to drinking water and it described the damage as incalculable. Some 15,000 people are now living in shelters.

Rosana Custodio, a 37-year-old nurse, fled her flooded Porto Alegre home with her husband and three children.

"During the night on Thursday the waters began to rise very quickly," she told AFP via a WhatsApp message. "In a hurry, we went out to look for a safer place. But we couldn't walk ... My husband put our two little ones in a kayak and rowed with a bamboo. My son and I swam to the end of the street," she said.

Her family was safe but "we've lost everything we had."

Authorities scrambled to evacuate swamped neighbourhoods as rescue work-

ers used four-wheel-drive vehicles — and even jet skis — to manoeuvre through waist-deep water in search of the stranded.

Rio Grande do Sul Governor Eduardo Leite said his state, normally one of Brazil's most prosperous, would need a "Marshall Plan" of heavy investment to rebuild.

Sunday will be a key day for the rescue effort, said Paulo Pimenta, a senior communications official under President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

Long lines formed as people tried to board buses in many places, although bus services to and from the city centre were cancelled. Porto Alegre International Airport suspended all flights on Friday for an undetermined period.

Lula posted a video of a helicopter depositing a soldier atop a house, who then used a brick to pound a hole in the roof and rescue a baby wrapped in a blanket. The speed of the rising waters unnerved many.

"It's terrifying because we saw the water rise in an absurd way, it rose at a very high speed," said Greta Bittencourt, a 32-year-old professional poker player.

## OIC calls for immediate ceasefire in Gaza

Continued from Front Page

It also expressed deep concern over the increasing systematic persecution of Muslims and other minorities in India that had led to their political, economic and social marginalization and urged the Government of India to take necessary measures to protect their lives and properties and prevent any such acts in the future.

The declaration paid tribute to Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkiye, and other Member States for leading efforts at the UN General Assembly for the adoption of the Resolutions designating 15 March as "International Day to Combat Islamophobia" in 2022 and "Measures to Combat Islamophobia" on March 15, 2024 and urged the UN Secretary General to appoint United Nations Special Envoy to combat Islamophobia and implement other relevant measures contained in these resolutions.

The organization reaffirming its support for a peaceful, stable, prosperous and inclusive Afghanistan, reiterated the need to address the challenges

faced by Afghan people.

It also paid tribute to The Gambia for its leading efforts at the level of the International Court of Justice, on behalf of the OIC, to hold to account those responsible for genocide and other atrocities against Rohingya Muslims.

The OIC also condemn in the strongest terms the repeated incidents of burning copies of the Holy Quran in a number of European countries and call again on the concerned countries and the international community to take comprehensive and necessary actions to prevent the recurrence of such acts and to counter the alarming surge of Islamophobia.

It also strongly condemned all forms of intolerance, terrorism, violence, extremism leading to violence, racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and discrimination of any kind based on ethnicity, tribe, color, and religion.

It urged the international community to accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly poverty alleviation, climate change, food security,

health and education consistent with Islamic Principles and values. It also underline the need for more international efforts to protect the rights of women, children, youth, the elderly and people with special needs as well as Islamic family values.

Besides, it also stressed the need to confront the challenge of water scarcity, which has escalated over recent decades to become a global challenge with the continuation of human development.

It also underscored the importance of implementing the "OIC-2025: Program of Action" to achieve the set goals in the political, economic, social and cultural fields Call for enhanced coordination and consultation among Member States and OIC organs to prepare the 2026-2035 Program of Action. The organization paid tribute to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, under the leadership of His Majesty King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud and Crown Prince Mohamed bin Salman for their continued generous support and guidance to the OIC and the Ummah.

## China's president arrives in Europe to reinvigorate ties



PARIS (AP): Chinese President Xi Jinping kicked off a three-country trip to Europe on Sunday with the continent divided over how to deal with Beijing's growing power and the U.S.-China rivalry.

European carmakers are losing ground to subsidized Chinese electric vehicles. Diplomats fret about alleged Chinese spies in European capitals. And China's continued defense trade with Russia worries anyone in Europe who supports war-ravaged Ukraine and fears that the Russian army won't stop there.

But Europe and China have hefty economic ties —

EU-China trade is estimated at 2.3 billion euros per day — and Xi appears determined to rebuild and deepen relations with European leaders after a prolonged absence prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Xi started Sunday in France, whose president wants Europe to have more economic and strategic independence from other world powers. Then the Chinese president heads to Serbia and Hungary, both seen as China-friendly and close to Russian President Vladimir Putin, and recipients of substantial Chinese investment.

Xi's trip will be closely watched in Washington for

signs of diminishing European support for its key foreign policy goals. At the same time, there's increasing uncertainty in Europe about future U.S. support for trans-Atlantic allies.

Xi was greeted at Paris' Orly Airport by French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal — and by protests by groups demanding that France pressure China to respect Tibetan and Uyghur minority rights. Activists seeking a free Tibet attempted to unfurl a banner Saturday beneath the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, and protested in the French capital around the same time as Xi's plane landed.

After arriving, Xi said he hoped the visit would bring "strategic convergence" between China and France, and that further developing their relations would contribute to "stability and positive energy in an turbulent world," according to a text provided to reporters at the airport.

On Monday French President Emmanuel Macron will treat the Chinese leader to formal honors of a full state visit. They will also meet with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who is expected to join Macron in pushing for fairer trade policies and for China to use its leverage with Russia to push it toward ending the war in Ukraine.

The EU launched an investigation last fall into Chinese subsidies and could impose tariffs on electric vehicles exported from China.

China claims neutrality in the Ukraine conflict but has refused to call the full-blown Russian assault on its neighbor an invasion, and has been accused of bolstering Russia's capacity to produce weapons.

## Pro-Palestinian protesters at USC comply with school order

CALIFORNIA (Aljazeera): Protesters began leaving a Pro-Palestinian encampment at the University of Southern California early Sunday after they were surrounded by police and told they could face arrest if they didn't go.

The move, days before commencement events are set to begin on the Los Angeles campus, came after the university said campus safety officers, assisted by the Los Angeles Police Department, were clearing the area and that anyone not complying could be arrested.

"If you are in the center of campus, please leave. People who don't leave could be arrested," USC said on the social media platform X.

Livestream video from student journalists showed the encampment had emptied out as police formed a

line to move remaining protesters away and stop people from re-entering the area.

The encampment had restarted after the LAPD first arrested 93 people on April 24. The atmosphere on the private university campus had largely remained calm since, while attention turned to arrests at the University of California, Los Angeles.

At the University of Virginia, 25 people were arrested Saturday for trespassing after police clashed with pro-Palestinian protesters who refused to remove tents from campus, and demonstrators at the University of Michigan chanted anti-war messages and waved flags during commencement ceremonies.

USC, a private university, has been the subject of student protests over the

war in Gaza as well as the administration's decision to cancel a commencement speech by the valedictorian, a Muslim student who had expressed support for Palestinians.

The university made that decision in mid-April, saying they had safety concerns after receiving threats. Some Jewish student groups had criticized the student's selection as speaker. Administrators later canceled the entire main-stage commencement planned for May 10, when 65,000 people were expected to gather to celebrate graduates. Other commencement activities, including graduation ceremonies for individual schools and colleges, are still scheduled from Thursday through Sunday.

Access to the private campus has largely been restricted for people not

affiliated with the university since late April.

Video posted online Saturday evening showed some demonstrators engaging in calm songs and chants in preparation for expected police activity. The encampment has been set up on a campus green space, with dozens of tents surrounded by makeshift fencing covered in signs with various messages of support for Palestinians and criticism of the university and law enforcement.

A university representative read a statement nearby the encampment Saturday saying that it had to come down, according to Annenberg Media, a student-run campus publication, saying the encampment and unspecified acts of vandalism and theft of university property violated the law.

Early Friday, several

dozen counter-protesters had set up outside the encampment, playing scenes from the Oct. 7 Hamas attack in Israel on a screen, Annenberg Media reported. In Virginia, student demonstrators began their protest on a lawn outside the school chapel Tuesday. On Saturday, video from WVAW-TV showed police wearing heavy gear and holding shields lined up on the campus in Charlottesville. Protesters chanted "Free Palestine," and university police said on the social platform X that an "unlawful assembly" had been declared in the area.

As police moved in, students were pushed to the ground, pulled by their arms and sprayed with a chemical irritant, Laura Goldblatt, an assistant professor of English and global studies who has been

helping student demonstrators, told The Washington Post. The university administration said in a statement that the demonstrators were told the tents and canopies they erected were prohibited under school policy and were asked to remove them. Virginia State Police were asked to help with enforcement, the university said.

It was the latest clash in several tense and sometimes violent weeks at colleges and universities around the country that have seen dozens of protests and hundreds of arrests at demonstrations over the ongoing Israel-Hamas war; many of the encampments have been dismantled by police.

Tent encampments of protesters calling on universities to stop doing business with Israel or companies they say support the

war in Gaza have spread across campuses nationwide in a student movement unlike any other this century. Some schools have reached agreements with protesters to end the demonstrations and reduce the possibility of disrupting final exams and commencements.

The Associated Press has recorded at least 61 incidents since April 18 in which arrests were made at protests, with more than 2,400 people being arrested on 47 campuses.

The figures are based on AP reporting and statements from universities and law enforcement agencies.

Michigan was among the schools bracing for protests during commencement this weekend, including Indiana University, Ohio State University and Northeastern University in Boston. Many more are

slated in the coming weeks.

In Ann Arbor, the protest happened at the beginning of the event at Michigan Stadium. About 75 people, many wearing traditional Arabic kaffiyehs along with their graduation caps, marched up the main aisle toward the graduation stage. They chanted "Regents, regents, you can't hide! You are funding genocide!" while holding signs, including one that read: "No universities left in Gaza."

Overhead, planes flew banners with competing messages. "Divest from Israel now! Free Palestine!" and "We stand with Israel. Jewish lives matter." Officials said no one was arrested, and the protest didn't seriously interrupt the nearly two-hour event, which was attended by tens of thousands of people, some of them waving Israeli flags.