

3 ANF personnel martyred

JHELUM (PPI): At least three Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) personnel were martyred in a shootout with suspected drug traffickers at a toll plaza in Jhelum area. The suspects were traveling from Rawalpindi to Lahore on GT Road when they were intercepted at the toll plaza. The suspects opened fire on ANF team after they were stopped, resulting in the martyrdom of three personnel, including Head Constable Gulzar, Zeeshan, and Mazhar.



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# Govt unveils Rs 3.792tr national development budget

FBR collection target set at Rs12,970 billion; Govt increases PSDP budget by 101 percent

**Rs2,122b earmarked for defence sector**

**Solar panels price decreased**

**Good news for journalists**

**Big blow for cigarette users**

**Livestock sector sees growth with enhance**

**Minimum wage rised to Rs 36,000**

Govt proposes up to 25% increase in salaries, 15% in pensions; proposes new tax slabs for salaried class

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pursuing an approach of balanced development across the country, the Federal Government on Wednesday unveiled a Rs 3.792 trillion national development budget for the fiscal year 2024-25, including the Federal Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) of Rs1,500 billion, Provincial Annual Development Plan of Rs 2.095 trillion and SOEs investment of Rs196.9 billion.

The major chunk of PSDP 2024-25 was earmarked on infrastructure development projects of energy, railway, motorways-highways, aviation and ports, besides equal importance given to the social sector, particularly in higher education, health, governance and climate changes.

Meanwhile, out of a total Rs1.5 trillion federal PSDP, the government allocated Rs 1,400 billion for federal ministries, Rs 354.223 billion for corporations, including National Highways Authority (Rs 180.284 billion) and PEPCO (Rs 175.939 billion), and Rs 100 billion for VGF for Public Private Partnership (PPP) projects.

The government earmarked Rs 259.598 billion for the Water Resource Division, Rs 7.302 billion for the Aviation Division, Rs 1.658 billion for the Board of Investment, Rs 75.773 billion for the Cabinet Division, Rs 6.256 billion for Climate Change Division, Rs2.205 billion for Commerce Division, Rs728 million for Communication Division (other than NHA), Rs 5.636 billion for Defence Division, and Rs 3.767 billion for Defence Production Division.

Likewise, Rs 921 million was allocated for Establishment Division, Rs 25.751 billion for Federal Education and Professional Training Division, Rs 6.084 billion for Finance Division, Rs 66.315 billion for Higher Education Commission, Rs 27.688 billion for Housing and Works

Division, Rs104 million for Human Rights Division, Rs 4.918 billion for Industries and Production Division, Rs6.550 billion for Information and Broadcasting Division and Rs 28.929 billion for Information Technology and Telecom Division.

Similarly, an amount of Rs 3.650 billion was earmarked for Inter-provincial Coordination Division, Rs 9.070 billion for Interior Division, Rs 1.230 billion for Law and Justice Division, Rs 5.300 billion for Maritime Affairs Division, Rs 169 million for Narcotics Control Division, Rs41.250 billion for National Food Security and Research Division, Rs 27.00 billion for National Health Services Regulations and Coordination Division, Rs 1.015billion for National Culture and Literary Heritage Division, and Rs 25.00 billion for Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission.

The government also allocated Rs 256.330 million for Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority, Rs 3.225 billion for Petroleum Division, Rs 59.114 billion for Planning, Development and Reform Division, Rs 45 billion for Railways Division, Rs 500 million for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Division, Rs 17.696 billion for Revenue Division, Rs 7.149 billion for Science and Technological Research Division, and Rs 35.617 billion for SUPPARCO.

The document revealed that to augment PSDP, resources of the private sector would be leveraged with the help of the Public Private Partnership Authority (PPA), attracting domestic and foreign direct investment in commercially viable projects.

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb on Wednesday presented budget 2024-25 amid opposition uproar in the National Assembly. The budget focus on fiscal consolidation to contain budget deficit, official

sources said.

Kicking off his budget address, Finance Minister Aurangzeb extended his gratitude to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif, and other coalition leaders for their invaluable guidance in preparing the budget.

"Mr Speaker, despite facing political and economic challenges, our progress over the past year has been impressive," Aurangzeb stated, urging the nation to seize the opportunity to revitalise the economy. Aurangzeb commended the government's determination in addressing economic challenges and pledged to accelerate development under PM Shehbaz's leadership.

He highlighted the journey so far, emphasizing a homegrown agenda that has helped navigate economic difficulties and stimulate development. He acknowledged the significant hurdles the economy has faced, including depleted foreign reserves, a 40% rupee depreciation, stagnant growth, and soaring inflation pushing citizens below the poverty line.

Aurangzeb praised the previous PDM government, led by Shehbaz Sharif, for securing a crucial nine-month IMF programme in June 2023, which helped avert economic collapse. "The previous IMF programme was ending, and a new deal was essential to prevent a default. I commend Shehbaz Sharif's government for their efforts in securing the programme," he said.

The minister pointed to marked improvements in economic indicators, attributing these successes to the efforts of the PM and his team. "Inflation stood at 11.8% in May, a notable achievement considering the challenges. We're on the right track, and inflation is likely to decrease further in the coming days," he noted. Aurangzeb highlighted a significant turnaround, with bolstered foreign

exchange reserves and growing international investor interest.

"Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves have been strengthened, and international investors are now seeking opportunities in our economy," he said. He also applauded the State Bank's decision to cut interest rates as a significant move to combat inflation, congratulating Shehbaz Sharif and his team for their commendable efforts in turning the economy around. "These achievements are not ordinary. As a result of these, the country has exited a difficult time," Aurangzeb asserted.

The minister emphasized the need for patience and collective effort to achieve sustainable economic development, cautioning that progress cannot be accelerated overnight. "There is a need for patience and extreme hard work, combined with homegrown corrective plans. The public must work together with institutions to achieve our economic goals," he concluded, stressing the importance of collaboration and sustained efforts.

Aurangzeb also highlighted several key measures and reforms. The FBR's tax policies and digitization efforts have registered 3,400 retailers, with PM Shehbaz Sharif closely monitoring these initiatives. He pointed out that Pakistan's tax-to-GDP ratio is very low and requires necessary reforms, with the federal government collaborating with provincial governments for economic betterment and fiscal stability.

The government is introducing pension reforms to save Rs45 billion and has approved right-sizing in PWE, which has been closed. A high-level committee will examine the government's structure and provide recommendations in the next two and a half months. In terms of privatisation, the government is selling state units like PIA and the Roosevelt Hotel to promote the private sector,

with Rs622 billion in liabilities transferred from PIA's balance sheet to a holding company set up in March 2024.

Major airports, starting with Islamabad International Airport, will be outsourced by July 2024. The BISP funds will be raised by 27%, with 500,000 new households included in the social spending programme. Aurangzeb noted that Rs5 billion has been allocated for an agriculture mark-up scheme, with financing available to boost the sector, which constitutes 24% of GDP.

The energy sector will see Rs253 billion allocated, focusing on reducing losses and promoting wind and solar power, with efforts underway to freeze debt from power reforms and involve the private sector. The IT sector will receive Rs79 billion, with plans for an IT park in Karachi and efforts to increase exports to \$3.5 billion this year.

A national digital commission will be introduced to advance digital solutions. The social welfare and education sectors will see Rs206 billion allocated for water resources, Rs8 billion for an IT park in Karachi, and Rs206 billion for drinking water projects. Smart screens, tablets, blended learning, and e-libraries will be provided in schools, and six-month IT courses will be offered to students.

Overseas Pakistanis will be facilitated in sending remittances, with Rs90 billion allocated for this purpose, recognising their crucial role in the economy. Aurangzeb presented a positive economic outlook, expecting 3.6% growth in the next fiscal year (2024-25) and keeping inflation around 12%. The budget layout totals Rs18,877 billion, with significant allocations for defence (Rs2,015 billion), pensions (Rs1,014 billion), and subsidies for the power sector (Rs1,363 billion).

Efforts are also being made to



attract global climate finance and improve Pakistan's economic growth through a homegrown reform agenda. The PSDP allocation of Rs1,500 billion, a historical high, will focus on infrastructure, social sector development, and strategic projects aimed at enhancing exports and productivity.

In FY25, a budget allocation of Rs50 billion has been earmarked for the production sector. A comprehensive Karachi package is being introduced, with special projects for Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur, and Benazirabad. The tax-to-GDP ratio will be increased through economic digitisation and a progressive tax system that levies higher taxes on higher income groups.

The undocumented economy will be brought under the tax net through digitisation, with the FBR introducing personal income tax reforms. Under these reforms, tax exemptions will remain unchanged at an annual income level of Rs600,000 for salaried individuals, promoting equity by ensuring no increase in income tax for the salaried class. The minimum wage is fixed at Rs36,000, up from Rs32,000.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif signing the documents of Federal Budget 2024-25 after its approval from federal cabinet.

## President stresses to provide relief to poor in budget

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has stressed to provide relief to poor and middle class in upcoming federal budget of fiscal year 2024-25.

President Asif Ali Zardari made these statements during a meeting with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Federal Minister for Planning and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal was also present during the meeting. PM Shehbaz Sharif Tuesday met to President Asif Ali Zardari to seek full support from him and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) for the upcoming budget approval.

President ensured to provide full cooperation in achieving goals for financial and development progress of country. Both sides exchanged views on economic situation of country. They also discussed considerations about relief to public in upcoming budget.

PM Shehbaz Sharif also informed the president

about his recent visit to China. Heads of states and government also discussed about the development projects in upcoming budget. On this occasion, President Asif Ali Zardari stressed to PM to provide relief to poor and middle class in upcoming federal budget.

It is pertinent to note that government is all set to present federal budget of over Rs18,900 billion today (Wednesday). Government has allocated Rs2,100 billion for defence and Rs9,700 billion for interest payments on loans reserved. For development projects, Rs. 1500 billion have been allocated.

In the budget, 253 billion rupees have been allocated for the energy sector, 827 billion rupees for infrastructure, 800 billion rupees for energy sector subsidy, 206 billion rupees for water resources, 279 billion rupees for transport and communication. The target of GDP growth in the budget is 3.6 percent.

The target of tax collection of 12 thousand 970 bil-

lion rupees has been set for Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) in the coming financial year. FBR will have to collect additional revenue of 3720 billion rupees, direct tax 3452 billion and customs duty 267 billion compared to the current financial year.

The volume of taxes of Inland Revenue will be 11 thousand 379 billion, the volume of direct taxes will be 5 thousand 512 billion rupees, the volume of income tax will be 5 thousand 454 billion. An additional target of 1773 billion rupees has been given in the income tax volume, 2500 billion rupees.

On the other hand, a meeting of the parliamentary party of PPP's was held under the chairmanship of former foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, in which the members of the assembly expressed their concerns regarding the budget and said that the conditions on which Shehbaz supported the government are still waiting for implementation.

## PHC orders de-freezing BRT accounts

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) order to de-freeze two accounts of private company operating Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) frozen by the orders of National Accountability Bureau (NAB) chairman on 4th April 2024, on Wednesday.

The company's lawyers Barrister Qaim Wadud and Babar Khan Yousafzai advocate argued that the freezing of the accounts had caused significant financial difficulties for the company, which was struggling to pay its employees and vendors. They also pointed out that the BRT project was a joint venture between three companies, including the Beijing Singleton Technology and Beijing Haiyun Technology, and that NAB's action had affected the entire project.

The accounts were frozen as part of an investigation into alleged corruption in the BRT project while NAB had exceeded its powers and that there was no solid evidence against it, the lawyers argued.

The lawyers further argued that NAB had not provided any evidence against the company and that the investigation was still in its early stages. They requested the court to declare NAB's action as unlawful and to unfreeze the accounts, allowing the company to continue its operations.

On the other hand, NAB's prosecutors Azeem Dad and Muhammad Ali argued that the accounts were frozen as part of an ongoing investigation into corruption in the BRT project and that unfreezing them would affect the investigation. He also argued that the company's request was equivalent to accepting the writ plea.

PHC's divisional bench comprising of Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Waqar Ahmad ordered de-freezing of two accounts and allowing the company to continue its transactions. However, the court stopped the company from withdrawing the amount present in the accounts at the time of freezing, effectively keeping the amount frozen. PHC adjourned further hearing till 3rd July in the writ plea.

## Conspiracies to bankrupt Pakistan thwarted: PM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Wednesday said that conspiracies to bankrupt the country had been thwarted, steering it away from economic hardships towards stability.

Presiding over the meeting of the Pakistani Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) Parliamentary Party at the Parliament House, he said, "We have left behind the conspiracies of those who dreamed of bankrupting the country and guided it from economic hardships to stability." The prime minister briefed the parliamentary party about the budgetary proposals.

He assured that maximum relief would be provided to the common man in the budget, with specific measures aimed at easing the burden of workers, farmers, and salaried people. He expressed gratitude to the party members and allies for their confidence in him and their full support of the government policies benefiting the common man and the country.

PM Shehbaz urged the parliamentarians to actively participate in the budget

sessions, offering suggestions, and providing a robust and reasoned response to any falsehoods or propaganda regarding the budget. He stated, "History is witness to our efforts for rescuing Pakistan's economy through prioritizing national interests. With the guidance of Allah Almighty and under the leadership of Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, we averted bankruptcy and default in the country."

He said that a conspiratorial group posed a threat to the country's security and undermined those who had sacrificed their lives for it. Prime Minister Shehbaz said that the Almighty entrusted him with serving Pakistan for the second time, expressing his determination to resolve the nation's issues.

Resolving to meet everyone's expectations, the prime minister lauded the trust of brotherly countries and investors in the government's economic policies and increasing the foreign investment. He stressed the importance of untiring efforts for the country's economic stability, and assured providing basic healthcare, higher educa-

tion, and equal opportunities for development.

He said that providing employment to the talented workforce as well as ensuring education and training in the IT field for the youth were among the government's priorities. Calling for efforts to empower women and dignified employment opportunities to them, the prime minister said that during his foreign visits, he called for attracting investments instead of seeking loans.

He said the environment of peace and political stability was inevitable for investment and that the nations always achieved success through hard work, dedication, and courage. He stressed the need to get aspiration from China and other developed nations to forge a bright future tailored for Pakistan's specific conditions.

He commended his team for their efforts in achieving a significant reduction in inflation, leading to the stabilization of the rupee against the dollar and a bullish trend in the stock market. He expressed satisfaction over the initial positive outcomes resulting

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## Cabinet okays budget proposals for fiscal year

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The federal cabinet on Wednesday approved the budgetary proposals for the coming fiscal year 2024-25.

Chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the special cabinet committee deliberated on the budget proposals and accorded its approval to the Finance Bill 2024. The cabinet meeting also okayed the budgetary proposals to be presented before the National Assembly for its onward consideration.

## Imran Riaz arrested

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Senior anchor-person and YouTube Imran Riaz was taken into custody by plainclothesmen from Allama Iqbal airport on Wednesday morning while leaving for Saudi Arabia to perform Hajj.

It is reported that "unidentified people", accompanied by police, arrested him from the airport. According to his counsel Advocate Azhar Siddique the "unidentified" men manhandled Imran when he resisted bid to arrest him. The lawyer said a petition has been filed in the LHC seeking details under what charges and provision of law Imran was arrested. The plea is yet to be fixed before a bench for hearing.

Advocate Azhar said Imran has been granted bail in all the cases registered against him and his name was removed from the Exit Control List on June 11. It may be recalled that Imran was stopped at Islamabad on June 3 from boarding a Hajj flight despite IHC orders. Last month, Chief Justice Aamer Farooq granted him permission to travel to Saudi Arabia for Hajj. Imran has been facing legal cases two days after protests broke out across the country following PTI founder Imran Khan's arrest on May 9 last year. He remained among "missing" people for almost four months. A number of cases were registered against him and different courts granted him bail. He was finally released on September 25.





ISLAMABAD: From every corner of the nation, eyes are fixed on TV screens as Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb delivers the federal budget speech for the fiscal year 2024-25.

## NAB takes action on sugar broker's mysterious disappearance

LAHORE (APP): National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Lahore Director General Amjad Majeed Aulakh takes swift action against a mega sugar scam by authorizing an instant inquiry into the disappearance of a sugar broker named Sheikh Rashid, who absconded with billions of rupees in investments from traders and sugar stockists across Punjab.

Keeping in view, a high-level investigation team has been constituted to probe the multibillion scam that has left countless investors of Punjab and several cities of Sindh, in distress. As per details, the NAB investigation team's initial raids uncover a web of deceit by revealing warehouses and shops in Sadiqabad, being used to stock misappropriated commodities by accused Sheikh Rashid and his accomplices.

Taking decisive action under Section 12 of NAO 1999, DG NAB freezes all properties and stocked commodities owned by the accused persons and appoints Assistant Commissioner (AC) Sadiqabad as "Receiver" for the frozen assets.

It's pertinent to mention here that NAB Lahore is pursuing a robust investigation against prime accused Sheikh Raashid along with accomplices named Kashif Ali and Faisal Ali, under the team's initial raids uncover a web

## 40,000 to perform security duties on Eid gatherings

LAHORE (APP): On the instructions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar, the Punjab police have completed their security arrangements for Eid-ul-Azha prayers at mosques, Imambargahs, and open places across the province.

The IGP said that over 40,000 officers and officials would be deployed to secure more than 26,500 mosques and Imambargahs, and 900 open places across the province, including Lahore.

In Lahore alone, security for more than 5,000 Eid prayer gatherings would be managed by over 8,000 officers and personnel. Additionally, 498 special police units and 260 Quick Response Force (QRF) teams will be deployed for security across the province. Eid security arrangements will also include 13,249 metal detectors, 217 walk-through gates, and 4,475 CCTV cameras. The IGP mentioned that more than 3,000 officers and officials are performing security duties at 227 cattle markets across the province.

The IGP said a comprehensive strategy had been formulated for protection of mosques, Imambargahs, Eid gatherings, and citizens across the province. Additional personnel would

## Punjab govt notifies transfers, postings

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab government issued a notification regarding transfers and postings of officers, here on Wednesday.

According to the notification Saima Sadia, Officer on Special Duty (OSD), has been posted as Deputy Secretary (Admin) Tourism & Archaeology Department, Ahmad Raza Sura, OSD, as Deputy Secretary Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries, Tariq Hussain, OSD, as Additional Secretary Environment, as Additional Secretary Home, Muhammad Ahmer Ali, Deputy Secretary Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries, as Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Bahawalpur, Abdul Razzaque Ali, Deputy Secretary Higher Education Department, as Deputy Secretary Local Government & Community Development Department (LG&CD), and Farhan Mujtaba, Deputy Secretary Food, Deputy Secretary LG&CD.

## Motorway Police M-2 hand over iPad to owner

LAHORE (APP): The Motorway Police M-2 set an example of honesty by returning Apple iPad worth Rs 450,000 to an overseas Pakistani doctor.

According to the Motorway Police spokesperson, Dr Sana Munir, an overseas Pakistani, reported the loss of her tablet to the Motorway Police Helpline 130. The Apple iPad was accidentally left at the Sial Mor Service Restaurant.

Upon receiving the report, DSP Malik Yousaf and Inspector Ramzan promptly searched the service area and successfully located the tablet.

## CM reviews health reform, approves revamping of 11 hospitals

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has approved increasing the number of field hospitals to 105 and ordered for implementation of the field hospital project in tehsils.

Chairing a 3-hour long meeting to review health sector reforms on the second consecutive day here on Wednesday, the CM also gave approval to revamp 11 major hospitals in different cities. She said that entire health system needed to be overhauled, monitoring and accountability system must be introduced, adding that if there was no monitoring and accountability, there would be no performance. The CM ordered for a complete mapping to determine needs and problems of public sector hospitals across Punjab.

The CM was presented with videos of Children's Hospital Lahore's bathroom, operation theater and other facilities. She got furious to see in the video that a baby was bleeding in the emergency and his mother was covering it with cloth. Maryam Nawaz strongly reprimanded the Health Department officials over this act of negligence. "If this is the situation of the biggest hospital in Lahore, what will happen to the rest," she questioned.

The CM said, "Eight children died in Sahiwal; we all are responsible; we must answer." She constituted a three-member committee under the chairmanship of provincial adviser Azhar Kayani, and highlighted that after fixing responsibility, the people involved should be sent behind bars. The chief minister also directed the authorities concerned to rectify weaknesses in the vaccination campaign. Urgent measures should be taken for measles vaccination campaign in Punjab, she added.

The meeting was briefed that a plan had been prepared to ensure presence of specialist doctors in small and remote hospitals. She directed a special committee, headed by the health minister, to monitor the proceedings.

Maryam Nawaz gave directions to devise a system to determine performance of doctors across the province. She also ordered for taking measures to eliminate backlog of waiting list of cardiac patients.

The CM issued Instructions to ensure the provision of emergency treatment facilities for cardiac, stroke, burn and paed patients in district hospitals. She was briefed on three, two and one level grading of government hospitals based on public needs.

Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Information & Culture Minister Azma Zahid Bukhari, Provincial Advisor Azhar Kayani, Dr. Adnan Khan and MPA Sania Ashiq attended the meeting. Chief Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zaman, Chairman P&D, Secretaries Sohail Ashraf, Ali Jan, Principal Secretary to CM Sajid Zafar Dal, CEO IDAP Shahmeer and other relevant officers were also present.

## Delegation of Greenwich University students visit Information Department

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of students from Greenwich University visited the Press Information Department' Karachi today. The students from Mass Communication had an interactive session with DG (Incharge) Mohammad Khalid Majraji Abbasi and other officers.

The delegation was headed by university teacher, Madam Tahira Sayyad. The discussion revolved around functioning of PID, specially publicity and advertisement related matters.

They were informed about the practical work as per advertisement policy 2021 (as amended in 2022). PID officers also gave awareness to the students about strong liaison and coordination of the department with state and private media for the timely dissemination of news related to Federal Government, Federal Ministers and Officials.

Students were interested in understanding the functioning of PID and the department's skillfulness in facilitating print media. Delegation members were inquisitive about media laws, rules and regulations and media code of conduct. They were also given details on the process of securing a declaration for newspaper.

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of students from Greenwich University visited the Press Information Department' Karachi today. The students from Mass Communication had an interactive session with DG (Incharge) Mohammad Khalid Majraji Abbasi and other officers.

DIRECTORATE OF EASTERN ZONE  
CAPITAL METROPOLITAN GOVT PESHAWAR

QUOTATION NOTICE

Directorate of Eastern Zone, Capital Metropolitan Government, Peshawar invites sealed quotations of the following items on the rent basis from aspiring tent and crockery services for Command Post in connection with Muharram-ul-Haram 2024. Interested suppliers/ services providers can Participate if they meet the given conditions.

CMPG FUND FOR THE YEAR 2023-24

S#	Scheme Name	Estimated Cost	Time & Date for Submission of quotation	Time & Date of Opening Quotation
1	Supply of Tent & Catering Items for Command Post on Rent Basis for the Muharram-ul-Haram, 2024 Eastern Zone CMG, Peshawar	Rate Required	01-07-2024 11:00 AM	01-07-2024 12:00 PM

S#	Name of Item	Qty
1	Kampala Large (Water Proof)	2
2	Kampala Small (Water Proof)	5
3	Kanat	1200
4	Shamiyana Large	20
5	Chair Foam	200
6	Chair Parachute	150
7	Table Large	10
8	Table VIP	10
9	Table Cloth	10
10	Jug (Glass) with 4 glasses	50
11	Jug Steel with 4 glasses (Steel)	50
12	Rug (dari)	30
13	Qaleen (Carpet)	10
14	Sofa Set 7-Seater (VIP)	10
15	Pedestal Fan	50
16	Water Cooler (Steel+Plastic)	20
17	Multi media Projector	1
18	Blinds	2
19	Glass Table	10
20	Runner Carpet	6
21	Head Table	1
22	Ceramic Plates	100
23	Goblet Glass	100
24	Split Type AC	10
25	Generator (Diesel) with oil (50KVA)	1
26	Rice Dag (Channa Mewa) (15Kg Rice, 3Kg Chana, 3Kg Mewa)	2
27	Salan Gosht Dag 15 KG / Tandoori Roti as required	2
28	Sanitary, Items, Electrification, Coloring Etc. (Note payment will made as per actual work done)	Lumps um
29	High Tea (for 2 days)	2
30	Refreshment Items Tea, Green Tea, Biscuit, Cold Drinks for 8 Days	8

Terms & Conditions

- Interested Suppliers/Services Providers will be required to submit their quotation envelopes with a guarantee in shape of Call deposit equal to 2% of their quoted rate to the office of the Works Superintendent, Engineering Section of Eastern Zone, Capital Metropolitan Government, Peshawar in the name of **Director General, Capital Metropolitan Government, Peshawar** call deposit of scheduled banks shall be acceptable.
- Quotations received will be opened on the same day in the presence of the applicant/ authorized representatives.
- It will be the responsibility of the Supplier/Services Providers to deliver and take back all the supplied crockery and other items to the desired locations.
- The Office will not be liable for any loss or damage to any item nor will it be reimbursed.
- Suppliers will enter the full address of their shop and 2 mobile numbers so that they can be contacted when needed.
- The presence of the quotation holder or authorized representative at the command post will be mandatory As per Clause 37(A) of KPRA Rules, all interested Supplier/ Services Providers must be registered with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority and Excise and Taxation Department.
- Sealed bids must be sent through Registered Mail/Couriers Services should be reached on opening date and will be opened on the same day.
- The Quotation shall be processed according to Rate quoted by quotation holder on their letter head paid.
- The successful bidder will be bound to establish Supreme command post and sub command post **one day prior to 1st Muharram ul Haram.**
- All goods must be of high quality. Goods will be supplied from **1st Muharram-ul-Haram to 10th Muharram-ul-Haram.**
- Late applications will not be considered (11.00 AM).

INFP(P)  
1339/24

Deputy Director (I&S)  
East Zone, CMG, Peshawar

Director East  
Capital Metropolitan Government  
Peshawar



**GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA**  
**COMMUNICATION & WORKS DEPARTMENT**

**NOTICE INVITING E-BIDDING (Single Stage Single Envelope E-Bidding System)**

1. The **C&W Highway Division Lower Dir**, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa invites electronic Bids from eligible firms / contractors in accordance with KPRA Procurement Rules 2014 amended up to 15/09/2021 on Single Stage Single Envelope procedure for the following work(s).

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Required Category of PEC	Bid Security I/c Stamp Duty)	Tender Fee (0.03%)	Period of Completion	Last Date and Time of Submission of E-Bids	Date & Time of Opening of Technical Bid
1	<b>ADP No. 1529/210456 (2022-23)</b> Construction of Roads and Bridges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. <b>Sub Head:</b> Shawa Kalai, UC Mayar, Tehsil Samarbagh P.C.C.	C-6	78000	1100	As Per Work Order	03/07/2024 at 12.00 PM	On Same Day
2	<b>ADP No. 1529/210456 (2022-23)</b> Construction of Roads and Bridges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. <b>Sub Head:</b> Shawa Kalai, UC Sacbarkalai, Tehsil Samarbagh P.C.C.	C-6	78000	1100	-do-	-do-	-do-
3	<b>ADP No. 1529/210456 (2022-23)</b> Construction of Roads and Bridges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. <b>Sub Head:</b> Gambir Shah to Gandarsi Road, UC Mayar and Sadbarkalai, Tehsil Samarbagh.	C-6	219000	3000	-do-	-do-	-do-
4	<b>ADP No. 1529/210456 (2022-23)</b> Construction of Roads and Bridges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. <b>Sub Head:</b> P.C.C Road Barchunai + Road Cutting, VC Rahimabad, Tehsil Samarbagh.	C-6	68000	1000	-do-	-do-	-do-
5	<b>ADP No. 1521/200245 (2022-23) (Revised)</b> Construction of Technically & Economically Feasible 294 Kms Roads in Matakand Division. <b>Sub Head:</b> Kano Shamshi Road (1-KM)	C-6	400000	5700	-do-	-do-	-do-
6	<b>ADP No. 2031/180579 (2022-23)</b> District: Uplift and Beautification Scheme <b>Sub Head:</b> Construction of Boundary Wall of Animal Veterinary	C-6	84000	1200	-do-	-do-	-do-

(1) Bid Solicitation Documents and Instruction to Bidders can be obtained from the office on any working day or downloaded from C&W Website ([www.cwd.gkp.pk](http://www.cwd.gkp.pk)) before the submission date/ time. (2) The bidders should submit their E-bids as per KPRA Notification No. SOR(14)/Vol:1-24/2021-22, dated 10-05-2022. (3) **Complete Detail of Bid Security in shape of CDR i.e. Bank Nae, CDR Number(s) and Date(S) must be submitted electronically alongwith E-bid on the E-Bidding Sysgtem.** (4) All bidders are required to be registered with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority under Finance Act,2013 Act No. XXI of 2013. (5) Original copies of Call Deposit for Bid Security Fee 0.03% should be enclosed in the Technical Proposal and shall reach to the office before closing date/time. (6) Venue of Bids opening is office of the Executive Engineer C&W Highway Division Lower Dir.

**INFP(P)#1304/24 EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, HIGHWAY DIVISION LOWER DIR. Ph: 0945-822182**





# Economists, businessmen, people laud federal budget

PESHAWAR (APP): Senior economists, traders, businessmen and people of all walks of life here Wednesday highly lauded federal budget 2024-25 and termed it goal oriented with maximum relief provided to all sectors in the country.

Dr Muhammad Naem, former Chairman Economics Department, University of Peshawar told APP that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb and their finance team deserved full credit and appreciation for presenting a goal-oriented budget despite prevailing economic and fiscal challenges.

He appreciated the three-pronged strategy announced by the Finance Minister to reform the pension scheme in line with international best practices. He said after reforms in the pension scheme, the pension liability would be reduced considerably in next three decades.

Dr Naem supported the proposal of launching contributory pension scheme for new recruitment for which the government would deposit its share every month and praised the proposal of pension fund.

Dr Muhammad Naem highly appreciated the strong 6.25 percent expansion in the agriculture sector of Pakistan as indicated by Economic Survey of Pakistan 2023-24, which is the highest in 19 years. He said that it would help drive the country's GDP by an expected 2.38 percent in financial year 2024-25 which means recovering from a contraction of 0.21 percent in the previ-

ous financial year.

He said the per capita income has increased to \$1,680 from \$1,551 while inflation was down to 26percent against 28 percent last year. He said it was possible due to bold economic, fiscal and monetary policies of the present elected government.

Praising the Govt's courageous step in signing the nine-month stand-by agreement with the IMF, he said that it has brought the country to a better place today. "Pakistan is an agricultural country and we need to strengthen this vital sector by providing maximum facilities to the farmers."

Owing to the Govt better economic and fiscal policies, he said that significant reduction in current account deficit has been witnessed from an estimated \$6 billion to around \$200 million that was a positive sign for the national economy.

Yousaf Sarwar, former President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry also welcomed the federal budget and declared it business and trade friendly with maximum facilities for all.

To achieve sustainable economic growth, he said "we need to curb electricity theft that caused an estimated Rs500 billion loss to the Govt kitty besides making negative effects on the industrial production.

To provide maximum relief to the disadvantaged segments of society, the federal government has increased budgetary allocations for the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) up to Rs. 593 billion, registering 29 percent increase as compared to the last

year.

He said that time has come to think seriously about privatization of electricity distribution companies and complete overhauling the electricity distribution system in order to save this huge amount.

"No country can make economic progress unless its exports increase manifolds," he said, adding it was a good omen that the country's exports have increased by 9.3percent from July to March to \$23 billion compared to \$21.1 billion in the same period last year.

Former ambassador Manzoorul Haq welcomed increase in salaries and pension of the government employees in the budget and termed it a positive step that would help provide relief to them in the wake of increased prices of daily used commodities and inflation.

He also appreciated huge allocations in the budget for development of merged tribal districts that would help erstwhile Fata on road to progress and development.

Former Secretary Zahoor Khan, ex Information Officer, Misal Khan, ex PST teacher, Riazul Haq, Pir Mouhammad Khan, construction contractor Irshad Ullah and others welcomed the federal budget and termed it historic, progressive and goal oriented.

They welcome the announcement of health insurance scheme for journalists and media workers undewhich 5,000 journalists and media workers would be given health insurance under the scheme in first phase, while 10,000 more would get the facility under its second phase.



PESHAWAR: Brigadier (ret) Muhammad Mussaddiq Abbassi, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Anti-Corruption addressing a press conference. DG Information Muhammad Imran is also present.

## Mussaddiq highlights alarming impact of NAB amendments

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Brigadier (ret) Muhammad Mussaddiq Abbassi, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Anti-Corruption, has expressed grave concerns over the amendments to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) law. Speaking at a press conference held at the Ila'a a Cell, Civil Secretariat Peshawar, Brigadier Abbassi warned that these amendments will result in an annual loss of 150 billion rupees to the national treasury and potentially end cases worth 1100 billion rupees.

He stated that these changes violate international laws and have rendered the NAB institution completely inactive, which is detrimental to the country and the national treasury. Speaking on Dubai property leak matter Brigadier (ret) Abbassi emphasized the importance of identifying the

source of income for money transferred out of the country.

"If the source is known but the transfer was through illegal channels, action will be taken under tax evasion laws. If the source is unknown and the transfer was illicit, action will be taken under the Anti-Money Laundering Act, 2012," he said.

He called for transparent judicial investigations and urged the FBR, FIA, and NAB to take decisive actions. Speaking on weakening of NAB's authority he said that Anti-money laundering cases have been removed from NAB's jurisdiction.

The acceptance of these amendments by the NAB chairman undermines the institution's role in protecting the national treasury he said.

Brigadier (ret) Abbassi said that such amendments have impact on High-Profile Cases of Sharif and Zardari Families, Raja Pervaz Ashraf, Ahsan

Iqbal, and Shahid Khaqan and many more.

Changes in specific sections of the law have eliminated the requirement to disclose sources of income, reducing accountability for corruption he said.

He said that during the PTI era in the federal government, NAB recovered 480 billion rupees over three years, averaging 160 billion rupees per year. Whereas, post-amendment, recoveries have dwindled to a few billion rupees.

These amendments have shifted NAB's focus to default cases rather than original corruption cases, severely limiting its effectiveness.

Discussing details of the amendments he said that under the amendments, unless bureaucrats create assets in their own names, they cannot be questioned. Corruption involving contractors and bureaucrats has been removed from NAB's authority.

He said that by amending the NAB law the Tosha Khana case under Section 97A was relaxed, benefiting individuals like Nawaz Sharif and Zardari and changes benefiting specific individuals, such as Khawaja Saad Rafiq, have been implemented.

The requirement to disclose sources of income under Section 14 has been abolished, impacting cases like Surrey Mahal, Avonfield, and Panama. NAB must now prove the source of income within six months, failing which the case will be considered closed which is lamenting, he said. Brigadier (ret) Abbassi said that through amendments foreign evidence has been rendered ineffective and inadmissible in court and amendments to Section 23 allow asset transfers after case initiation.

He said that original cases have been converted into default cases under amended Section 25, dealing with plea bargains.

## Health Secretary chairs meeting on Deworming Initiative

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In the chairmanship of Health Secretary Mahmood Aslam Wazir, the Steering Committee Meeting of the Deworming Initiative was convened at the Health Secretariat's committee room. The meeting saw the participation of key officials from various government departments and organizations including Planning and Development, Planning Cell, Health Department, Directorate General Health

Services, Elementary and Secondary Education, Private Schools Regulatory Authority, Local Government, Afghan Commissionerate, Elementary and Secondary Education Foundation, Rescue 1122, IRD Pakistan, and AVI Dance Action.

Secretary Health highlighted the government's commitment to addressing the challenges and risks posed by intestinal worms among school-going children in the next three years. It was revealed dur-

ing the meeting that approximately 12 million children in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have already been administered deworming medication, with an additional 850,000 children set to receive effective and safe deworming medication in October this year.

The meeting outlined the goal of protecting over 850,000 children aged 5 to 14 years from intestinal worms in 22 districts of the province. This target includes children from both public and private

schools. To achieve this goal, over 40,000 teachers and medical practitioners are mobilized annually.

Furthermore, it was announced that training for practitioners will commence in September based on various grading, with the deworming campaign set to be launched in October. Secretary Health emphasized that the Deworming Initiative has become a part of the Annual Development Plan for the next three years, reflecting a positive and encouraging outlook.



PESHAWAR: Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Saleem Swati in a group photo with Iranian Ambassador Raza Ameer and Iranian delegation during the later visit to KP Assembly.

## All set for Safari Helicopter service in Chitral

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Arrangements for helicopter safari service for the domestic and foreign tourists in Chitral have been completed and approval has been given for the immediate launch of the heli service before the start of the 3-day Shandur Polo Festival in Chitral Upper being inaugurated on Friday, June 28.

In the light of the instructions of the Advisor

to the Chief Minister for Tourism and Culture Zahid Chanzab, Director General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) Barkatullah Marwat signed an MoU with Petronet Aviation Authority during a simple ceremony held at his office in Peshawar cantt on Wednesday. With this new development the heli service for tourists has been launched immediately. Hence according to the announcement of the

Advisor to the Chief Minister on Tourism and Culture, Zahid Chanzab, the helicopter service for tourists has been officially launched, which he had done before the budget meeting. Before the announcement, he contacted the Chief Minister, Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur and took him into confidence while the Chief Minister appreciated this initiative and assured his full cooperation in this regard.

On the occasion of the MoU signing ceremony, Director General KPCTA Barkatullah Marwat clarified that helicopter service has been started for the convenience of tourists in wake of the Shandur Polo Festival. As per the agreement tourists will benefit from this service considerably and tourism will flourish in Chitral by leaps and bounds. He said that four packages of the safari helicopter tourism service have been designed.

## Task forces to be formed to fight case of province, address problems of universities

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Faisal Karim Kundi has said that a task force comprising representatives of political parties would be formed to fight the case of province.

He was talking to a representative delegation of Peshawar Press Club that was led by President PPC, Arshad Aziz Malik. The governor said that task force would be formed after consultation with political parties with an aim to fight case of province and to improve education system.

He told that consultation process with political parties is underway and afterwards political leadership would be contacted to nominate their representatives for inclusion in task force. He said that task force would prepare papers mentioning arguments and reasons adding it would serve as a milestone for others and help getting rights of the province. KP Governor said that a similar task force would be constituted to address education sector and to resolve issues being faced by universities.

He also express concern over deteriorating standard of education in Edwards College and said that it is astonishing that provincial government is ignoring education sector and on the contrary Punjab and Sind governments have allocated a considerable amount of Rs. 6 billion and 20 billion respectively for universities. He said that Chairman State Life has also been directed to devise a strategy to resolve pension issues in universities. Governor said that, he was being informed that Peshawar- D I Khan Motorway was not executed according to standard and its length has been increased without any reason.

## KP Food Safety Authority raids KTH Doctors' Hostel canteen

Uncovers cockroaches and stale meat

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Authority conducted a raid on the canteen of the Khyber Teaching Hospital (KTH) doctors' hostel. The raid resulted in the discovery of cockroaches and stale meat, leading to the canteen's closure and a hefty fine.

According to a spokesperson of Food Safety Authority while

unveiling details, said that in response to a complaint from doctors, Peshawar food safety team found the canteen in a deplorable state of cleanliness, with severe violations of hygiene standards.

The inspection revealed not only the presence of cockroaches but also the use of stale meat. Furthermore, the canteen staff also lacked medical certificates.

Spokesperson stated that the canteen was

immediately sealed, and a substantial fine was imposed on the establishment.

In line with this, the Swat food safety team, in collaboration with the district administration, also dismantled a fake milk production factory. The food safety team confiscated equipment and supplies from the factory, and legal proceedings were initiated against the owner.

Director General of the Food Authority, Wasif

Saeed, instructed the hospital administration to take action against the contractor responsible for the canteen. Wasif emphasized that the health of doctors, who are considered a national asset, must not be compromised. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Food, Zahir Shah Toru, directed the Food Safety Authority teams to conduct regular inspections of hospital canteens to ensure compliance with hygiene standards.

## Delegation of Helvetas calls on Governor KP



PESHAWAR (APP): A delegation from the social organization Helvetas Pakistan, led by Country Director Dr. Arjumand Nizamani, met with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi at the Governor House here on Wednesday.

During the meeting, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi expressed appreciation for the collaboration between the government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and donors in improving marginalized areas.

The Governor emphasized the potential for effective and lasting solutions to issues through public-private partnerships. Addressing concerns about the devastation caused by floods due to encroachments and lack of cleanliness in natural water channels, Governor Kundi announced funds from the Annual Developmental Program (ADP) for the cleaning of water channels.

He stressed that without proper maintenance of these channels, the damage from monsoon rains cannot be mitigated. Clean

water channels will not only prevent waterlogging but also facilitate agricultural development, said Governor Kundi.

Governor Kundi also highlighted the need for attention to the Rod Kohi System, as other provinces have already secured their share of water from the irrigation system, as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has been deprived.

He said that lift bank canal was not completed now we expressed hope for cooperation between the provincial and federal governments to address this

issue promptly.

The head of the delegation briefed Governor Kundi on their organization's ongoing and upcoming projects in Pakistan, including successful vertical farming initiatives in Punjab, which will now be implemented in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at the Governor's recommendation.

The meeting also discussed the provision of further facilities in the Rod Kohi System, especially in terms of providing skills to youth, particularly in digital literacy.





## In brief

### Three die due to gas leakage

**SARGODHA (PPT):** Three sanitary workers died in a well in Bhalwal area of Sargodha after inhaling toxic gas, police said on Wednesday. According to a report, four workers descended into the well in Satellite Town area of the city to clean it when they lost their consciousness and fell down due to the gas leakage. They were taken to hospital where three of them died, while the fourth one had to be shifted to a hospital in Sargodha due to his critical condition. A similar incident had taken place in the area a few days ago. However, the administration did not take notice of that and did not provide these workers with safety kits.

### 20 injured in road mishap

**HYDERABAD (INP):** More than 20 people including some critical were injured in collision between two over speeding vehicles here, police said on Wednesday. According to details, the accident took place outside Rahokia police station near Tando Jam in Hyderabad where a mini-truck and a passenger coaster collided head-on. The passenger coaster caught fire after the collision. The collision and fire resulted in serious injuries to more than 20 passengers. The injured were shifted to civil hospital through private vehicles and ambulances where condition of four wounded people was stated to be critical.

### FC thwarts smuggling bids

**QUETTA (INP):** In a series of successful anti-traffic operations, FC Balochistan has seized illegal goods worth over Rs380 million between May 18 and June 11, 2024. The operations took place in various regions including Dera Allah Yar, Barkhan, Pishin, Chaman, Noshki, and Mastung. During these operations, authorities intercepted and confiscated a substantial amount of smuggled items. These included 97,000 liters of Iranian diesel, 1,313 tires, 377 cartons of cigarettes, and 90 metric tons of betel nuts. In addition, other contraband such as fertilizers, non-customs paid vehicles, and mobile phones were also seized and handed over to customs authorities. Smugglers were employing various methods to transport these goods, using trucks, passenger buses, and secret routes. However, FC Balochistan managed to thwart these attempts through timely and coordinated actions.

### SMBBU setup water camps

**F.P. Report**

**LARKANA:** Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Medical University (SMBBU) Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr. Nusrat Shah ordered establishment of water and syrup camps in wake of heat-wave, which was arranged by the Directorate of Work and Research in different places of the city. With the joint support of Benazir Bhutto Medical University Larkana, UNICEF and Mayor Larkana, water, ORS and syrup camps have been organized to face the rising heat. The third camp was established in Allahabad along with Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Nusrat Shah, Commissioner Larkana Ghulam Mustafa Phal, Deputy Commissioner Dr. Sharjeel Noor, SSP Larkana Dr. Ruhul Khoso, In-charge Rescue Itfikhah Ahmed, DSP Pars, camps. Visited and distributed cold water and ORS to the visitors and informed the common people to prevent heat stroke.

# Sale of sacrificial animals begins in Landi Kotal

**F.P. Report**

**LANDI KOTAL:** The sacrificial animals have started arriving in Landi Kotal from mostly down towns of the country for sale ahead of Eidul Azha. Besides local sailing points, a temporary main cattle market has been set up at the bypass road, near to Tublegli Markaz, Landi Kotal.



At the moment, animal prices are quite high and beyond the reach of the common man, although, these prices are expected to fall closer to the Eidul Azha. More often the locals prefer to buy sheep on the Eid-ul-Azha. According to a survey conducted by this scribe this year a huge increase has been witnessed in the price of sacrificial animals.

As per available information a small size sheep prices have been noted Rs.30000 in the local market. Similarly a middle size sheep is selling at Rs.40000

to 50000 and price of large size sheep has been recorded ranging Rs.60000 to Rs.75000. In the same way, prices of cow, ox and buffalo range from Rs.90000 to Rs.250000 depending on size of the animal.

Dilshad Khan, who has been in the cattle business for a long time, said that the price of a single big animal has raised Rs.15000 to Rs.25000 as compared to

pared to last year Rs.10000 to Rs 15000 per sheep rate had increased. He added that a ban on import of sheep from Afghanistan through Torkham border was the main cause of the rise in the rate of the small animal.

Sheep and lambs transported from Nowshera and Peshawar cost them high as additional tax and expenses, he added. Saeed Khan, a local customer from Khuga Khel area said that as compare to last year, prices of big animals rose Rs. 25000 per head while Rs.10000 to Rs.15000 price hike had been noticed in small animals.

Ban imposed on import of sheep from Afghanistan caused a rise in its rate as short supply from Nowshera and other districts to the market automatically hiked the price of the animal. Khayali Shah Shinwari who was busy, searching in the market to buy sheep to perform Sunnah Ibrahim said, the prices were beyond the buying capacity of middle class citizens.

He added that if the ban on import on sheep from Afghanistan via Torkham was not lifted, maximum people would be deprived of conducting the religious rites. He demanded relaxation on its import to facilitate the poor segments of the society. It is to be mentioned here that the border security forces have imposed a ban on import of sheep from Afghanistan at Torkham border because of security reasons.

## Security plan afoot for Eidul Azha in Dir Lower

**F.P. Report**

**LOWER DIR:** The police have devised a comprehensive security plan to ensure peace during Eidul Azha in the area. According to police, the plan had been made on the directives of District Police Officer (DPO) Lower Dir Rai Mazhar Iqbal aimed at protecting important and sensitive locations, mosques, commercial centers, and markets, and to maintain the smooth flow of traffic on the auspicious of Eid.

Under the plan security has been heightened throughout the district, which has been divided into four sectors for these arrangements. According to the plan, more than 1,600 police personnel will be on duty. SP Investigation Lower Dir Rashid Khan will oversee the security arrangements in their respective areas along with Circle SDPOs and SHOs.

The plan also features a foolproof security arrangements for Eid prayers, and

police patrols have been increased to ensure peace and security in the area. During Eid, checking processes at checkpoints at the district's entry and exit points and important routes will be intensified. As per plan more than 200 traffic personnel would be performing duty to ensure smooth flow of traffic during Eid days.

DPO Rai Mazhar Iqbal has appealed to the public to refrain from aerial firing and one-wheeling on the joyous occasion of Eid. He has also urged parents to cooperate and prevent their children from engaging in these dangerous activities. He said legal action will be taken against violators.

**Rescue 1122 cancels staff leaves for Eid:** The district emergency service-Rescue 1122 has cancelled the leaves for its staff to provide prompt services to citizens in case of emergency during Eidul Azha holidays. According to a plan issued by the District Emergency Officer Abrar

Ali and Rescue 1122 service will remain alert during Eidul Azha providing services to people round the clock.

The District Emergency Officer has directed all station house in-charges, storekeepers, control room in-charges, and admin staff to perform their duties with enthusiasm during Eid. He also directed the staff concerned to ensure the functionality of all emergency vehicles, tools, and equipment. He also directed on-call officers to remain alert and available 24/7.

As per plan, Rescue 1122 personnel will perform duties at various Eidgahs and mosques especially during Eid prayers. Medical teams will be deployed at various points in the Panjkora River to handle any untoward incidents promptly. The public is informed that they can avail free services by calling Rescue's toll-free number 1122 to deal with any emergencies.

## Distance learner graduates threatened to arrange sit-in

**F.P. Report**

**BANNU:** The students obtained degrees under distance learning system to hold sit-in in front of the provincial assembly and to knock the doors of court in favor of their demands.

This was claimed by graduates including Naseem Allah, Esmat Allah Khan, Riaz Allah, Sajid Nawaz Intiaz Khan while addressing a press conference at Bannu press club and added that we are poor people benefiting from the distance education system. For those admitted to B. Ed and other fields from the University of Sarhad, three

thousand rupees were first demanded, then five and ten thousand rupees are being demanded, which is not enough for the poor because most of us teach in private schools.

There are teachers whose salary is hardly 12,000 a month and who also run their own home. Yes, but it has not been shown yet, but Altaia said that the expenses of the university are not being met, that is why the fees have been exceeded. We are not able to apply to various institutions for vacancies due to the lack of a degree, in addition to the employees who are currently

in the service who have different degrees than the ones who are not receiving the degrees due to the lack of degrees, which is our loss.

He called on the Higher Education Commission, the provincial minister of education and other high officials to pay immediate attention to this issue of special importance and force the University of South Africa to reduce the degree fees. Against HECAFS, we will protest in front of the university and the provincial assembly building, and if we still don't get justice, we will go to court.

## Mayor inaugurates MAGP offices

**F.P. Report**

**WANA:** The newly constructed MAGP office in Zalai and Gul Kach, Lower Waziristan, was inaugurated by Tehsil Chairman Muhammad Saleh, joined by village chairmen, councilors, politicians, and community members.

This office, widely appreciated by elected bodies, will serve approximately 6,000 residents who were previously under-

served due to their remote location, 22 km from Wana Main Bazaar. Chairman highlighted the office's significance as a liaison between the police and public, as per the 2017 Act, and outlined its functions, including reporting illegal issues and issuing vital certificates on an emergency basis.

The community and elected representatives urged MAGP to establish similar offices in adjacent

areas along the Afghanistan border, recognizing the office's importance. Muhammad Anwar, Field Officer, and Shahid Ullah, Sub Engineer, assured that services would be delivered directly to the doorsteps of the tribesmen in Lower Waziristan, as stated by Mr. Bin Yamin. The event concluded with the community expressing heartfelt gratitude to MAGP for the new office, which will greatly benefit the region.



**QUETTA:** A vendor selling barbeque items at Sariah Road ahead of Eidul Azha.

## Residents' complains against NADRA staff behavior

**F.P. Report**

**SHANGLA:** The residents are facing difficulties due to the lack of staff and poor behavior of National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) staff at district headquarter Alipuri, Shangla.

The office is understaffed, and the staff is uncooperative and rude, causing problems for the people. The establishment of a second shift at the NADRA office would facilitate the people of remote areas and increase NADRA's revenue. The staff at the NADRA office is behaving like they own the authority, and their behavior is causing problems for the people.

The public is demanding that the Chairman of NADRA provide training sessions for the staff and improve their behavior. While other areas of Shangla have been provided with second shifts and vans, the NADRA office in Alipuri, which is always crowded, is being neglected.

The office is only functional from 8 am to 3 pm, and people from remote areas often return empty-handed due to electricity and internet issues. The establishment of a second shift at the NADRA office in Alipuri would facilitate the people and benefit both the employees and the residents of the area.

## Ulema, civil society plays key role for peace

**F.P. Report**

**HAFIZABAD:** Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad urged the Ulema, civil society and prominent personalities to play their vital role to maintain law and order, to promote interfaith harmony, tolerance, brotherhood and unity on the eve of Eid-ul-Azha.

DC argued while addressing a meeting of District Peace Committee and Interfaith Harmony Committee and added that Islam teaches us lesson of tolerance, unity, interfaith harmony, affection, tranquility and coherence. She said that district administration and police finalised comprehensive plan to ensure peace, cleanliness and to lift offal of sacrificial animals during Eid Days and it was also responsibility of the citizens to place offal at fixed points so that sanitary workers could lift easily.

She said that only those religious Madaris, religious organisations could collect sacrificial animals which get permit from district administration while no one would be allowed to collect hides without permit. Addressing the meeting, DPO Faisal Gulzar said that foolproof security arrangements would be made to protect Eid congregations at Eidgahs, Masjid and other places. The members of committee assured that they would be played their positive role for keeping traditional peace in the district.

## Comprehensive plan for Eid directed

**F.P. Report**

**MARDAN:** Commissioner Mardan Muhammad Ayaz directed the administration to take all necessary measures for the safety of tourists including timely disposal of sacrificial animal carcasses, cleanliness and security arrangements in animal markets and traffic management at tourist spots during Eid-ul-Azha, on Wednesday.

He was addressing a high-level meeting held at his office regarding preparations for Eid. The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioner Mardan Muhammad Fayaz Khan Sherpao, Secretary to Commissioner Sara Tawab, ADC Swabi Gohar Ali, Mardan and Swabi Tehsil Municipal Administration, Police, Livestock, Water Supply and Sanitation Company and other departments. In the meeting, officers from various departments including Livestock, TMAs, Water Supply and Sanitation, Health and police.

Commissioner Mardan was briefed about their preparations in connection with Eid-ul-Azha preparations and to build control rooms in both districts on the occasion of Eid. It was also directed to ensure spraying of Congo virus prevention on animals at animal markets and entry points and to ensure security arrangements at tourist spots. PESCO Mardan Superintendent Engineer Ikramullah told about the arrangements handed over for power supply during Eid.

Commissioner directed the authorities concerned to complete the process of removing the carcasses of the sacrificial animals and disposing of them on the same day so as to protect the birds from hovering over the dirt which may pose a threat to the planes flying from Risalpur Airbase. He also directed the administration of both the districts to make fitness of swings, registration of boats and use of life jackets mandatory in amusement parks. He urged the public to cooperate with the officials of government departments on the occasion of Eid.

**TMA employees hold protest:** Tehsil Municipal Administration (TMA) Mardan Employees Union staged a protest rally and dharna against the right of their demands and alleged corruptions. Due to the failure of negotiations with the officials, the employees' union boycotted the offices and took out a rally and staged a protest at the TMA gate.

The protestors demanded the transfer of all the officers while raising slogans to

remove corrupt mafia and save TMA. Addressing the rally, Employees Union Provincial General Secretary Salman Hoti, TMA President Munir Khan and WSSCM President Akhtar Munir Khan said that employees are being harassed unnecessarily for raising their voice for their rights and the employees are being evasive in solving their legitimate rights and problems.

The speakers alleged that TMA has become a stronghold of corruption and the reputation of the organization is deteriorating. Instead of solving the problems, the authorities have resorted to threatening the employees. There has been corruption of crores of rupees, the legitimate rights and issues of the employees should be resolved and an impartial investigation should be conducted. Officials of the Employees' Union announced a phased protest movement and said that they will not sit down until the demands are resolved. Our protest will continue until our legitimate demands are not accepted and other officers including TMO Mardan are not removed from Mardan.

**LG govt committed for protection of Mukha (archer) game:** City Government Mardan and Tehsil Council Katlang are jointly taking practical and concrete steps for the traditional and ancient sport of Pakhtun nation, so that this historical and important game of Makha (archery) can survive and these centuries-old historical games can be extended to the new young generation.

These views were expressed by Mayor Mardan Himayat ullah Mayar and Chairman Tehsil Council Katlang Riaz Khan while speaking at the prize distribution ceremony of the late Provincial Peace Mukh (Archery) Tournament 2024 at Gondo Shamoza Chappalabad. Haji Nawab Shah presided over the event. The event was addressed by Vice Chairman Farman Shah, Ghazali School Katlang Principal Taj Maluk, District Sports Officer Saeed Akhtar, Ajmal Khan, Gohar Ustad and others.

On this occasion, Provincial President Mukha (Archery) Khyber Pukhtunkhwa Amjad khan Yousafzai highlighted the importance of organizing the tournament and Mukha (Archery) to the participants and shed light on its history in detail. A total of 20 teams participated in the tournament which includes teams from Mardan, Swabi, Buner, Haripur and Punjab, Attock, and Rawalpindi districts.

## Implementation of uplift projects in Dir sought

**F.P. Report**

**LOWER DIR:** The Lower Dir political leaders have demanded of the administration to take practical steps for making the

Timergara Medical College functional, opening of the Balambat Irrigation channel, probe into the alleged irregularities in the sehat Insaf card at Timergara hospital and avoid the demolition of legally built structures on the roadsides.

The demand was made during a meeting of local politicians with deputy commissioner Wasil Khan held here the other day. A grand jirga of political leaders including ANP district president and former MPA Haji Bahadar Khan, JUI-F district chief Sirajud Din, PPP district president and former provincial minister Mahmood Zeb Khan, JI former MPA Saeed Gul, JI district general secretary Hafiz Yaqubur Rehman, president Anjuman Tajiran Timergara Haji Anwarud Din, tehsil chairman Mufi Irfanud Din, PML-N district president Malik Farooq Iqbal, Sar Foundation's representative Daim Shah Akhunkhail, Young Doctors' Association's Dr Najib Khan, Dir Chamber of Commerce representative Malik Khalid Iqbal and Dir Quami Pasoon leader Malik Shah Nasim met the deputy commissioner at his office.

The additional deputy commissioner finance Jan Muhammad and other officials were also in attendance.

The jirga members discussed the ongoing anti-encroachment drive in the district, Timergara Medical College, Balambat Irrigation Channel, Dir Motorway and sehat Insaf card at DHQ hospital Timergara. The jirga informed the official that the main road in the city was wide enough and the land owners had donated 40 feet wide land while the administration was removing buildings and kiosks within a radius of 60 feet.

They said the approved Timergara beautification project had been lingering for a long time and it was yet to be completed. The jirga said that classes at the Timergara Medical classes were not started despite the recruitment of employees and academia. The jirga members complained that the Balambat Irrigation channel was closed due to which the farmers were facing financial losses.

Responding to the jirga demands the DC said that all the stakeholders would be directed to fulfill the responsibilities related to the district administration. He said that some issues which were related to the federal government, would be corresponded with the relevant circles. The DC pointed out that work on

the Timergara Model City plan was in progress. He said the road widening would help resolve traffic jams in the city.

He said the administration had marked the encroached area in the city months ago. He said the administration would play its due role in the area development. He said that letters regarding the development projects would be sent to the provincial and federal governments in a couple of days.

**Book launching ceremony:** The Youth Development Center, department of political science in collaboration with ORIC, university of Malakand arranged a book launching ceremony at the varsity. The UoM vice chancellor Prof Dr Rashid Ahmad was the chief guest on the occasion.

The book is basically a Novel titled as 'Hubb' written by Ms Anisa Batool, a student of the BS 8th semester in the department of Political Science. Students and Faculty members from different departments participated in the event. The panelists included Prof Dr Rashid Ahmad, Hamid ul Haq Khaksar and Ms Anisa Batool and moderated by Sajid Khan. The VC appreciated the work of the author and said that the university always strived for extracurricular activities to enhance different faculties of students.





## 49 die after boat capsizes off Yemen

SANAA (BBC): At least 49 people from the Horn of Africa have died after their boat capsized off the coast of Yemen, according to the UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM). Among the dead were six children and 31 women. Survivors told rescuers that the vessel, carrying 260 migrants, sank in strong winds.

The search continues for 140 people who are still missing. The boat left Somalia carrying 115 Somali nationals and 145 Ethiopians, part of a recent rise in migration from the Horn of Africa to Yemen, according to the IOM.

Local authorities in Rudum, east of Aden, said that those on board were migrants who use Yemen as a transit point to reach Gulf states. According to the IOM, tens of thousands of people a year attempt the

journey, crossing by sea from the Horn of Africa to Yemen and then travelling on to Saudi Arabia or other wealthier nations. Hadi al-Khurma, the director of Rudum district told Reuters news agency the boat sank before it reached the shore. Fishermen and residents managed to rescue survivors, who reported that more migrants were missing from the same boat, Mr al-Khurma said. "The search is still ongoing and the United Nations has been informed of the incident," he said. The IOM said the ongoing search and rescue operation has been challenged by a shortage of operational patrol boats.

It said it was providing aid to 71 survivors, including six children, with eight migrants referred to hospital. In a statement, IOM spokesman Mohammedali Abunajela said "this recent

tragedy is another reminder of the urgent need to work together to address urgent migration challenges". According to the UN, 97,000 migrants arrived in Yemen from the Horn of Africa last year. They are motivated by political and economic instability, droughts and other extreme weather events in their own countries, the organisation said. The number of migrants arriving to Yemen annually has tripled from around 27,000 in 2021 to more than 90,000 in 2023, the IOM said. The increase has occurred despite the war in Yemen and recent Houthi assaults on ships in the Red Sea. The journey is perilous: Since 2014, the IOM has recorded 1,860 migrant deaths and disappearances along the route from East Africa and the Horn of Africa to the Gulf, including 480 people who drowned.

## Zuma's party in bid to block SA parliament meeting

JOHANNESBURG (BBC): The party led by South Africa's former President Jacob Zuma has asked the country's highest court to stop the newly elected national assembly from sitting for the first time on Friday. It is a key date because that is when members of parliament are due to vote for the country's president.

But Mr Zuma's uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) party is boycotting the session, claiming there were irregularities in last month's general election - although it has not provided evidence to support this. Mr Zuma, a former ANC leader, is an ally-turned-enemy of President Cyril Ramaphosa, who is seeking a second term. Mr Ramaphosa is the leader of the African National Congress (ANC), which lost its parliamentary majority for the first time since it took power at the end of the racist system of apartheid in 1994.

The ANC won 40% of the vote, not enough to govern alone. It is now involved in talks with other parties as it scrambles to form a government of national unity. Mr Zuma blames Mr Ramaphosa for ousting him as president in 2018, when the party removed him partly because of corruption allegations Last December, Mr Zuma announced that he would be campaigning for MK.

MK caused a major surprise by coming third in the election - the first it contested since registering as a party last September. The unexpected strength of its showing cut into the ANC's vote share, and is a factor behind the ruling party's poor results. MK also emerged as the biggest winner in Mr Zuma's home province of KwaZulu-Natal, but failed to get an outright majority to gain control of the government there. It is the only party to have demanded that Mr Ramaphosa step down. The main opposition party, the Democratic Alliance (DA), has not confirmed it plans to vote for Mr Ramaphosa to be re-elected. But neither has the party said it would not back him. "The focus on the negotiations now is finding solutions to the process towards formation of governments [at national and provincial level]," DA spokesman Solly Malatsi told the BBC.

"Ramaphosa is the president of the ANC and that's the knowledge on which we are all negotiating with," he added. In legal papers submitted to the Constitutional Court, MK alleged that South Africa's election commission was wrong to call the results of May's general election free and fair. It also argues that holding Friday's parliamentary sitting would be unconstitutional, saying there would not be enough members present.

And the party is demanding that the president call another election within 90 days. It is unclear whether this legal move will have any impact. Parliamentary officials had previously dismissed the MK's objections, saying its interpretation of the constitution was incorrect, and the chief justice went ahead with announcing a date for the first sitting.



TAIPEI CITY: Taiwan's coast guard officials are seen on board a speedboat that an alleged former Chinese naval officer used to enter a harbor in Taiwan.

## Russian vessels conduct missile drills in Atlantic on way to Cuba

MOSCOW: A Russian naval frigate and a nuclear-powered submarine have conducted missile drills in the Atlantic Ocean while on their way to Cuba, the Russian Ministry of Defence has said.

The drills, by the submarine Kazan and the warship Admiral Gorshkov, involved firing high-precision missiles at mock enemy targets from a distance of more than 600km (370 miles), it said in a statement. The Admiral Gorshkov also conducted training in recent days to repel an air attack, the ministry said.

They are part of a group of four Russian vessels due to arrive in Cuba on Wednesday. Cuba said last week that such visits were standard practice by naval units from countries friendly to Havana, and that the ships carried no nuclear weapons and did not present a threat to the region. The trip will nevertheless be closely watched by the United States at a time of acute tension with Russia over its war in Ukraine.

The US does not see the move as threatening, but the US Navy will monitor the exercises, a US official told reporters last week. "This is about Russia showing that it's still capable of some level of global power projection," the official said. The Admiral Gorshkov is armed with new Zircon hypersonic missiles. The weapon has been designed to arm Russian cruisers, frigates and submarines and could be used against sea and ground targets.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has touted Zircon as a potent weapon capable of penetrating any existing antimissile defences by flying nine times faster than the speed of sound at a range of more than 1,000km (more than 620 miles). The Admiral Gorshkov and the Kazan are accompanied by two support ships on their

visit to Havana, which Cuban officials said reflected "historically friendly relations" between Russia and Cuba. The Cuban Foreign Ministry said the Russian warships will be in Havana between Wednesday and June 17. It is not the first time Russia has sent its warships to the Caribbean, but this week's visit follows Putin's warning that Moscow could respond to Ukraine's Western allies allowing Kyiv to use their weapons to strike targets in Russia by giving similar weapons to adversaries of the West worldwide.

Meanwhile, Russia and Belarus have begun the second stage of tactical nuclear weapons drills, part of Moscow's efforts to discourage the West from ramping up support for Ukraine. Russia announced the exercises last month, after French President Emmanuel Macron said he would not rule out deploying troops to Ukraine under certain conditions and the United States and some other NATO allies said Kyiv was allowed to use Western-supplied weapons on targets in border areas of Russia.

The first exercises took place last month and focused on preparation for nuclear missions and how to arm and deploy missiles. In the drills that began, the Russian Ministry of Defence said Russian and Belarusian troops would undergo joint training in non-strategic nuclear weapons used in combat. It said the exercise was aimed at maintaining the readiness of personnel and equipment to ensure the "sovereignty and territorial integrity" of the alliance between Russia and Belarus. Speaking to reporters, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the situation in Europe was "quite tense" and that such drills and maintaining combat readiness were important in view of the "hostile decisions and actions" by

the US and its allies and their "daily provocations". Since sending thousands of troops into Ukraine in a full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly warned that Russia could use nuclear weapons to defend itself in extreme situations. Last year, Russia moved some of its tactical nuclear weapons into Belarus, which also borders Ukraine and NATO members Poland, Latvia and Lithuania. Belarus's President Alexander Lukashenko has relied on close ties with Russia and provided his country as a staging ground for the war in Ukraine. Tactical nuclear weapons include air bombs, warheads for short-range missiles and artillery munitions and are meant for use on a battlefield. Usually, they are less powerful than strategic weapons - huge warheads that arm intercontinental ballistic missiles and are intended to destroy entire cities.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has noted, however, that even Russia's battlefield nuclear weapons are much more powerful than the two atomic bombs the US dropped on Japan in August 1945. Last week, Putin declared that the West was wrong to proceed from the assumption that Russia will never use its atomic arsenal.

The country's nuclear doctrine envisages the use of nuclear weapons in case of a threat to "the very existence" of the Russian state. Officials in the US have said they have seen no change to Russia's strategic posture, although senior intelligence officials say they have to take Moscow's remarks about nuclear weapons seriously. Russia and the United States are by far the world's biggest nuclear powers, holding about 88 percent of the world's nuclear weapons, according to the Federation of American Scientists. — Aljazeera

## More than 10m displaced in war-torn Sudan: IOM

KHARTOUM: More than 10 million people have been displaced within war-torn Sudan, according to the latest figures released by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Since the war broke out in April 2023 between the Sudanese army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, 7.26 million people have fled their homes, adding to the 2.83 million already displaced by previous conflicts, the IOM said on Thursday.

The United Nations has repeatedly warned that Sudan is facing the world's worst displacement crisis, as the war shows no signs of abating and the spectre of famine haunts the country. Over a quarter of Sudan's 48 million people have now been forced to flee their homes, with more than two million crossing international borders.

Around 3.7 million people - over a third of all the displaced - have escaped from the devastated capital Khartoum alone. In a little more than a year, the war has killed tens of thousands of people. The overall death toll remains unclear, with some estimates of up to 150,000, according to the United States Special Envoy for Sudan Tom Perriello. Millions more

could die as the humanitarian crisis worsens, aid groups and experts have warned. Within Sudan, 70 percent of those displaced "are now trying to survive in places that are at risk of famine", the IOM has warned. The UN says 18 million people in Sudan are acutely hungry, with 3.6 million children acutely malnourished. Some 55 percent of Sudan's displaced people are children under 18 years old, and approximately a quarter are under five, the IOM added. Aid agencies say a lack of data has prevented an official declaration of a famine, while the UN accuses both sides of "systematic obstructions and deliberate denials" of humanitarian access. Both sides have been accused of war crimes, including deliberately targeting civilians, indiscriminate shelling of residential areas and blocking humanitarian aid. Widespread sexual violence has also been reported, amounting to crimes against humanity, according to the UN.

Meanwhile, the International Criminal Court's (ICC) chief prosecutor has appealed to witnesses to send evidence to aid an urgent investigation opened by his office into

allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Sudan's Darfur region. Sudan has been mired in war since April last year when a rivalry between the leaders of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) exploded into violence. Four weeks of fighting in and around el-Fasher, the capital of North Darfur, has killed more than 190 people and wounded 1,200, according to medical charity Doctors Without Borders, known by its French initials MSF. "I am extremely concerned about allegations of widespread international crimes being committed in el-Fasher and its surrounding areas," ICC prosecutor Karim Khan said in a video statement, adding that the investigation "seems to disclose an organised, systematic and a profound attack on human dignity". His investigators had seen credible allegations of what looked like ethnically motivated attacks against the civilian population, widespread use of rape and attacks against hospitals, Khan said, calling for anyone with possible evidence, video or audio material to submit it to his office. — Aljazeera

## Thai market fire consumes hundreds of caged animals

BANGKOK: A fire has killed hundreds, if not thousands, of animals caged at a famous market in Thailand. The blaze ripped through the pet section of Chatuchak Weekend Market in Bangkok, the city government reported.

The fire is believed to have started in the ornamental fish zone in Sri Somrat Market, adjacent to the bigger Chatuchak, at about 4am (21:00 GMT), according to Tivakorn Prongseng, a police inspector investigating the case. More than 100 pet stalls were damaged across about 1,300 square metres (14,000 square feet) before the flames were brought under control an hour later.

There are no reports of human casualties.

A shop owner called Meecha told online news outlet Thaiger that she was awakened by the animals' cries, according to the BBC. "Suddenly, thick smoke filled the air, making it impossible to breathe," said Meecha, who climbed through a window to safety. Some shop owners do live in a popular shopping destination for residents. It has hundreds of shops and stalls selling items ranging from food and drink to clothing, furniture, plants, and books. The pet zone has long provoked criticism for the poor conditions in which some of the animals are kept. — Aljazeera

that survived the fire. Officials said they are still working on estimating the cost of damage, and affected shop owners could register for compensation. This is not the first fire to break out at the market. In 2013, at least 20 shops were destroyed in a blaze in the fashion section.

The sprawling Chatuchak is a top tourist draw, but also a popular shopping destination for residents. It has hundreds of shops and stalls selling items ranging from food and drink to clothing, furniture, plants, and books. The pet zone has long provoked criticism for the poor conditions in which some of the animals are kept. — Aljazeera

## Is UK's Labour Party on a 'rightward' path in election race?

GLASGOW: It has been beset by bitter resignations, selection disputes and accusations of institutional racism - but Britain's main opposition party remains on course for a landslide victory in next month's general election.

After 14 years of playing second fiddle to the ruling right-wing Conservatives, and after four chastening general election defeats, the Labour Party is today on the cusp of power, with some polls suggesting that it could win a 100-plus seat majority on July 4. However, if Labour, led for the past four years by former Director of Public Prosecutions, Sir Keir Starmer, does realise a return to government for the first time since 2010, then it will do so having left a trail of unwelcome headlines in its wake.

Last week, Faiza Shaheen, Labour's left-wing Muslim candidate for Chingford and Woodford Green in northeast London, revealed that she had been de-selected by the party's national executive committee (NEC) after it took issue with her social media posts, including one which saw her like a 2014 The Daily Show sketch on the discourse surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian con-

flict. Lloyd Russell-Moyle, the left-wing Labour candidate for Brighton Kemptown, was also de-selected last week. He blamed "a vexatious and politically motivated complaint" on his de-selection by the party which means that he cannot now defend a seat he had held for Labour since 2017. Labour said the decision was down to a complaint it had received on his behaviour. These dismissals came as left-wing stalwart, Diane Abbott, the UK's first female Black MP, was reinstated back into the party fold at the eleventh hour after she was suspended from Labour last year, accused of making anti-Semitic comments in a national newspaper. The party's treatment of Shaheen and Abbott prompted seven Labour councillors in Slough to resign after accusing the movement of "institutional racism".

Several observers have accused the party of deliberately purging the left. "Starmer's leadership have committed some unavoidable errors that they may well regret," said Colm Murphy, a lecturer in British politics at Queen Mary University of London of Labour's selection disputes. "In the short term, it's unlikely to matter outside of a few seats. Longer term,

it's a different story."

Starmer assumed control of Labour in April 2020 pledging to distance himself from his ardent socialist predecessor Jeremy Corbyn, who was repeatedly accused of turning a blind eye to accusations of anti-Semitism in the party. Four years ago, he suspended Corbyn as a Labour MP; now Corbyn runs as an independent candidate in his long-held Islington North constituency. Murphy told Al Jazeera that Starmer was potentially storing up trouble for the future by adopting uncompromising vetting procedures.

"Successful party management requires [vetting] processes to be seen as reasonable by most stakeholders - otherwise, the leader's internal support base can weaken or narrow," Murphy said. "If the political environment becomes more difficult for Labour in future, then long-standing grievances like those generated this week could become important." Starmer's reluctance to vociferously condemn Israel's bloody war on Gaza, where more than 36,000 Palestinians have been killed by the United States-backed Israeli military in just eight months, has also cast a shadow over Labour, a party tradi-

tionally of the left.

Dozens of Labour councillors have resigned their roles over Starmer's stance on Gaza since the war began last October. The party's decision to parachute Luke Akehurst, a committed Zionist and staunch defender of Israel's actions in the Palestinian enclave, into the safe Labour seat of North Durham for July's election, saw left-leaning voters contend that a Starmer government would rule from the centre-right. "Where is the ambition for tackling climate change, the greatest challenge of our age? It has been watered down," said Phil Burton-Cartledge, an academic at the University of Derby.

Burton-Cartledge resigned his membership of Labour in protest at the party's position on Gaza and its treatment of Abbott, Russell-Moyle and Shaheen, who declared on Wednesday that she was now running as an independent candidate for Chingford and Woodford Green. Last month, Kamel Hawwash, a British Palestinian, told Al Jazeera he had also quit his Labour Party membership to run as an independent candidate in Selly Oak.

Burton-Cartledge added: "How

about tackling child poverty, among the worst in the Western world? Economic growth is shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves's answer to everything. How is Labour going to tackle the problems in the National Health Service? Apparently, more private sector involvement is the magical cure-all."

Starmer has promised to provide real change for Britain should he succeed Conservative leader Rishi Sunak as prime minister in four weeks' time. He has, for instance, pledged to legislate for a "family-friendly" "New Deal" for British workers, including a commitment to "deliver a genuine living wage", within 100 days of entering office. He has also promised to establish a publicly owned clean energy company, Great British Energy, in a bid to tackle the cost-of-living crisis.

As for the ruling Conservatives, some of the party's political heavy-hitters are predicted to lose their seats at the election, and many have already decided to step down. It is unclear what a Conservative opposition would look like.

But recent history suggests that parties which surrender power in the

UK tend to be in the political wilderness for more than a decade. When Conservative leader Margaret Thatcher defeated the incumbent Labour Party government in 1979, it was 18 years before Labour regained power under the leadership of Tony Blair. This defeat for the Conservatives in 1997 consigned them to 13 years in opposition before they removed Labour Prime Minister Gordon Brown in 2010. But while Starmer is on the precipice of becoming the first UK Labour prime minister in 14 years, many on the left remain to be convinced that the party represents a clean break from the Conservatives, who have taken a hardline approach to immigration and thrown their weight behind Israel's war on Gaza.

"I'm really concerned that if Labour gets a massive landslide victory, and does so by tacking so far to the right as they have, they will take that as a blank cheque to continue taking the UK on a rightward trajectory," Laura Moodie, the Scottish Green Party candidate for Dumfries and Galloway, in southwest Scotland, told Al Jazeera. "And I don't think that's the answer." — Aljazeera



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## Will Hunter's conviction affect Biden's fortunes?

**A**ERICAN President Joe Biden's second son, Hunter Biden, was convicted by a Delaware jury on three counts of felony for filling the form when buying a revolver in 2018 that he was not a drug addict when evidence dredged up by Justice Department showed that he had a history of drug addiction. The sentencing is to be done sometime later.

The maximum punishment for making a false statement would be 25 years in prison. It is being said that since he was a first-time offender he may not attract the maximum sentence. Defence lawyers for Hunter Biden had argued that there was political motivation in pursuing the case, blaming pressure from Republican lawmakers. But President Biden had maintained scrupulous silence on the issue, but he said that he and the family stood by Hunter as family. As a matter of fact, First Lady Jill Biden was at the Delaware courthouse when the conviction was pronounced, and she accompanied the stepson to home, refusing to make any statement to the waiting media.

The general question being raised is whether Hunter's conviction by the jury would impact the presidential prospects of Biden in the November election, as the same question is being asked about Trump when a New York jury had convicted him felony recently. Trump and his supporters have been loud in declaring that the conviction in what has come to be known as the "hush money" case, that it was political vendetta on the part of Democrats. The Manhattan attorney Alvin Bragg who brought the case against Trump is a Democrat. It is a coincidence that Delaware judge Maryellen Noriega who presided over the case against Hunter Biden is a Trump-appointed one. The politicisation of the two cases seems inevitable because the Republicans are convinced that the conviction of Trump, the presumptive presidential nominee of the Republican party, was a Democrat conspiracy.

It is a matter of speculation whether Hunter Biden's conviction would in any way affect his father's presidential re-run later this year. There is no charge against President Biden that he was in any way involved in Hunter's misdemeanour. In the case of Trump, who is a presidential contender, he has been found to be directly involved in an act of felony. The two cases then stand qualitatively on different grounds.

There is also doubt whether Trump's political fortune has in any way been affected by the New York jury's guilty verdict. It seems to have strengthened Trump's support base, who believe that the verdict is politically motivated. It is possible that what will decide Trump's presidential bid is not so much the felony charges but whether Americans in general are convinced that he can tackle America's economic woes. Trump's supporters are convinced that Trump is indeed the man of the hour.

The presidential contest has been less about the issues facing America and more about Trump's exaggerated claims. Biden has been saying that if Trump were elected, it would be the end of democracy in America, which is an exaggerated statement in its own way.

But the presidential election has been polarised and personalised beyond the norm, and the personal barbs of the two candidates against each other will be crowding the newspaper and television news headlines in the run-up to the election. By November, the focus would have moved away from the convictions of Trump and Hunter Biden, and will revolve around the issue of illegal immigrants from Mexico, the fluctuating fortunes of the domestic economy. Biden has been strongly advocating support for Ukraine against Russia, something that Trump disagrees vehemently. Similarly, Biden's stance on the ceasefire in Gaza does not have Trump's endorsement.

## Dialogue crucial

**I**T should not be taken as a coincidence that those trying to pour dirty water on the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting in the Russian city of Nizhny Novgorod on Monday and Tuesday are also those that are responsible for the challenges the participants of the meeting tried to resolve. The club of wealthy nations that has steered the world into dangerous waters has no reason to not refrain from trying to undermine BRICS, and the rise of the Global South as a whole.

This is the first foreign ministers' meeting of the expanded BRICS, which now consists of Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Given the wide representativeness of these countries, not to mention their close interaction and cooperation with the West, it is ridiculous that there are people trying to politicize and even smear the BRICS meeting as an anti-West gathering.

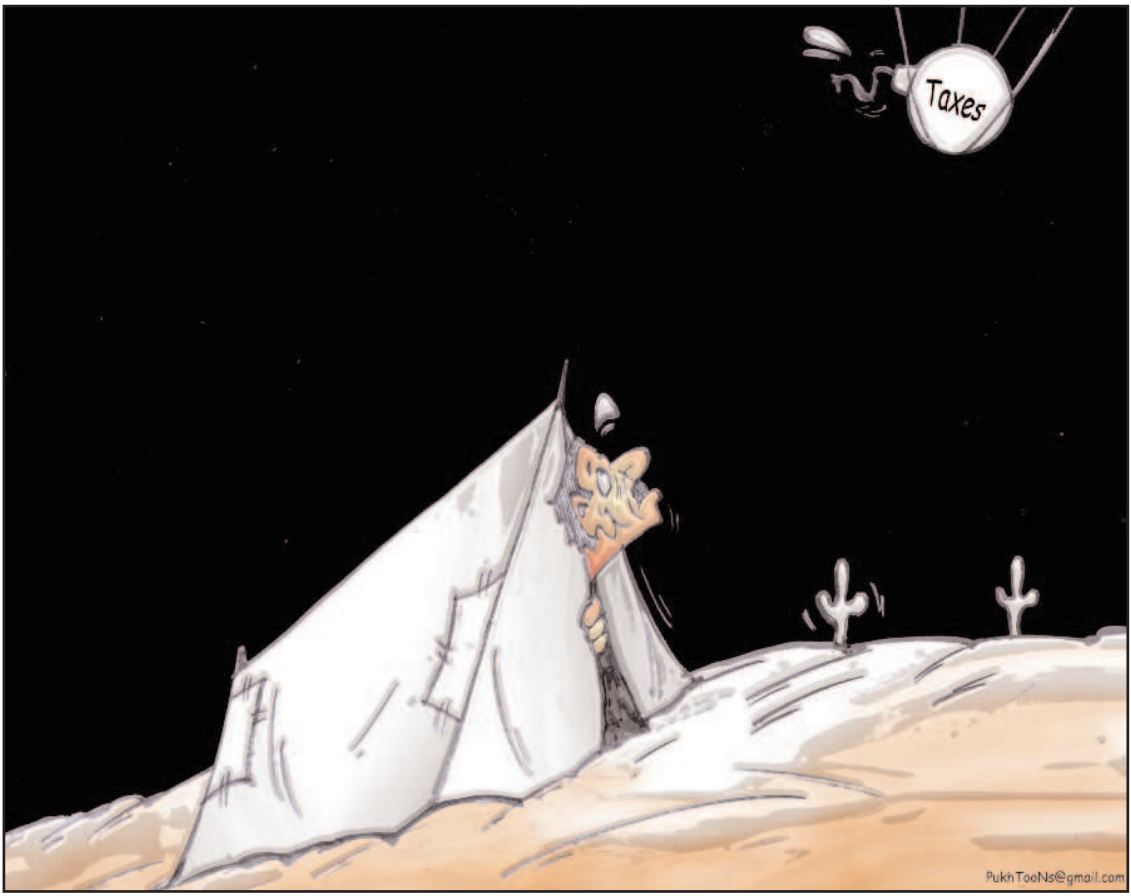
Those daunted by the rise of the Global South should put aside their pride and prejudice, and be realistic about the true picture of today's fast-evolving world. They need to objectively see that BRICS is representative of the increasingly important roles the emerging market economies and developing countries are assuming in world affairs. The BRICS countries are playing an indispensable role in promoting common development among the economies of the Global South and fostering fairer multilateral global governance.

The joint declaration issued after the BRICS meeting on Tuesday is the latest testimony to the members' shared commitment in that regard. BRICS is not a geopolitical tool of any party, nor does it target any third party. It represents a new type of multilateral cooperation mechanism that is open and inclusive. Although there are divergences among the BRICS members on some issues, they all uphold BRICS' original aspiration of openness, inclusiveness, and win-win cooperation, and share a willingness to resolve their differences through dialogue. That BRICS has expanded from its original four members in 2009 to its current size, with more countries seeking accession to it, reflects the historical trend toward a multipolar world and more equitable international order. The BRICS countries' common calls for adherence to multilateralism, reform of the international financial architecture, fairer and more effective global governance, touch upon some of the core issues that need addressing. More importantly, the BRICS countries are trying to transform those calls into concrete actions for the common good of the world. As Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi noted in his speech at the meeting, the profound changes that are underway in the world raise two questions that need to be answered: How can new opportunities be created amidst the changes? And how can new opportunities be fostered amidst the crisis? For China, the answers to both these questions are unity, development and fairer global governance. All countries should make development their priority and pursue more robust, greener and more balanced global development, Wang said. Dialogue, not division, is the solution.

While we live in a time of turbulence and confusion, it is also a time of renewal. But history has many lessons to offer of the disastrous consequences that arise when the wrong choices are made at such times by those who put themselves before the common good. The BRICS countries have always stood together, and the expanded membership of the group shows that it stands as a testament to the solidarity of the Global South.

### Important Notice

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## Kosovo has many reasons to celebrate its Liberation Day

Lulzim Mjeku

**T**HERE is light at the end of the night. Salvation frees people from fear. Twenty-five years ago, my country, Kosovo, shook off the dark clouds.

On June 12, the Republic of Kosovo celebrates the 25th anniversary of its liberation, a historical event that changed the fate of our people and enabled the era of peace and stability in the region to begin.

This year also marks the 16th anniversary of our independence and sovereignty, as celebrated on Feb. 17, Kosovo's Independence Day. Our embassy in Riyadh joyously marked this occasion, which coincided with the 15th anniversary of the forging of diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia.

It is with great honor that today I share glimpses of Kosovo's progress since its liberation and the recent accomplishments in our harmonious nation.

Kosovo is committed to European and global integration. Presently, Kosovo is recognized by 117 states worldwide and holds membership in more than 50 international organizations. Our aspirations further extend to joining esteemed regional bodies such as the Council of Europe, the EU and NATO.

Our nation has distinguished itself through remarkable advancements in both political stability and economic prosperity.

Across various indices, Kosovo demonstrates commendable progress and economic growth trajectories. Notably, the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index attests to Kosovo's third consecutive year of positive advancement in the rule of law. Furthermore, Kosovo's inclusion in Conde Nast Traveler's esteemed list of the top 24 destinations to visit in 2024 underscores the allure of its pristine landscapes, which are perfect for immersive hiking and biking experiences.

In a year of unprecedented challenges, Kosovo has fulfilled its commitment to allocate 2 percent of gross domestic product to defense,

manifesting a 191 percent increase in the defense budget allocation. This commitment is crucial not only for our nation's security but also for fostering stability across Europe. Notably, Kosovo last year hosted the Defender Europe 2023 military exercises, marking a significant collaboration with partner nations and reinforcing our contribution to regional stability.

Our economic environment not only remains stable but also exhibits a promising upward trajectory. Over the past two years, Kosovo's economy has received an infusion of 2.1 billion (\$2.26 billion), sustaining an economic growth of more than 3 percent. Particularly noteworthy is the rapid expansion of the information technology sector, with Kosovo's experts gaining global acclaim for their professional achievements. I am delighted to share that a considerable number of IT applications currently utilized in Saudi Arabia have been developed in Kosovo, reflecting our nation's expertise and innovation in the field. A recent World Bank report lauded Kosovo's robust fiscal stimulus package, the largest in the region at 4.3 percent of GDP, which was aimed at alleviating the financial burdens faced by our citizens amid rising food and energy costs.

Kosovo remains determined in its commitment to sustainable energy solutions, with plans to augment renewable energy production capacities by 1.2 gigawatts by 2030. Notably, the inaugural 100 megawatt solar auction garnered significant interest from leading global firms, exemplifying Kosovo's strides toward a greener future.

The Republic of Kosovo is an ideal investment destination. Our strategic geographical location, talented youth, skilled workforce and robust legal framework come hand in hand with numerous opportunities to be part of transformational projects. Cultural exchange between Kosovo and Saudi

Arabia thrives, as evidenced by Kosovo's hosting of Europe's largest artistic forum. Here, a Saudi painter showcased her work alongside 40 artists from around the globe. Similarly, a Kosovar sculptor participated in the Tuwaiq Sculpture event among 30 artists representing 20 countries. These occurrences highlight the distinct values and assets each nation offers to the world.

Additionally, a significant parallel emerges in the year 2030: Kosovo, a member of the International Olympic Committee, will host the 2030 Mediterranean Games, welcoming 26 nations and nearly 5,000 athletes. Concurrently, Saudi Arabia prepares to host Expo 2030, while its Vision 2030 unfolds, marking a pivotal moment in history.

In Pristina, the capital city of Kosovo, the European Judo Championship found its home, underscoring Kosovo's emerging status as a global juggernaut in the sport. Among its many triumphs, Kosovo's judokas consistently secure medals, solidifying their reputation as a powerhouse in the judo world. Notably, Distria Krasniqi's ascension to the top rank as the world's No. 1 exemplifies Kosovo's exceptional talent and unwavering commitment to excellence. This stands as a shining testament to Kosovo's prowess and unwavering dedication in the realm of judo.

Despite our journey toward progress, Kosovo remains mindful of its painful but proud history. Kosovo actively seeks justice for the victims of war crimes and remembers 1,617 missing people. Last July, Kosovo gained membership in the International Commission on Missing Persons and looks forward to contributing as a fully fledged member of this international organization.

Kosovo and its people are grateful to the Council of Europe and its member states for their strong and continuous support, after its Committee of Ministers

voted in favor of processing the application of Kosovo to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. As the youngest European state, Kosovo will continue showing its determination to promote the Council of Europe's values, while hoping to soon find its well-deserved place in the organization.

Kosovo has achieved a significant milestone with its passport ranking, climbing to 47th position globally. Notable recent agreements — including a visa-free regime with the UAE and other Middle Eastern nations — underscore Kosovo's growing international recognition. According to both the Henley Passport Index and the Global Passport Rank, Kosovo emerged as the most advanced country in 2024 in terms of passport accessibility and global mobility.

As Kosovo advances along its developmental journey, we hold in high regard our ties with Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom recognized the independence of Kosovo on April 20, 2009, before formalizing diplomatic ties on Aug. 7, 2009. These years have not only witnessed the steady growth of our bilateral relations but also the unwavering support of a valued friend.

The Kingdom has consistently stood on the right side of history, exemplified by pivotal moments such as its support for Kosovo's independence at the International Court of Justice and its backing of Kosovo's aspirations for membership in various international organizations. This enduring friendship is a cherished gift, symbolizing mutual respect and solidarity.

Our engagement with Saudi Arabia, along with other Gulf and regional nations, spans diverse sectors, signaling a broadening of horizons. Kosovo aspires to deepen these bonds even further, recognizing the promising foundation upon which our bilateral relations are built. Together with these friendly nations, we are committed to leveraging our partnership for the betterment of the international community, while striving for peace, stability and progress.

## Lebanon's deliberate non-policy on Syrian refugees

Dr. Dania Koleilat Khatib

**A**Syrian man last week attacked the US Embassy in Lebanon. It is said he had Daesh written on his clothing. The man was registered as a refugee in Lebanon. Of course, this led to a rise in hate speech. Escalating hate speech in a country that is witnessing tensions can lead to an explosion. This should be a wake-up call to the Lebanese government that it is time to devise a policy. So far, the Lebanese government's policy has been a policy of non-policy.

Successful governments have deliberately chosen not to craft a policy regarding refugees. Instead, the issue has been used on a tactical level depending on the need. The refugee issue has been a card used domestically, as well as with the international community. Internally, whenever there is public anger toward the political class's corruption and incompetence, this issue is the best distraction. Politicians have also used the refugees to extort funds from the international community and pressure the world to turn a blind eye to the political class's corruption.

The problem is that the issue of refugees is not handled in a systematic and professional manner. The attack on the US Embassy was not the first act of violence perpetrated by a Syrian living in Lebanon. In April, Pascal Suleiman, a member of the Lebanese Forces, was kidnapped and killed. Though the official story was that a gang of car thieves committed the crime, all the evidence points to the involvement of Bashar Assad-affiliated gangs, particularly the 4th Armored Division led by Maher Assad.

Directing anger at Syrians generally, as is the case today, will only lead to more tensions and possibly unrest. The Syrian refugees in Lebanon are looked at as one bulk. There is no differentiation. However, to start solving the issue of refugees, there should be proper compartmentalization.

Firstly, there are the refugees who fled the Assad regime's brutality. There are also refugees from areas bordering Lebanon that are now occupied by Hezbollah. On the other hand, there are Syrians who move freely between Lebanon and Syria. Hence, they are not refugees. A refugee is someone fleeing danger in their home country.

It is known that, as a result of the economic crisis in Syria, Bashar Assad started dumping Syrians across the Lebanese border. These are by no means refugees. However, the regime uses them. Financially, it benefits from the disbursement provided to the refugees. The regime also uses them to create security disturbances in the country — hence the murder of Suleiman.

There are also the workers that the Lebanese economy relies on to a large extent. No solution can be devised unless there is a classification of the different categories. A different solution should be devised for each of the different categories. However, the issue of refugees is politicized to the maximum.

The current Lebanese government, which is dominated by the pro-Assad, pro Hezbollah camp, is using the refugees to pressure the international community into accepting Assad and alleviat-

ing sanctions. The refugees, along with narcotics, are Assad's main point of blackmail of the international community. He will not allow them back unless the international community accepts him and pours money into Syria, which under the current circumstances will be used to fund his corrupt and brutal regime. This would only perpetuate the current conflict in Syria.

The Lebanese government has expressed its disappointment with last month's EU conference on Syria in Brussels that declared that the conditions were not yet right for the safe and voluntary return of refugees. On the other hand, it was offered 1 billion (\$1.08 billion) of aid for the country's economy and security forces. Many Lebanese have described this aid as a "bribe." Now, the government has announced that it has a plan for the refugees' voluntary return. However, this so-called plan remains vague. It has not been published anywhere, meaning that the people, especially Syrian refugees, do not know what kind of policy they are facing.

Following last month's visit by Syria's head of intelligence, Hossam Louka, to Beirut to meet Hassan Nasrallah, there was talk circulating in the Lebanese capital that Hezbollah might pressure the Damascus regime into accepting refugees and not making them subject to arbitrary arrest. However, a speech made by Nasrallah after the visit did not change the tone. He emphasized that the way to handle the refugees is to accept Assad and for the US to lift its Caesar Act sanctions. Nasrallah called on Syrians to take to the sea and head to Europe. Hence, the speculation was probably wrong. This proves that Hezbollah and the current government are still using refugees as a scapegoat internally and as a negotiating card with the international community, while having no intention whatsoever to devise a policy to handle the issue.

If they had a genuine intention to solve the problem, they would start by at least counting the refugees. They would start distinguishing between those who move freely back and forth to Syria and hence face no danger and those who have remained in Lebanon. The General Security Directorate has all the data on movement across the border.

Again, this ambiguity should not be accepted by the international community. The international community should pressure the Lebanese government into making a clear tally of the Syrians in Lebanon in order to be able to judge who are real refugees and who are not. The so-called policy of returning refugees should be directed toward those who will not be subject to arbitrary arrest by the regime.

Also, the Lebanese government should realize that adopting a clear and transparent policy is the only way to secure Lebanon. It should also be aware that the prevailing hate speech will not work. Though it can create a momentary distraction, it will have grave security implications. It could lead to a conflict that the country does not need, especially with the fighting going on with Israel in the south.

## How to navigate financial turbulence

Zhou Xuezi

**S**EVERAL East and Southeast Asian economies have faced significant financial market turbulence, with pronounced currency fluctuations, this year. But unlike the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the situation in East Asia today is markedly different. While the likelihood of systemic financial risks in the region remains low, the situation of certain economies warrants caution while increasing the appeal of Chinese assets.

Since the beginning of 2024, the stock and financial markets in East and Southeast Asian economies have been volatile. In particular, in mid-April, major stock indices in Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam as well as more developed markets like Japan and South Korea, saw significant declines — from 4 percent to 9 percent. Additionally, some East and Southeast Asian economies' currencies have depreciated significantly against the US dollar, aver-

aging a 5 percent drop as of mid-May, with the Japanese yen declining by about 10 percent.

Despite these fluctuations, the situation is different from that during the 1997 Asia financial crisis. First, before the 1997 financial crisis, a substantial influx of hot money into East Asia inflated property and stock prices. And when this capital rapidly exited the East Asian markets, asset prices and currencies plummeted. This time, the depreciation of East Asian economies' currencies has been marked by a high-interest rate period for the US dollar, without the influx of hot money.

Second, many East Asian economies had rigid exchange rate regimes before the 1997 financial crisis, which while superficially eliminating the risk of exchange rate volatility made them vulnerable to collapse when risks accumulated. Today, however, most East Asian economies have more flexible exchange rate systems,

where currency depreciation can both signal and reduce risks.

And third, after the 1997 financial crisis, the East Asian economies began accumulating foreign exchange reserves. These reserves are now relatively sufficient, providing a buffer against risks.

East Asian economies' currencies have depreciated this year due to both external and internal factors. Externally, the frequently changing US Federal Reserve's interest rate policy has played a key role in the depreciation of East Asian economies' currencies. After the fourth quarter of 2023, global commodity prices surged, and although markets initially expected the Fed to cut rates in 2024, rising inflation reduced these expectations. Additionally, the rising yield of the US' 10-year Treasury bonds strengthened the dollar, causing East Asian economies' currencies to

depreciate.

Internally, the insufficient economic resilience of some East Asian economies has been a contributing factor to currency depreciation. For example, although the Bank of Japan abandoned its policy of negative interest rates in March, the move did not exceed market expectations. Combined with rising US Treasury yields, this led to the further depreciation of the yen. The limited tightening by the Bank of Japan reflects Japan's relatively weak domestic economy, which has prevented the country from taking more aggressive measures to improve the situation.

Similarly, Vietnam's economic performance has been underwhelming, with the country's economy weighed down by the real estate sector, which has even begun affecting the banking industry, further dragging down the Vietnamese dong.

Despite these factors, the risks are controllable. As the United States' economic indicators weaken and inflationary pressure subsides, US Treasury yields are likely to decline, potentially easing the depreciation pressure on East Asian economies' currencies.

The Chinese yuan, too, has depreciated against the US dollar this year, but by only 1.53 percent till mid-May. This is much less than those of other East Asian economies' currencies, which highlights the yuan's relative stability. Unlike the stock markets in many East Asian economies, which have mirrored US market volatility, the Chinese stock market has performed relatively well, especially after bottoming out in February, with its gains exceeding 10 percent. And the growing investment value of Chinese assets is likely to support a stable yuan.

The trajectory of China's stock market and currency might progress independ-

ently, with little influence of the US market and dollar movements. As real estate and local debt risks gradually subside, the robust fundamentals of China's economy will help mitigate the external shocks, too.

Nevertheless, in an increasingly interconnected global economy, fluctuations in East Asian and global financial markets will impact China's financial market. So government departments need to maintain market stability by preventing the changes in the policies of the Fed and the European Central Bank from impacting the Chinese economy.

Besides, investors should carefully monitor the economic trends in the US and the European Union, especially the policy shifts of the Fed and the European Central Bank. Additionally, understanding the economic dynamics and potential risks in the East Asian economies is crucial for making informed investment decisions.



# Integrated megapolises next stage of reform

**AFTER record rapid urbanization, China is moving to the next stage with the development of integrated and coordinated multi-city clusters. The Yangtze River Delta region is a case in point.**

To identify the best ways to advance the integrated development of the Yangtze River Delta region, President Xi Jinping chaired a symposium in Shanghai in November 2023. Half a decade before that, the president had championed an initiative that made the integrated development of the delta region a national strategy.

From the standpoint of development, I believe China has entered the next stage of reform and opening-up, essential to propel Chinese modernization.

The Yangtze River is China's longest waterway. Running more than 6,300 kilometers, it encompasses a set of economic powerhouses and megacities, including the provinces of Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui, and the megapolis of Shanghai.

Between 2018 and 2022, the Yangtze River Delta region's GDP grew at an average annual rate of about 5.5 percent, accounting for 24 percent of the national total — the region's GDP exceeds that of Japan's.

Recently, Tesla inaugurated its new megapack battery factory in Shanghai, which highlighted the US carmaker's increasing investment in China amid intense competition. Among other industrial ecosystems, the Yangtze River Delta (YRD) region is a major automobile production base, and a hub of new energy vehicles (NEVs), including a variety of electric vehicles. With chip and software sourced from Shanghai, batteries from Jiangsu, die-casting machines from Zhejiang, an NEV factory in the YRD region can reportedly acquire all the auto parts within a four-hour drive.

From microchips to large aircraft, and cloud computing to artificial intelligence, coordination among these locations fosters industrial transformation and upgrading in the region. Because of its status as one of the most economically vibrant regions in China, the YRD city cluster has attracted major State-owned and private enterprises, and a large number of Fortune 500 companies for setting up headquarters in China.

As an increasingly diversified industrial, financial, retail and corporate hub, Shanghai can drive regional clusters while benefiting from their complementary strengths. But Shanghai is not alone. It is developing in tandem with China's other major regional growth engines.

Consider these important facts of development. In 1950, only 13 percent of the Chinese people lived in cities. By 1980, just after China launched reform and opening-up, the figure had increased to 19 percent. Since then, it has soared to a stunning 66 percent, with the initial urbanization drive taking off in the special economic zones of the largely coastal first- and second-tier cities. Now, urbanization is intensifying even in third- and fourth-tier cities.

Moreover, the development momentum is shifting from urban-

ization toward the integration of major regional city clusters.

China has several major "megapolises". In addition to the Yangtze River Delta region, the megapolises and economic hubs include the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, the Jing-Jin-Ji (Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei city cluster), and the Chengdu-Chongqing dual-city hub.

Furthermore, some emerging multi-city clusters have the potential to develop into new regional

innovation, which is coupled with Boston and its Ivy League research-oriented universities, such as Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Austin's energy cluster, Raleigh's Research Triangle and Seattle's Microsoft engine.

These dynamic US regions compete with Western Europe's innovation-driven cities such as London, Berlin, Paris and the Nordic hubs.

However, what makes Chinese cities unique is their ability to

compete, whereas cities and countries cooperate, whereas cities and countries cooperate. By contrast, governments that prioritize win-lose geopolitics can't benefit from win-win cooperation.

Some portray the rise of regional multi-city clusters as threats, rather than opportunities. They have tried to contain China's rise by targeting successful Chinese companies, such as Huawei, the information and communications technology giant, and Byte-Dance, the parent of TikTok.

That has little to do with the "competition" they claim to tout.

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Internationally, China's emerging megapolises also face competitive threats and cooperative opportunities from the regional engines of the advanced economies.

As the world's leading global financial center, the New York Metropolitan Area hosts the headquarters of more than one-third of Fortune 500 companies in the United States. The San Francisco Bay Area is the heart of global

combine world-class innovation at affordable prices in a way that the rich economies can't. Over time, some major multi-city clusters in India, Brazil, Mexico and Indonesia have the potential to follow in the footprints.

But whenever new challengers emerge, they face entrenched incumbents, some of which seek to retain their monopoly. From New York City to Los Angeles, farsighted Western metropolises and their mayors understand that businesses

Instead, such efforts are reminiscent of colonial protectionism and imperial preferences that once legitimized monopolies in the name of Western supremacy.

Today, terms differ, but goals don't. It is a geopolitical ploy to avoid real competition with the Global South. Today, it targets China. Tomorrow, it will target India, Brazil, Mexico and Indonesia. Mega protectionism should have no role in the 21st century.

# Sensitive handling of complaints can end bullying on school campus

Kang Bing

**CENTRAL government departments have taken some strict measures to better protect minors after some recent media reports highlighted a number of bullying cases in schools. While we fully support these measures, we know a lot more needs to be done to make our children safe and worry free on school campuses.**

Late last month, the Supreme People's Court released a number of cases involving minors, including a provincial court ruling on a knife attack by a frequently bullied student as "justifiable self-defense". A Hunan court ruled that the student was not criminally liable for injuring three of his classmates who used to bully him. On the other hand, the court punished those students who used to bully the boy.

The Supreme People's Court issued a guideline mandating courts at lower levels to declare bullying an offense in other child-related cases and promptly advise schools and training institutes to intervene in such cases, so as to end bullying on campus.

Besides, the Ministry of Education has issued a notice, requiring educational institutions to more effectively deal with campus violence, including bullying. The notice requires all schools to set up special commissions to identify campus bullying and punish those who bully others, as well as open hotlines and install complaint boxes to make it easy for students to report bullying cases.

The notice also requires all schools to install close circuit TV cameras in all corridors and platforms in order to better monitor students' behaviors, and hold class discussions and lectures to dissuade students from bullying their schoolmates.

These measures were taken after some serious campus bullying cases came to light last month. According to a media report, on May 15, outside the gate of a school in Baoji, Shaanxi province, a desperate father was heard shouting: "Where can I find justice when the school is doing nothing to prevent my son from being bullied on the campus?"

After learning that the school didn't take any action to protect his son from bullying, the father, who worked in a place

more than 1,000 kilometers away, drove all the way back to the school to protest. The case drew wide public attention, prompting the local education bureau to step in and order a thorough investigation.

Moreover, on May 21, it was reported that a group of boys poured hot water on a student in a boarding school in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region after he refused to help them wash their dirty clothes. The victim suffered severe burns.

While the Supreme People's Court and the Ministry of Education were busy working out counter-bullying measures, a court in Henan province passed a ruling in a case about a school girl

reported against.

People's intolerance toward campus bullying today shows enhanced public awareness about human rights protection, especially about the protection of minors' rights. Bullying demands serious attention of the school authorities because it harms not only the physical health but also the mental health of minors.

While welcoming the government's strict measures to prevent bullying in schools, we, as members of society, have the responsibility of doing our bit to end bullying and make those who bully others as objects of condemnation. Parents should tell their children to stand up to bullies or complain against them to their

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being stripped naked and beaten by some of her schoolmates — all minors — on May 30.

As school-going children, we rarely, if ever, complained about being bullied to our teachers or parents either because we took it as part of our school life or we felt ashamed to say that we could not stand up to a bully, or because we were afraid that the bully would exact revenge for being

teachers. And teachers, on their part, should take the complaints against bullying seriously and punish the bullies.

Only when parents teach their children to not hesitate to complain against bullying to their teachers, and the teachers take strict action against the bullies can campus bullying end. The children should be taught that it is not a shame to protect oneself.

# Europe must wake up to the far-right threat

Mohamed Chebaro

If you want to gauge how bad the results of last week's European Parliament elections were for the future of the EU, its centrality, stability and cohesiveness, look no further than Moscow. Russian politicians gloated over the heavy defeats for the mainstream parties in France and Germany and praised the results achieved by right-wing and ultra-right parties across the bloc.

Russia has never harbored any love for the EU project. But what is sure is that Europe's nationalist, populist and ultra-right parties have capitalized on voters' disquiet over spiraling prices, immigration, the war in Ukraine and the cost of the green transition to raise their representation to approaching a quarter of the assembly's seats.

Most worrying of all is that these parties, who once were the go-to address for marginal, disgruntled, middle-aged white individuals only, have been doing particularly well among younger voters, especially young men. According to a survey conducted before the elections, some 26 percent of 18 to 24-year-olds in France backed Marine Le Pen's National Rally.

European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen's complacent statement that "the center is holding" should spell more fear than reassurance. What these elections have demonstrated is the scale of the failure both nationally and within the bloc's institutions to tame the hard right, as well as to contain

the change in attitudes across the union, as people no longer see voting for populist right-wing parties a mere protest or lost vote.

Today, these parties claim to speak the language of the common citizen, understanding their fears and grievances and some-

predicted in a newspaper article in April that the rightward drift in EU policies was likely to become a tidal wave after these elections. Brown expressed his fear that the bloc of 27 will have to contend with ultranationalists,

Hungary, Italy and Slovakia. Right-wing parties are governing or supporting the government in Finland and Sweden and are about to form a government in the Netherlands under the anti-immigrant,

more aggressive nationalist and protectionist agenda is likely to add more tension to an already volatile world.

In the EU, many believe that many years of low economic growth, which have

**European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen's complacent statement that "the center is holding" should spell more fear than reassurance. What these elections have demonstrated is the scale of the failure both nationally and within the bloc's institutions to tame the hard right, as well as to contain the change in attitudes across the union, as people no longer see voting for populist right-wing parties a mere protest or lost vote. Today, these parties claim to speak the language of the common citizen, understanding their fears and grievances and sometimes even stoking them. They have always focused on two issues: one is the sense of failure of the state, its traditional leadership and its diminishing welfare; and the second is the feeling that their countries are being taken over by immigrants and foreigners. Former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown predicted in a newspaper article in April that the rightward drift in EU policies was likely to become a tidal wave after these elections. Brown expressed his fear that the bloc of 27 will have to contend with ultranationalists, demagogues and populist-nationalists, who will force the hand of the political system into more extreme anti-immigration, anti-trade and anti-environment policies. And the problem is that these populists and demagogues are already leading, with nationalist prime ministers in countries like Hungary, Italy and Slovakia. Right-wing parties are governing or supporting the government in Finland and Sweden and are about to form a government in the Netherlands under the anti-immigrant, anti-Islam Freedom Party of Geert Wilders. Others in France, Germany and Spain are sitting in second place and hoping to get a shot at the top job as their numbers in the polls improve.**

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Former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown

demagogues and populist-nationalists, who will force the hand of the political system into more extreme anti-immigration, anti-trade and anti-environment policies.

And the problem is that these populists and demagogues are already leading, with nationalist prime ministers in countries like

anti-Islam Freedom Party of Geert Wilders. Others in France, Germany and Spain are sitting in second place and hoping to get a shot at the top job as their numbers in the polls improve.

This right-wing shift is not just a European problem, it seems, but a global one. With a Trump 2.0 presidency on the horizon, a

spurred austerity policies, are one of the key causes of the general feeling of discontent that has seeped into many societies.

The result is a downward loop of frustration, exaggerated by a less than innocent digital realm, leading to pessimism. Later, a blame game is set in motion against the segments of

ing" yet simplistic and empty slogans of the populist extreme-right.

Anyone visiting the major cities of Europe can't help but notice the increased number of foreigners on their streets. But the majority of migrants are often a crucial part of the labor force in countries with dwindling popula-

tion, which have to resort to foreign workers to keep their economy afloat. During the years of economic boom and prosperity, those immigrants and foreign workers were celebrated as contributors to the growth of the economy and society. In times of economic decline, they often become the catalyst that rallies support for extremist and populist parties, which call them "invaders" and say that "they don't look or speak like us" and have a poor grasp of their host country's culture and values.

None of the euroskeptical parties are likely to advo-

National governments and EU institutions should double down on their efforts to win the argument by providing more answers to the uncertainty and fears felt by a large number of Europeans. They should deliver housing for the young, as well as the jobs and life chances many claim they have been denied and the security and





## PSX turns around to bullish trend and gains 207 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bullish trend, gaining 207.94 points, a positive change of 0.29%, closing at 72,797.43 points against 72,589.49 points the previous day.

A total of 293,083,473 shares valuing Rs10.541 billion were traded during the day as compared to 372,538,669 shares valuing Rs11.650 billion the previous day.

As many as 435 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 232 of them recorded gains and 130 sustained losses, whereas the share price of

73 companies remained unchanged.

The top three trading companies were K-Electric Limited with 28,444,305 shares at Rs 4.64 per share, PIA Holding Company with 27,442,146 shares at Rs 12.81 per share and WorldCall Telecom with 20,518,249 shares at Rs 1.29 per share.

Pakistan Engineering Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 49.85 per share price, closing at Rs 689.95 whereas the runner-up was Sapphire Textile Mills Limited with a Rs 24.00 rise in its per share price to Rs 1,324.00.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 75.00 per share closing at Rs 18,050.00, followed by PIA Holding Company Limited with a Rs 34.43 decline to close at Rs 511.81.

**Rupee shed 11 paise against dollar:** Pakistani Rupee on Wednesday witnessed a devaluation of 11 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.60 against the previous day's closing at Rs 278.49.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market, however,

were Rs 277.7 and Rs 280.5 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by 35 paise to close at Rs 299.39 against the last day's closing of Rs 299.74, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese Yen went up by 01 paise and closed at Rs 1.77, whereas an increase of 92 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs 355.28 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 354.36.

The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 03 paise and 01 paise to close at Rs 75.85 and Rs 74.27.



ISLAMABAD: Vice CEO Huawei Pakistan Ray Yu meeting with Federal Minister for Science and Technology Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui.

### Gold rates increase slightly

ISLAMABAD (INP): The gold rates in Pakistan witnessed a slight increase of Rs600, taking the cost of 24-karat gold to Rs241,900 per tola on Wednesday.

Dealers reported a similar declining trend in the price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold, which was available for Rs207,390 after witnessing a rise of Rs514 in its price. Furthermore, the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold also displayed a similar increase and was available at Rs190,108.

These movements are closely linked to changes in the value of the US Dollar, indicating the close relationship between currency values and gold prices. This underscores the impact of global economic factors on local gold markets.

The price of 24-karat silver remained stable at Rs2,750. Internationally also, the gold price witnessed a sharp rise of \$6 and was available at \$2,313 per ounce.

It's very important to recognize that gold rates in Pakistan can vary significantly throughout the day, influenced by trends in the global market. The provided gold rates are sourced from reputable sources, primarily based in Karachi and Multan.

For the most up-to-date and accurate information on gold prices, individuals are advised to consult local gold merchants and jewellers.

### Tokyo shares end down

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks closed lower on Wednesday as investors awaited the release of US inflation data.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index lost 0.66 percent, or 258.08 points, to 38,876.71, while the broader Topix index slipped 0.73 percent, or 20.36 points, to 2,756.44. Investors kept their hands out of the market ahead of the release of US consumer price data and the end of the Federal Reserve's policy meeting, both to come later on Wednesday.

The Fed is expected to stick with its current programme but economy watchers are focused on the bank's policy outlook.

Market players may also decide to refrain from making bets before the Bank of Japan concludes its own policy meeting on Friday, analysts said.

"The market is in a wait-and-see mood to gauge the outlook for Japanese and US monetary policy as they await US CPI, FOMC and the Bank of Japan meeting," Daiwa Securities said. The dollar stood at 157.23 yen, little changed from 157.11 yen seen in New York overnight.

Among major shares, Toyota lost 1.38 percent to 3,209 yen. Sony Group fell 1.76 percent to 13,105 yen.

Tokyo Electron lost 0.17 percent to 35,500 yen and Panasonic fell 0.83 percent to 1,318 yen. Heavily weighted Fast Retailing, which runs the Uniqlo brand, lost 2.45 percent to 40,680 yen. However, overnight gains of Apple shares lifted iPhone suppliers. Chipmaker Murata Manufacturing jumped 2.63 percent to 3,117 yen. Parts maker TDK soared 4.35 percent to 8,730 yen.

Tech investor SoftBank Group added 0.35 percent to 9,703 yen.

## PCJCCI keen to conduct food analog

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan-China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI) President Moazzam Ghurki

on Wednesday, during a think tank session, held at PCJCCI Secretariat, said the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) had achieved tangible and fruitful progress, becoming the world's broadest-based and largest platform for international cooperation. It had been joined by 149 countries and 32 international organisations, showing strong vitality, the president added.

The president PCJCCI said China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) had undeniably brought numerous benefits to Pakistan's economy and the project had resulted in the construction of highways, ports and energy infrastructure, leading to improved transportation and energy efficiency. Furthermore, the CPEC had strengthened bilateral ties between China-Pak, fostering a strategic cooperative partnership, he added.

PCJCCI Senior Vice President Fang Yulong said that it was observed that Chinese community live in isolation which had devastating impact on investment promotion activities and in return positive signals were not being transmitted by existing investors. Taking stock of above, PCJCCI, being the China specific chamber, had chalked-out a programme of conducting food and cultural analog to part distance between the two communities, he added and said that the concept was to bring both communities closer by arranging interaction in their respected fields through conduct-

ing food gala which would not only present special Pakistani and Chinese cuisine, but also highlight the commonalities of both cultures.

PCJCCI Vice President Hamza Khalid said that the main agenda of the event was to boost the cultural exchange between both countries. Pak-China Food & Cultural Analogue would highlight the similarities and uniqueness of Chinese and Pakistani food, culture and music, he added.

PCJCCI Secretary General Salahuddin Hanif shared that the hallmark of the food and cultural programme was to disseminate message of uniformity between public and private sectors with respect to enhanced Chinese stake in this region in the shape of foreign direct investment /joint ventures.

### Shah Alam Market:

## PIAF nominates leader to contest LCCI elections

### E.P. Report

LAHORE: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has announced to nominate Shah Alam Market leader Rana Nisar as its new candidate for Lahore Chamber election 2024 from the Shah Alam Market Board during their visit to the PIAF Office.

A trade delegation under the leadership of Khawaja Amir, President Central Shah Alam Market Board and Secretary General Rana Nisar, Shah Alam Market Board officials and members along with the Presidents General Secretaries of the main markets of Lahore arrived at the main office of PIAF.

Patron PIAF Mian Anjum Nisar, Chairman PIAF Fahimur Rahman Saighol, Former Chairman PIAF Muhammad Ali Mian, Mian Abuzar Shad, Senior Vice Chairman PIAF Nasrullah Mughal, Vice Chairman PIAF Tahir Manzoor Chaudhary, Senior Vice President Lahore Chamber Zafar Mehmood, other leaders of PIAF received them.

Patron Chief PIAF Mian Anjum Nisar and Chairman PIAF Fahimur Rahman Saighol, addressing the delegation, said that PIAF has an excellent record of 22 years of service to the business community because PIAF brings qualified and working people to Lahore

to advocate for the business community.

Fahimur Rahman Saighol said that Rana Nisar from Shah Alam Market Board will prove to be a strong candidate due to his extensive experience in dealing with market problems and serving traders.

Mian Anjum Nisar provisionally nominated Rana Nisar as a hopeful from the PIAF in the Associate Class which the House applauded and supported. He advocated for the policy rate to be reduced to a single-digit figure to alleviate the financial burden on the business community and stimulate economic activity.

Anjum Nisar highlighted that the tight monetary policy, combined with the government's significant domestic borrowing, has left minimal room for business growth.

He stressed the urgent need for the government to freeze both domestic and foreign borrowing and to devise a comprehensive strategy to showcase Pakistan's economic potential to international investors.

He proposed a 300-500 basis points reduction in the policy rate, potentially bringing it down to 15 percent, a level last seen several years ago. This anticipated cut is supported by several favorable economic indicators, including a significant decline in inflation rates.

Anjum Nisar also pointed out a decline in yields

for government securities in both primary and secondary markets since the last monetary policy announcement in April 2024. In the primary market, yields across various tenors have decreased, with reductions of 0.6 percent in 3-month yields, 0.38 percent in 6-month yields, and 0.80 percent in 12-month yields. Similar trends have been observed in the secondary market.

On this occasion, he condemned the central bank, stating the policy rate should be further reduced. In the budget, relief should be given to exports so that exports can be increased. In the last one month, only 3.5 billion dollars of remittances have come, which can be increased further.

Issues of importers related to banking sector are still unresolved and State Bank should streamline the banking system, he added.

On this occasion, Shah Alam Market, Qatar Band Road, Multan, Anarkali, Liberty, Hafeez center and other important markets presidents and secretaries general, market leaders, businessmen were also present. Former Chairman PIAF Muhammad Ali Mian from the meeting, Mian Abuzar Shad, Zafar Mehmood, Khawaja Amir, Prince Babar, Malik Muhammad Khalid and others also addressed the Shah Alam Market Board delegation.

## Hashoo Group and Park View Enclave join hands

— to enhance premium urban residential experiences

### E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Two of Pakistan's leading groups, Hashoo Group and Park View Enclave, have joined forces to elevate Islamabad's urban landscape with state-of-the-art residential properties, complete with luxurious amenities, designed to enhance the quality of life in the city.

This strategic collaboration will oversee the development of several key projects in Islamabad, aimed at providing unmatched comfort and convenience to residents. These projects include the development of serviced apartments, the opening of Pearl-Continental Signature Restaurants, and the creation of signature villas, all intended to offer premium

living standards.

The partnership was officially launched earlier this evening in the picturesque setting of Park View City, with senior delegates from both organizations in attendance. Sharing his vision for this new venture, Shakir Bhura, Chief Executive Officer of Hashoo Group Real Estate Division, remarked, "We are excited to embark on this new journey with Park View Enclave to enhance luxury living in Islamabad through our combined expertise in real estate development. I am grateful to our partners at Park View Enclave and look forward to achieving our shared goals in the coming years."

Abdul Aleem Khan, Chairman of Park View Enclave, also expressed his

enthusiasm for the partnership, stating, "By combining our strengths and vision, we will implement impactful projects that positively influence Pakistan's real estate landscape through premium living facilities."

Park View Enclave has been the epitome of premium lifestyle services for over 20 years, providing timeless quality through houses, commercial buildings, and much more.

Hashoo Group Real Estate Division offers a comprehensive range of services, including hospitality, residential, corporate, and commercial assets, as well as development services, to facilitate luxurious and welcoming experiences nationwide.

With a proven track

record of excellence, Hashoo Group Real Estate Division has delivered notable projects such as Pearl City Multan, with exciting upcoming projects currently under development including Pearl-Continental Hotel Multan and Pearl-Continental Hotel, Mirpur.

Hashoo Group is Pakistan's premium conglomerate with a diversified business portfolio spanning both national and international markets. The Group owns and operates the Pearl-Continental Hotels & Resorts and PC Legacy & Hotel One brands in Pakistan and has business interests encompassing the information technology, investment, travel & tourism, and real-estate sectors.

## ‘Broad tax base required to alleviate public suffering’

### E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said on Wednesday that it is difficult to provide any relief to the masses and business community as taxes worth 4000 billion rupees are not being collected.

He said the new budget is expected to set a revenue target of 12900 billion rupees, 3500 billion rupees more than the current target. The sales tax rate is also likely to increase.

He said that if the difference between filers and non-filers is not removed in the new budget, the economy will not be fully digitized, and the tax base will not increase by five percent; then, the budget measures will affect the

public, the salaried class, and the tax-paying business community. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that the current tax system relies on indirect taxes and targets the commoner while rewarding tax evaders.

In the presence of skewed taxation, the country's development is impossible, he added.

The business leader said that a series of measures have been initiated to manage the country's economy, and good results have come out. Inflation has come down; agricultural production has increased substantially, imports have decreased, and exports have increased slightly, bringing Pakistan's current account out of deficit.

Despite the efforts, some

sections are not ready to pay any tax, so the policy of transferring the entire burden to the taxpayers has been adopted, which has broken the backs of the people. On the other hand, non-tax-paying and tax-dodging sectors, including property, agricultural income, professionals, wholesalers, and retailers, are flourishing.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that the poor and middle class are continuously targeted. At the same time, those belonging to influential sectors benefit from all possible reliefs and tax concessions. They will try to continue this trend even after the budget.

The government's priorities will remain the same in the next financial year as before the budget. If the landed elite, real estate ty-

coons, wholesalers, retailers, and professionals continue to pay negligible taxes and carry on cash transactions, the tax burden will fall on the existing taxpayers and the public, reducing tax payments and investment.

He demanded that the government refrain from targeting the industrial sector to boost revenue.

Mian Zahid Hussain further said that realizing the commoner's plight, the government must bring the undocumented economy into the tax net to broaden the tax base and distribute the tax burden fairly.

It will help stop the continuous punishment of the common people and taxpayers. A fair and comprehensive tax system makes sustainable economic growth and prosperity possible.

## UAE-based British Pakistani launches Trade Gate

ISLAMABAD (APP): UAE-based British Pakistani Shakeel Ahmad Meer of the Meer Group launched the first Trade Gate branch in Dubai, aiming to innovate trading and joint ventures by integrating various business sectors.

It offers scholarships, practical training, and diverse trading opportunities across sectors like EV, automotive, e-commerce, real estate, and luxury cars, said a press release issued here.

Meer's vision is to democratise financial edu-

cation and global investment opportunities, fostering a vibrant community through seminars and networking. The initiative plans global expansion, aiming to lead in trading education and business investment globally, starting with Dubai as a transformative milestone.

Trade Gate goes beyond a conventional training center, becoming a dynamic hub that empowers individuals with the knowledge and tools for success in trading and joint ventures.

Its holistic approach to wealth creation and management offers participants a broad platform to explore and invest in various sectors. Trade Gate offers diverse trading opportunities, allowing participants to explore sectors such as electric vehicles, automotive, e-commerce, real estate, and luxury car advisory services. With expert guidance and investment prospects, Trade Gate helps individuals capitalize on cutting-edge trends and market dynamics, paving the way for trading success.

Shakeel Ahmad Meer's vision for Trade Gate is driven by his global market experience and deep business understanding. At the Dubai opening, Meer expressed excitement: "Trade Gate is a groundbreaking platform merging education, innovation, and diverse business opportuni-

ties. Launching in Dubai, a city of growth and opportunity, marks a significant step in our mission for financial empowerment.

Trade Gate aims to democratize access to top-tier financial education and diverse investment opportunities. It blends theoretical knowledge with practical experience, equipping participants to navigate market complexities. Flexible learning options, like online courses and weekend workshops, accommodate diverse participant schedules.

Trade Gate goes beyond education and investment, cultivating a vibrant community where individuals connect, collaborate, and share insights. Regular seminars, webinars, and networking sessions allow participants to engage with industry leaders and stay updated on market trends.

The Dubai launch of Trade Gate marks just the beginning. Shakeel Ahmed Meer plans to expand Trade Gate globally, establishing hubs in major financial centers to provide consistent, high-quality education and investment opportunities.

Trade Gate aims to lead globally in trading training and diversified business investment. We empower individuals to achieve financial independence and success through informed decision-making and strategic investments," he explained.

### SBP announces holidays

### E.P. Report

KARACHI: State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) will remain closed from 17th to 19th June, 2024 (Monday to Wednesday) being public holidays on the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha.

### Court Notice

In the Court of District Judge/Zilla Qazi Buner at Daggar. Civil Appeal No. 01/13. Institution 12/01/2024. Date of hearing 26/6/2024. Behram Khan etc. Vs. Bakht Zamin Khan etc. Notice to No (3) Farman, (4) Shah Zaman sons of Bakshi (late), (7) Ejaz s/o Abdul Zamen (late) resident of Krapa Tehsil Daggar District Buner at present in Malaysia. Whereas, in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8:00 a.m. dated 26/6/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

### Court Notice

In the Court of Saima Ehsan Civil Judge-II/Allaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Case No. 101/1. Institution 15/5/2024. Date of hearing 14/6/2024. Bakht Sultan Vs. Bakht Akbar. Notice to No. (7) Noor Hakim s/o Merjawal resident of Akakhel Amnawar Tehsil Gagra District Buner. Whereas, in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendant cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendant will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8:00 a.m. dated 14/6/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.





## In brief

## Commissioner visits basketball courts

KARACHI (APP): Municipal Commissioner of Saddar Town, Noor Hassan Jokhio has said that there is a need to take strong measures for the development and promotion of such sports which have been neglected in the past. By participating in international competitions, the players can get a place on the victory podiums, he said. He expressed these views on the occasion of the inspection of the basketball courts at Wajid Shamsul Hasan Family Park in Clifton and the Abdul Nasir Basketball Court at Aram Bagh Park.

Municipal Commissioner Noor Hassan Jokhio further said that the importance of youth in a healthy society cannot be denied. "Our effort is not only to increase the playing fields but also to provide more facilities in the existing grounds so that more and more players can have opportunities to unearth their talent and enhance their skills", he added. The administration of Saddar Town has started several projects for the construction and development of parks and sports grounds by using the available resources, the completion of which will increase the facilities available to the people for sightseeing and entertainment, and also eliminate the problem of encroachment, he maintained.

Noor Hassan Jokhio emphasised that after the 100 per cent completion of the renovation, the youth of the area will have the best facilities for playing basketball near their homes and they can learn the basic and modern techniques of this game under the supervision of their senior coaches. S.E Rafeeq Sheikh, Director Parks Asim Ali Khan and Director Sports, Asif Azeem were also present on the occasion.

## Heli Safari Service to facilitate tourists

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshwa to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism and Culture Zahid Chanzeb Wednesday said that decision to start helicopter safari service for Shandur Polo festival would help facilitate the local and foreign tourists. In this connection, he said, Director General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority Barkatullah Marwat signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), with Petronet Aviation.

Various tourism and heli safari service packages have been introduced for tourists desiring to participate in Shandur Polo Festival, Adviser Zahid Chanzeb said. He disclosed that the first package includes Chitral Airport, Kalash Valley, Lowari Tunnel visits, followed by the second Package including Chitral Airport, Trichmer Peak and in the third Package, the tourists would visit Chitral Airport, Trich Mir, Qaqash Meadows. In the fourth Package, he said, tourists would have tour from Chitral Airport to Shandur Polo Festival.

## Jerry West dead at 86

LOS ANGELES (AFP/APP): Jerry West, an iconic 1960s star guard for the Los Angeles Lakers who inspired the NBA logo, died Wednesday at age 86, the Los Angeles Clippers announced. West played for the Lakers from 1960 through 1974, winning his only NBA title in 1972, and was co-captain on the 1960 Rome Olympic US basketball gold medal squad. In later years, West served as an executive on several NBA clubs, most recently the Clippers.

## Suryakumar leads India to Super 8s in win over USA

NEW YORK (AFP): Suryakumar Yadav hit an unbeaten half-century and left-arm seamer Arshdeep Singh claimed a career-best 4-9 as India defeated the United States by seven wickets to reach the T20 World Cup second round on Wednesday.

Chasing 111 to win the Group A clash, India were rattled at 15-2 and then 44-3 before Yadav (50) and Shivam Dube (31) put on an undefeated fourth-wicket stand of 67 to secure a third win in three games for Rohit Sharma's team with 10 balls to spare.

"We knew this was going to be a tough task. We lost some wickets up front but we showed some maturity to take the game to the end," said Rohit.

Despite the defeat, the United States are still well-placed to join India in the Super Eights as they have four points while Pakistan and Canada are on two with a game each to play.

India were stunned by Mumbai-born fast bowler Saurabh Netravalkar who played for India at the Under-19 World Cup in 2010. He had superstar batsman Virat Kohli caught behind for nought off the

first ball he faced.

Rohit was then caught by Harmeet Singh at mid-off, again off the bowling of the 32-year-old Netravalkar in the third over. Rishabh Pant's 18-run cameo was ended when his stumps were uprooted by Ali Khan in the eighth over.

However, Yadav went to his 18th international T20 half-century from 49 balls with two fours and a pair of sixes. Left-hander Dube's 31 came off 35 deliveries and featured a boundary and a six on the same tricky and slow Nassau County International Cricket Stadium pitch where India had made just 119 in a six-run win over Pakistan at the weekend. "I would say we were 10-15 runs short on that pitch. We knew that 125-130 would have been a tough total to chase but it goes that way sometimes," said USA skipper Aaron Jones.

Earlier, Arshdeep removed recalled opener Shayan Jahangir lbw off the first ball and had Andries Gous (two) caught in the deep five balls later as the USA found themselves 3-2 after the opening over.

Big-hitting Jones, who clubbed an undefeated 94 in the hosts' opening win

over Canada in Dallas, made just 11 before he fell to Hardik Pandya.

That left the US on 25-3 before opener Steven Taylor (24) and top-scorer Nitish Kumar (27) put on 31 for the fourth wicket. Nitish became Arshdeep's third victim, smartly caught on the boundary by Mohammed Siraj.

Former New Zealand star Corey Anderson (15) was the sixth man out with the score on 96 thanks to a running catch by wicket-keeper Pant off Pandya who completed a wicket-aiden. With the Americans looking to push the total into three figures, Arshdeep had Harmeet Singh caught behind for 10.

Shadley van Schalkwyk (11) and Jasdeep Singh (two) ensured the United States posted what they hoped would have been a defendable total. Both teams went into the game with a perfect four points from two wins with the USA having stunned Pakistan in a famous Super Over triumph last time out.

India join Australia and South Africa as the three teams to have so far booked their places in the next stage.



NEW YORK: Rohit Sharma walks back after becoming Saurabh Netravalkar's second victim.

## Naqvi fumes over slow upgradation work at Gaddafi stadium

LAHORE (APP): Chairman Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Mohsin Naqvi has expressed displeasure over slow upgradation and renovation work at the Gaddafi stadium, Lahore.

The PCB has undertaken upgradation and renovation of the Gaddafi stadium, Lahore besides National Bank stadium Karachi and Rawalpindi cricket stadium to prepare for the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 to

be held in Pakistan.

The Chairman PCB visited the Gaddafi Stadium on Tuesday night to oversee the progress of the upgradation work and was unhappy to see that no work was being undertaken

at night by the contractors despite the fact that Mohsin Naqvi had ordered to work round the clock in order to complete the upgradation and renovation well before the deadline.

Chairman PCB Mohsin Naqvi directed the relevant stakeholders to work 24/7 on the project, adding that the huge project could only be completed on time by working round the clock.

Naqvi also visited various parts of the main building of the stadium which is being dismantled and demanded for the upgradation timeline to be followed strictly. He also directed immediate repair of the

main water pipeline under the main building of the stadium and quick drainage of the accumulated water.

Directing to accelerate speed, the PCB Chairman said that more resources be mobilized to complete the upgradation work of the stadium well before Champions Trophy 2025.

Director International Cricket Usman Wahla and GM Infrastructure were also present on this occasion.

## Haris Rauf confident of victory against Ireland

LAHORE (APP): Fast Bowler Haris Rauf has said that the victory against Canada has set the tone for the team and the team will win the last group stage match against Ireland to keep hopes of the Super Eight qualification alive.

Addressing the post-match press conference after Pakistan beat Canada at the Nassau Country International Cricket Stadium, he said the team was fully focused on the next match against Ireland, adding that the qualification scenario for the Super Eight depends on the destiny.

Pakistan team is on the verge of early exit from the T20 World after losing the first two matches against novices USA and arch-rivals India. The Green Shirts may only qualify if the team USA loses its last two group matches against

India and Ireland.

To a question, Haris Rauf promised to play good cricket if the team made to the Super Eight stage of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup in West Indies.

On early glitches in the T20 World Cup, the ace fast bowler, who completed his 100 T20I wickets in the match, said "We played good cricket as a team but mistakes cost us the matches," adding that mistakes are part of the game. However he reassured that they were working hard to overcome the mistakes they made in the first two matches against the USA and Indian team.

"We played good cricket against the USA and India but could not finish the games well and ended up on the other side of the podium," Haris said. He said the team will try to

play good cricket in the last match of the group stage.

On his performance post injury, he said "I am trying to replicate my past performances upon joining the team after rehabilitation from injury. He said had the belief in him and was confident of doing well after the rehabilitation. I worked on shortcomings during the rehabilitation at the National Cricket Academy (NCA). "Playing for Pakistan is a moment of pride for every cricketer," Haris Rauf responded.

Defending the batsmen, he said New York pitches are not bed of roses for the batsmen, adding that we, as bowlers, try to restrict the opposition to the minimum total so that the batsmen could chase it. He said the players back each other if some player is passing through a lean patch.

## Messi expects Inter Miami to be his final club

MIAMI (AFP): Argentine football superstar Lionel Messi says he expects Inter Miami to be the club where he closes his legendary playing career, but he is not intending to depart right away.

Messi, who has a contract with the MLS squad until the end of the 2025 campaign, made his comments to ESPN in an interview to be broadcast on Wednesday. "Yes, as of today, I think it's going to be my last club," Messi told ESPN.

But Messi, who turns 37 on June 24, also added, "I'm not ready to leave football either." The record eight-time Ballon d'Or winner became a legend with Barcelona, helping capture four Champions League crowns and 10 La Liga titles.

Messi sparked

Argentina victories in the 2021 Copa America and 2022 World Cup and is set to play for Argentina in this month's Copa America, to be staged in the United States.

After playing for Barca from 2004-2021, Messi joined Paris Saint-Germain from 2021-2023 and then moved to Inter Miami last year, helping the club win the Leagues Cup crown in his early days with the squad. "It was a difficult step to leave Europe to come here," Messi said.

"The fact of having been world champion helped a lot to see things differently also." Messi's star turn raised the profile for MLS in the United States, matches selling out wherever he plays and his shirt by far the most popular among MLS jersey

purchasers.

Messi now ponders playing for his homeland in the 2026 World Cup, to be co-hosted by the USA with Mexico and Canada, and is contemplating the end of his incredible career.

"My whole life I did this. I love playing ball. I enjoy the training, the day every day, of the matches. A little afraid that everything will end," Messi said. "I try to enjoy. That's why I enjoy everything much more, because I'm aware that there's less and less to go and I have a good time at the club."

"How lucky I am to have colleagues and friends by my side. I had a good time in the selection, where I have teammates and friends too, and many of them, and I enjoy the little details that I know I'm going to miss when I don't play anymore."

ISLAMABAD (APP): Balochistan and Sindh have moved in the final of PBCC Blind Cricket T-20 Super League at APS School Cricket Ground Abbottabad.

The final would be played on Thursday at the same venue.

In the matches played on Wednesday, Balochistan secured a nail-biting victory against Punjab, chasing down a formidable target of 240 runs with just one ball to spare.

Punjab Blind set a daunting target, scoring 239 for 2 in their 20 overs. Anees Javed (B2) and Akmal Hayat Nasir (B3) delivered remarkable performances with the bat. Anees Javed smashed an impressive 103 runs off 61 balls, including 17 boundaries, while Akmal remained unbeaten on 98 off 65 balls, hitting 13 fours. Their exceptional batting ensured Punjab posted a challenging total.

Balochistan's chase began with early setbacks, losing wickets at regular intervals. However, Haroon Khan (B2) anchored the innings with a sensational unbeaten 106 off 57 balls, including 15 fours. The final overs saw Mohsin Khan (B3) contribute crucial 33 runs off 19 balls, providing the necessary support to Haroon.

With 39 runs required off the last two overs, the match reached to a tense finish. Haroon and Mohsin displayed nerves of steel, capitalizing on every scoring opportunity. Balochistan successfully chased down the target, scoring 240 for 6 in 19.5 overs, clinching victory in a heart-stopping finish. For Punjab Blind, Israr Ul Hassan (B2) and Sajid Nawaz (B1) managed to claim a wicket each, but their efforts couldn't prevent Balochistan's determined pursuit.

In the other semifinal, Sindh beat KPK by 6 wickets. KPK won the toss and decided to bat first. KPK posted a formidable total of 253 for 6 in their 20 overs. KPK innings was headlined by an explosive knock from Badar Munir (B2), who scored a stunning 99 runs off just 39 balls, including 16 boundaries and 2 sixes, maintaining a strike rate of 253.85. His powerful hitting provided KPK with a strong foundation. Despite losing Zeeshan (B3) early for 11 runs, contributions from other batsmen such as Muhammad Rashid (B3) with 20 runs off 12 balls and Talha Iqbal (B3) who remained unbeaten with a rapid 41 off 21 balls, further bolstered the total. Extras also played a significant role,

with Sindh's bowlers conceding 44 runs through wides, no-balls, byes, and leg-byes. KPK's aggressive batting and smart running between the wickets ensured they reached an imposing total of 253 runs for the loss of 6 wickets in their allotted 20 overs. M Idrees Saleem (B1) was the most economical, with figures of 4-0-38-1, while Salman (B1) and Kashif Siddique (B1) also managed to pick up a wicket each.

In reply, Sindh's chase was off to a solid start, with Safdar (B3) scoring a quickfire 40 off 22 balls. Ayoub Khan (B2) added 29 runs off 17 balls, and despite early wickets, Sindh maintained a brisk run rate. The standout performer was Nisar Ali (B2), who anchored the innings with a sensational unbeaten 82 off 40 balls, hitting 14 boundaries at a strike rate of 205.00. Sanwal Shahzada (B3) also played a crucial role, contributing 49 runs off 26 balls with seven fours and one six. Sindh reached the target in 17.2 overs for the loss of 4 wickets. Ahtisham Ul Haq (B2) was the most successful bowler, claiming 2 wickets for 40 runs in his 3 overs. Badar Munir (B2) and Talha Iqbal (B3) took one wicket each.

## Boulter cruises into Nottingham quarter-finals



NOTTINGHAM (Agencies): Defending champion Katie Boulter reached the third round of the Nottingham Open with an assured win over Canadian qualifier Rebecca Marino.

The British number one broke early in both sets in her 6-4 6-4 victory to set up a quarter-final tie with either fifth seed Magdalena Frech or Tatjana Maria.

But despite her win, secured in one hour 14 minutes, the third seed warned "it's going to take some time" before she hits her top form on grass. Boulter is building towards Wimbledon, which starts on 1 July.

Having needed more than three hours to beat Harriet Dart in the first round, she got off to a dream start on centre court by breaking Marino's second service game. She defended two break points while serving for the opener

before taking the set with a fine forehand Marino could only return into the net.

In the second, she broke twice to lead 3-0 but then uncharacteristically lost her next service game having been 4-0 up. The world number 30 was unperturbed though, breaking Marino for a fourth time to win the match. "I'm very realistic, for me it's about bedding in some of this momentum," she added. "I'm going to take it one match at a time and see how far we can go."

Later on Wednesday fellow Briton Heather Watson faces Czech sixth seed Karolina Pliskova. Evans beats British teenager Searle

Earlier Great Britain's Dan Evans reached the third round of the Nottingham Open with a battling win over teenage compatriot Henry Searle. Second seed Evans was well matched by the 18-year-old and after his 7-6 (7-4) 7-6 (7-5) win said

the reigning Wimbledon junior champion will be "a hell of a player".

Searle, the current world number 630, is yet to make his debut at ATP Tour level, but underlined his potential in a tight contest. "He's obviously very good," said Evans.

"I'm just happy to come through to be honest - it's not the draw I wanted to see when I saw I was next to his name." Neither player was able to break serve in the opening set which Evans sealed with an ace at the end of a tense tie-break.

In the second set qualifier Searle broke Evans early and missed out on a second break point at 4-3. In the next game Evans broke back and then had the edge in the tie-break to record a straight-set win. Elsewhere on Wednesday, British number two Jack Draper plays American Marcos Giron in the Stuttgart Open.

## Alcaraz, Nadal named in Spanish Olympic tennis team

PARIS (AFP): French Open champions Carlos Alcaraz and Rafael Nadal have been named in the Spain team for the 2024 Olympic Games, the Spanish tennis federation (RFET) announced Wednesday.

World number two Alcaraz last weekend won his first Roland Garros title on the clay in Paris, where the Olympic tournament will take place from July 27 to August 4. Nadal boasts 22 Grand Slam victories, including a record 14 French Open titles, but only returned to competition last April after missing the best part of 16 months through injury and is currently ranked 264 in the world.

In addition to the singles tournament, Alcaraz, 21, and Nadal, 38, may also take part in the Games' doubles event. The Spanish men's squad is completed by world number 32 Alejandro Davidovich Fokina, Pablo Carreno Busta and number two-ranked doubles player Marcel Granollers.

On the women's side, Spanish number one Sara Sorribes and world number 67 Cristina Bucsa have been included in the team.

Injury-plagued former world number two Paula Badosa — now ranked 118 — will not be included in the squad for Paris. "We have the chance of winning two or three medals (at the Olympics)," said RFET president Miguel Diaz Roman.

## Rs 3,100m allocated for sports infrastructure

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Government has green light a series of substantial projects aimed at bolstering Pakistan's sports infrastructure, with a significant focus on the South Asian Games and Pakistan Sports Complex (PSC) and various facilities across the country.

According to a budgetary document released here on Wednesday, Rs 3,100 million has been allocated under Public Service Development Programme (PSDP) for Inter Provincial Coordination (IPC) Division for the fiscal year 2024-25. An amount of Rs 2,433 million has been allocated for ongoing schemes

while new schemes (667 million) in PSDP 2024-25.

Among key projects in the ongoing schemes include providing and installing of electronic displays and scoring system of different sports facilities at Pakistan Sports Complex, Islamabad and PSB Coaching Centers at a cost of Rs 735.394 million; Provision of missing facilities for South Asian Games viz. warm-up track, heat exchanger, residential flats for coaches, revamping of multipurpose halls, fencing wall, 5-A Side Hockey Ground, Futsal Ground & master planning of Pakistan Sports Complex Islamabad

an amount of Rs 388.429 million was earmarked.

Rehabilitation & up-gradation of existing facilities at PSC, Islamabad for preparation/holding of South Asian Games 2021-22 at a cost of Rs 312.083 million; Laying of synthetic athletic track/football ground, sprinkling system and flood lights at PSB Coaching Centre, Karachi an amount of Rs 304.893 million was earmarked. Some of the new schemes include holding of National Games at a cost of Rs 317 million and construction of swimming pool at PSB Coaching Centre, Karachi an amount of Rs 200 million was earmarked.





## In brief

### 293,600 cusecs released

ISLAMABAD (INP): With an inflow of 199,400 cusecs, the Indus River System Authority (IRSA) released 293,600 cusecs water from various rim stations on Wednesday. As per IRSA's released data, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1448.80 feet and was 50.80 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 75,100 cusecs and 140,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1185.00 feet, which was 136.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 40,700 cusecs and 70,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 183,100, 149,700, 115,400 and 63,100 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 54,800 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 6,100 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### Repatriation of Afghans

ISLAMABAD (INP): The ongoing repatriation of Afghan nationals from Pakistan has seen significant numbers, with the total reaching 607,166 as of June 11, 2024. The effort to return illegal Afghan immigrants to their home country continues with no change. Between May 29 and June 11, a total of 16,721 Afghan nationals were repatriated. This group included 7,621 men, 4,587 women, and 4,513 children, highlighting the diverse makeup of those returning. The logistics of the operation saw 510 families transported in 687 vehicles back to Afghanistan, underscoring the organized nature of the repatriation process.

### Embassy host event

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Pakistan in France Asim Iftikhar Ahmed and renowned environmentalist and filmmaker Luc Hardy co-hosted an event to highlight the challenges of climate change and glacial melting. Held at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, the event also featured the premier screening of film "Ice Giants: Discovering the Karakorum," according to a press release received on Wednesday. This followed a panel discussion with top names in the field including paleoclimatologist Valerie Masson-Delmotte, glaciologists Patrick Wagnon and Fanny Brun and Luc Hardy and animated by François Carrel. A full house comprising diplomats, researchers, academicians, think tanks, environmentalists media and general public engrossed by the captivating documentary and discussion with experts. The event helped create greater awareness about the global climate crisis, its impact on populations and ecosystems, and the urgency of collective action to address those challenges. It also greatly projected Pakistan's mighty mountains and over 7,000 glaciers, beauty and splendor of the region, and its leading role in global climate discourse.

### PIA announces holidays

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan International Airline (PIA) has announced the Eid-ul-Azha holidays. All PIA offices across the country will remain closed from June 17 to 19. The circular said employees of the shifts and operations department will serve under their own roster.

## Operationalization of National Bank counters

# Wafaqi Mohtasib issued directions

ISLAMABAD (APP): Wafaqi Mohtasib Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi has directed the office of Protectorate of Immigrants on Wednesday to open a separate counter for women and senior citizens, provide the facility of filling of forms online through internet, operationalize all the five counters of National Bank and authorize the regional offices to put protector stamp. He stated that the facility of protector clearance to all citizens of Pakistan be done at one place instead of asking them to visit regional offices.

Wafaqi Mohtasib gave these directions after submission of a report by the Inspection Team headed by Senior Advisor Ahmad Farooq.

It may be noted that Wafaqi Mohtasib had constituted the Inspection Team comprising officers of the Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat, after taking

notice of irregularities in the office of Protectorate of Immigrants. The Inspection Team visited the Rawalpindi Office of Protectorate of Immigrants yesterday and heard the complaints of hundreds of people present there and issued orders at the spot to the Protectorate Officers.

On the arrival of the Inspection Team of Wafaqi Mohtasib, there was a huge crowd in the office and there was no place for women to sit. Five counters of the National Bank existed to collect the fee but only at one counter the bank employee was collecting the fee.

Two employees at the State Life Insurance counter were filling the form of each customer resulting in delays. The team directed Protectorate Officers to make all the five counters of National Bank operational and computerize the insurance forms because

most time of the people was consumed at these two counters. Six complainants, who had come from Mianwali, told the team that first they went to Lahore from where they were sent to Rawalpindi and they are now being sent back to Lahore.

One of the persons from Faisalabad informed the team that he has to spend one night on the road. On the directions of the Wafaqi Mohtasib team, protector clearance was given to many people at once. The Office of the Protectorate informed that they have prohibited the visit of Agent mafia in office and if any such person is found he is handed over to the police. It may be noted that many complaints were being received by Wafaqi Mohtasib against the Protectorate of Immigrants regarding delay in getting protector stamps and interference of the agents.

## Pak to host global moot on girls' education

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Government of Pakistan, in collaboration with Rabta Alaam Islami (Muslim World League), is set to host a landmark Global Conference on Girls' Education this September 2024.

This prestigious event aims to bring together a diverse group of international and national dignitaries, including education ministers from numerous Islamic countries, to address and find solutions to the numerous challenges faced by girls in the education sector, according to a press release issued here yesterday.

The primary objective of the three-day conference is to explore and formulate effective strategies to enable institutional responses and ensure better resource allocation for promoting girls' education on a global scale.

The conference will see

the participation of eminent scholars, education experts, policymakers, and various stakeholders who will share their expertise, experiences, and best practices in the field of girls' education.

Prime Minister has established a dedicated committee to ensure the event is organized in a befitting and efficient manner. This committee is headed by Mohyuddin Wani, Secretary of Education, and includes Ms Nausheen Iftikhar MNA, Ms Dr Tanveer Anjum representatives from the Foreign Office, the Federal Directorate of Education, and the Capital Development Authority. Their collective efforts aim to ensure the seamless execution of this high-profile event.

The conference is expected to attract a significant number of participants from around the world. These include edu-

cation experts, policymakers, practitioners, and representatives from various international organizations.

The event will serve as a crucial platform for sharing experiences, discussing the multifaceted challenges faced by girls in accessing education, and exploring innovative solutions to overcome these barriers.

While the conference is scheduled to take place in September, the exact dates will be announced soon. This event marks a significant step towards the global promotion of girls' education, demonstrating Pakistan's commitment to being at the forefront of this vital initiative.

By hosting such a crucial conference, Pakistan aims to contribute substantially to the global dialogue on education and help forge a path towards a more inclusive and equitable educational landscape for girls worldwide.

## PHMM ensuring standard health service

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's Hajj Medical Mission (PHMM), Director Brigadier Jamil Ahmed Lakhair, on Wednesday assured that the present government of Pakistan, with the collaboration of the Saudi government, was ensuring standard healthcare services to the pilgrims this year during their stay in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where over 90,000 Hajj pilgrims have been being treated in Makkah and Madinah since May 9.

He said that Pakistan had established two hospitals and 11 dispensaries in the holy cities of Makkah, Madinah, and Jeddah to provide healthcare for Hajj pilgrims, adding that the mission included almost all types of medical specialists, including cardiologists, chest specialists, physiologists, pulmonologists, pathologists, radiologists, and dermatologists.

He said, "PHMM hospi-

tals are equipped with modern X-ray, ultrasound, isolation wards, and 29 lab testing facilities where minor procedures can be performed. Patients suffering from serious ailments, if required, are referred to Saudi hospitals for further treatment or any surgery-related issues in a free-of-charge facility."

"In every dispensary, one doctor, two paramedics, and one pharmacist are present round the clock in different shifts, and each dispensary has an ambulance as well, adding that special awareness drives for preventive measures against heatstroke or any other heat-related illness are also being launched to educate pilgrims," he added.

Commenting on the disease trend, he said, "The majority of patients are visiting with respiratory tract infections like flu, cough, throat infection, and unspecified fever; these are the

ailments that were reported during hijab visits."

He also advised all Pakistani pilgrims to take all necessary precautionary measures against heatstroke, following a severe heat warning issued, adding that no heatstroke-related patient was being reported so far as Pilgrims were advised to stay indoors.

He further hailed the ministry of religious affairs for conducting standard NTS tests for medical staff, adding that patients visiting the mission's healthcare facilities also expressed satisfaction, enhancing their Hajj journey's comfort and spiritual fulfillment.

As compared to previous records, a classified healthcare administrator and public health specialists with vast experience in command, staff, and training were appointed at various healthcare setups and institutions in Saudi Arabia, he added.

## PMD predicts 'more than usual' rain from June 19

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecasted that the first monsoon rain spell is expected to hit parts of the country after June 19, according to Chief Meteorologist Sardar Sarfaraz.

The forecast indicated that southern Sindh, including the city of Karachi, is likely to experience heavy rainfall during this upcoming monsoon period.

The chief meteorologist further stated that there is no chance of rain in the plain areas during the Eid-ul-Azha holiday period, and a more precise forecast for the upcoming monsoon spell will be provided closer to the event.

On June 7, Karachi areas such as Gulshan-e-Iqbal,

University Road, Gulistan-e-Johar, as well as Surjani Town, Scheme 33, Hawksbay, Baldia Town, Maripur, and Nazimabad will experience drizzling in the city.

PMD weekly weather forecast has predicted predominantly hot and dry conditions across most parts of the country, with very hot temperatures anticipated in the central and southern plains. Some isolated areas of Gilgit-Baltistan may experience partly cloudy weather with light rain or thunderstorms during the evening and nighttime hours.

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has warned that this hot, dry weather is expected to continue in

parts of Sindh and Punjab during June.

## Edu Ministry eliminates requirement of Form-B

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training has eliminated the requirement of Form B for getting admission in federal government schools.

"It has come to our attention that the previous requirement of producing Form B as a condition for admission in federal government schools has inadvertently restricted access to education for underprivileged children," the min-



ISLAMABAD: Police officials carrying bags of budget documents arrive at the National Assembly before Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb presents the country's annual budget for fiscal year 2024-25.

## 500,000 complaints filed in seven years

ISLAMABAD (INP): There has been a significant increase in cybercrime as over the past seven years, more than 500,000 complaints of digital theft and online fraud have been reported.

The number of perpetrators brought to justice remains alarmingly low, highlighting the need for more effective measures to combat this growing threat.

From 2016 to 2023, consumers have filed over 500,000 complaints of online fraud and digital theft.

Legal actions were taken against 5,953 individuals, but only 916 were prosecuted.

Fraudsters often use messages claiming eligibility for the Benazir Income Support Program or notifications about ATM card blocks to deceive victims.

Another prevalent scam involves obtaining victims' PIN codes by pretending to transfer money via mobile banking mistakenly.

Over 100,000 complaints related to such frauds were filed with the FIA Cybercrime Wing between 2016 and 2023. Legal action was taken in 5,953 cases, resulting in only 316 convictions.

## Ministry introduces evening shifts

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training has announced to introduce of evening shifts in 51 schools across the city, starting from the next academic session.

According to the Education Ministry, this initiative aims to address the challenges faced during the enrollment campaign, where many schools saw a significant increase in student numbers, with some primary classes exceeding 50 students per class and reaching 100."To ensure quality education and a conducive learning environment, we will upgrade infrastructure in the designated schools and arranged additional honorarium for teachers to support the evening shifts".

The evening shifts will help alleviate the pressure on morning classes, providing a better student-to-teacher ratio and an improved learning experience.

"We are committed to providing quality education to all students, and this initiative is a significant step towards achieving our goals" it added.

## Pakistan observes 'World Day Against Child Labour'

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan joined the global community today to mark the 'World Day Against Child Labour', with a renewed commitment to eradicate the scourge of child labour. The theme of this year's observance is "Let's act on our commitments: End Child Labour!"

Pakistan has been working to address the issue of child labour, which remains a significant challenge in the country. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), there are approximately 12 mil-

lion children aged 5-14 engaged in child labour in Pakistan, with many more at risk of being forced into the workforce.

The government and civil society organizations are working together to implement policies and programs aimed at preventing child labour and protecting the rights of children. These efforts include strengthening labour laws, increasing access to education, and providing support to vulnerable families.

Pakistan's efforts are part of a global push to end

child labour, with the ILO estimating that there are over 152 million children worldwide who are engaged in child labour. The organization has set a goal of eliminating child labour by 2025, and Pakistan is committed to playing its part in achieving this goal.

The World Day Against Child Labour is an opportunity for Pakistan to reiterate its commitment to protecting the rights of children and ensuring that they have access to quality education and a safe and healthy environment.

## IIUI students showcase talents in Open House

ISLAMABAD (APP): The students of International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) showcased around 100 innovative projects at the Open House organised by the Faculty of Engineering and Technology (FET) on Wednesday. The event, held at the university's new campus, was inaugurated by Rector IIUI, Prof. Dr Samina Malik.

She emphasised the importance of fostering interactions between technology and engineering students and the industry, asserting that a strong link between academia and industry can address numerous challenges.

Prof. Dr Samina Malik praised the displayed projects and encouraged students to develop prototypes that could be transformed into practical applications. She highlighted the potential of the country's talented engineers to tackle issues such as power shortages through innovative power

generation solutions.

The IIUI rector showed particular interest in AI-based and solar energy projects, emphasising the need for collaboration between universities and industry to solve critical national problems.

She noted the impressive efforts of both male and female students in presenting their talents.

She said the event highlighted the university's commitment to producing graduates who are well-equipped to contribute to the nation's technological advancement.

Students explained their projects to visitors, including invigilators, industry representatives and the chief guest.

The showcased projects featured solar power solutions for farming, automobiles, and hospitals, as well as AI-based vertical farming kits, health-related devices, smart energy meters, water distribution systems, grid-tie inverters,

and various power generation initiatives.

The IIUI Rector was accompanied by the Vice President Research and Enterprise, Prof. Dr Ahmed Shuja Syed, Dean FET, Dr Khan Zeb Jadoon, heads of departments within the faculty, deans of various faculties, and other relevant officials.

The event also attracted numerous entrepreneurs, industrial experts, and investors who engaged with the students about the feasibility and market potential of their final-year projects.

The Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and Technology said on the occasion that the Open House served as a platform for students to bridge the gap between academic concepts and real-world applications. He said it facilitated discussions on the practical implementation of innovative ideas, offering students the opportunity to receive valuable feedback from industry experts.

## Two-day travel, tourism symposium concludes

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Travel and Tourism Symposium jointly organised by Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation and World Bank Pakistan at Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA) concluded here the other day.

During the concluding ceremony of the Symposium themed "Building National Economy through Tourism", Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan participated as a special guest.

The two-day event was attended by various tour

operators including more than 400 national and international tourism experts, industry experts and decision-makers for the sustainable development of the tourism industry and development of a future roadmap.

On the second day of the symposium, the provincial tourism departments informed the participants about the tourism destinations in their provinces and the investment opportunities.

Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan said in his address that he will put all the suggestions given by the participants and stakeholders of the conference before the prime minister so that the problems faced in the tourism sector can be solved urgently.

He assured that the government of Pakistan will use all its resources to promote tourism and in this regard, in the coming days, the government is bringing two pilot projects for the promotion of tourism, including double-decker buses for Islamabad and setting up an eco-friendly village in Shakar Pariyaan Islamabad.

He especially thanked all the foreign delegates and investors who participated in the conference and con-

gratulated MD PTDC and his team for organising such a successful conference.

In his closing address, Managing Director of Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation, Aftab Ahmad Rana said that the tourism industry is a challenge. The purpose of the event was to bring together tourism stakeholders to benefit from each other's experiences.

He said that such type of conference was held in Pakistan 20 years ago. Aftab Ahmad Rana said that the recommendations coming out in the symposium will be shared with the relevant forums.

He said that in this symposium it was agreed that the establishment of a full-fledged ministry regarding tourism in Pakistan is the need of the hour.

The representative of World Bank Pakistan, Kiran Afzal also addressed the event and thanked all the participants on behalf of Najy Benhassine, Country Director of World Bank Pakistan, while at the end of the event, the guests were presented with souvenirs.

The symposium also featured four different panel discussions on different topics.



### Ministry met stakeholders

KABUL (Ariana News): Nooruddin Azizi, acting Minister of Commerce and Industry, met with technical teams from Iran's Veera Gas Sepehr Sokht Company, and Emirati Oil and Gas Company of Afghanistan, as well as officials from the Afghanistan National Standards Authority (ANSA) in a move to establish a refinery in the country. In this meeting, the representative of Veera Gas Sepehr Sokht Company shared a plan to establish a refinery, over three stages.

## The Frontier Post

Zil-Hajj 06 1445 — Thursday, June 13, 2024

### IEA holds meeting

KABUL (BNA): The regular meeting of the Technical Committee of the Economic Commission held at the Marmarin Palace. In this meeting, discussions were held on the copper processing in Sar-e Pol province, the development of the substation in Mohammad Agha district of Logar province, the production of 40 megawatts of solar power in Nangarhar province, 10 megawatts in Paktika province, and several other topics.

## Malaria patients increased, says report

JALALABAD CITY (TOLONews): Local officials in Nangarhar report an increase in the number of malaria patients compared to last year.

According to them, in the first five months of the current year, nearly fifteen thousand malaria patients have visited the health centers of this province for treatment.

Based on official statistics, in the first five months of 2023, 9,500 people were registered as having malaria in this province; however, in the first five months of 2024, nearly 15,000 people were infected with the disease and received treat-

ment. Mohammad Saeed Shirzad, the provincial official for the malaria and other communicable diseases program, said: "Every three years, a large mosquito net campaign is launched in Nangarhar, distributing nets to all households, and all hospitals have malaria diagnosis equipment and medication."

Meanwhile, residents of Nangarhar say that to prevent the spread of this disease, public awareness programs and the provision of necessary facilities should be undertaken.

Nematullah, a resident of Jalalabad, said: "There

should be public awareness campaigns to educate people so they can protect themselves and help eliminate malaria from the country."

Shah Wali Khan, another resident of Jalalabad, said: "Nangarhar is a very hot province. Mosquito nets should be provided to the residents, standing water should be removed, and spraying should be done."

According to Nangarhar health officials, the geographic location, climate changes, recent rains, and the return of migrants from Pakistan are the causes of the increase in malaria cases in this province.

## Delawar: Afghan mines benefit all citizens equally

FARYAB (TOLONews): The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum has announced it has curtailed the mafia's influence in the oil sector and is now working to prevent their access to the country's salt mines.

During the tender opening for three salt mine blocks in Faryab, acting Minister Shahabuddin Delawar criticized salt traders, urging them to act with integrity.

According to him, the ministry seriously considers national interests in the country's mining contracts.

"I do not consider anyone in national interests. These mines are the national interests of Afghanistan, and men, women, children, Shias, Sunnis, Hindus, and everyone are partners in them," said Shahabuddin Delawar.

The acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum also mentioned that a significant portion of the country's budget is funded through its mines, and that last year, the ministry contributed more than 17 billion afghani to the treasury of the Islamic Emirate.

"Every year that we



have high revenues, we allocate a significant percentage. Although revenues fluctuate, a large portion comes from these mines, and in addition, we have transparent customs revenues," he said.

Delawar also added that the number of military and civilian employees of the Islamic Emirate has seen a substantial increase compared to the Republic era, and all their needs are met through mining revenues and other domestic incomes.

"Our security agencies have surpassed the previous regime; we fund these agencies from our budget, whereas the Americans were providing three and a half billion dollars for their funding," the acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum added.

The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum of Afghanistan also held tenders for nine different projects in the Qashqari block of the Amu Darya oil zone among domestic companies.

## World Day Against Child Labor: 19% of Afghan children engaged in hard labor

KABUL (Khaama Press): Coinciding with June 12, the World Day Against Child Labor, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reports that 19% of children in Afghanistan are engaged in hard labor.

OCHA stated in a press release on Wednesday on the occasion of the World Day Against Child Labor that this issue is concerning for the health and future of children.

The United Nations

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) added, "We must collaborate to ensure that every child has the opportunity to learn and grow in a safe environment."

Previously, the World Food Program, in its latest report, stated that 3.2 million children in Afghanistan are also suffering from malnutrition.

Experts believe that children are among the primary victims of poverty in society. Compared to youth and adults, children lack the

necessary resilience to fight diseases, and the spread of diseases resulting from poverty and poor nutrition initially affects children.

In addition to the increasing poverty and unemployment rates in Afghanistan, years of war have also contributed to the rise of child labor in the country.

The World Day Against Child Labor is observed annually on June 12, aiming to strengthen the global movement against child labor.

## 7 water regulation plans started

PAKTIA (TOLONews): Seven water regulation projects were started which cost 13 million Afs and were supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Paktia.

Authorities said that with the completion of this project, besides job opportunities and aiding farmers, it will prevent wasting water and destroying agricultural land.

Pakteia's director of the river zone said that this project contains the cleaning of two water containers, the building of one dam, and one canal in Zurmat district, as well as the building of a retaining wall in Gardez.

Mohammad Kareem Fateh, head of Paktia's river zone, said: "This project was started by the FAO organization for water management and surface water feeding."

On the other hand, residents and farmers are very happy about implementing this project and require the implementation of more development projects.

"We used this for agriculture and groundwater feeding," said Shah Mohammad a farmer.

Abdul Ghafar, a resident of the Zurmat district of Paktia province, said: "We are very happy that the FOA started a project and worked for us."

The recent rain and floods have destroyed large amounts of land in Paktia.

## Governor, OCHA head discuss aid

KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Abdullah Sarhadi, the Governor of Bamyan, recently met with the new head of the OCHA office in the province to discuss humanitarian aid and the needs of local residents.

During the meeting, Ms. Mirna Aho, the new head of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Bamyan, expressed her gratitude for the attention and cooperation of the provincial authorities. She stated that OCHA aims to distribute humanitarian aid to flood-affected victims and needy residents of Bamyan in coordination with the local leadership.

Ms. Aho also announced the continuation of humanitarian aid efforts in Bamyan's center and districts, reaffirming OCHA's commitment to addressing the needs of the province's residents through beneficial projects.

Governor Sarhadi praised the activities and services of the OCHA office in the Bamyan zone and highlighted that the nationwide security has provided a better environment for the activities of aid organizations.

Additionally, Governor Sarhadi called for the distribution of humanitarian aid to those in need in Bamyan and requested the repair and reconstruction of roads in the province's districts, particularly the road in Dara Shikari, which was damaged by recent floods.

## Lack of polio vaccine awareness

HERAT (Khaama Press): According to a report, saying that a five-year-old child in Herat province has become permanently paralyzed due to family neglect.

Bakhtar News agency, under the control of the Taliban, recently reported that this child from the village of Qabir-mir in the Koh Zor district has contracted paralysis.

According to this report, the child who has become paralyzed is named Sayed Gul, and about five years ago, his father prevented the polio vaccine from being administered to him.

The child's uncle said, "Due to a lack of proper awareness about polio and the role of this vaccine in children's lives, this child was not vaccinated." Doctors also stated that this child contracted polio in 2020, which has now resulted in permanent paralysis.

## Türkiye sent more aid to Herat earthquake victims

HERAT (Ariana News): The Turkish government has sent a large shipment of humanitarian aid to the victims of last year's earthquakes in Herat province.

The Red Crescent Society of the Western Zone wrote in a newsletter that the 9th shipment of Turkish humanitarian aid, which is about 620 tons of food and non-food items, has arrived in Herat through Turghondi port.

Herat Red Crescent press office wrote that these shipments include flour, tents, blankets, wheelchairs, health packages and essential household items.

The series of earthquakes of 6.3 magnitude on October 7, 11, and 15 killed over 1,500 people and injured more than 2,600 people.

The assessment, with UNDP as the technical lead, covered nine districts with roughly 2.2 million



people. The earthquakes damaged 49,578 houses, with 13,516 being completely destroyed.

It revealed that over 275,000 individuals were affected. Among these

were 17,358 pregnant women, 17,146 infants, 3,976 people with severe disabilities, 3,207 elderly families, 6,806 women-led households, 3,176 individuals with chronic illnesses,

and 147,000 children under 18.

Herat, Injil and Zindajan were the hardest hit, with rural and vulnerable communities suffering the most.

## Parwan residents demand completion of 200 bed hospital

PARWAN (TOLONews): Some residents of Parwan province are calling on the authorities to resume the unfinished construction of the province's 200-bed public hospital.

They state that the 100-bed hospital in Parwan does not meet the needs of all the patients in the province and currently faces challenges.

Musa, a resident of Parwan, said: "Our hospital's capacity is low, and patients are not properly attended to. We want the unfinished 200-bed hospital to be completed."

Hamid, another resident of Parwan, said: "Parwan's

hospital does not have enough capacity, and many patients visit it."

Nine years after the construction of the 200-bed public hospital in Parwan began, the project remains incomplete.

The foundation stone of this hospital was laid in 1394 (solar year) at a cost of over 5 million by the previous government, but it was halted for unknown reasons.

However, local officials in Parwan say they have recently shared their proposals with the Ministry of Public Health to restart the hospital's construction.

Mohammad Idris

Anwari, Deputy Governor of Parwan, said: "We have proposed to high-ranking officials to complete the remaining work of the 200-bed public hospital in Parwan so that it can be operational and usable as soon as possible."

Hedayatullah Azam, Director of Public Health in Parwan, said: "We have shared the issue of the hospital's construction with the authorities and hope the building work will begin, and the people's problems will be solved."

Meanwhile, a health aid organization in Parwan has built a medicine storage facility to treat people col-

lectively during significant incidents. This facility can treat up to 1,000 people at a time.

Riaz-ul-Haq Naderi, a representative of the aid organization in Parwan, said: "Our focus is on responding to emergencies through medicine and transport support."

Abdullah Afghanmal, Deputy Director of Public Health in Parwan, said: "It can treat 1,000 people at one time."

According to public health officials in Parwan, about 35 health centers in the province do not have standard buildings and operate in rented houses.

## Exhibition of handicrafts and domestic products held in Mazar

MAZAR-I-SHARIF (TOLONews): A three-day exhibition of handicrafts and domestic products named "Mawla Jalaluddin Mohammad Balkhi" has been held in Mazar-e-Sharif.

The purpose of this exhibition is stated to be the growth of domestic products and their introduction to the citizens.

Domestic products are displayed in 130 booths, of which about 80 booths are allocated to women.

Asadullah Asadi, head of the Balkh Chamber of Commerce and Investment, said: "We have around 130 booths in a hall for women and men, of which 80 booths are allocated to women and 50 booths to men."

Nooralhaadi Abu Idris, Deputy Governor of Balkh, said: "We have always told traders to come and invest in Afghanistan, establish companies and factories within Afghanistan. Wherever they are in the world, they should come. Thank God, Afghanistan is safe and secure today."

The head of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Afghanistan says they stand by the people of Afghanistan, especially the industrialists, and will have future programs to support women.

Ramin Behzad, head of the ILO in Afghanistan,



said: "In the past three years, the ILO has served over 28,000 people in northern Afghanistan and has financially supported more than a hundred small, medium, and large businesses, which has led to the creation of 10,000 jobs in this region."

Participants of this exhibition find such programs beneficial for familiarizing people with domestic products and strengthening women's economic activities.

Abdul Samad Sarwari, a booth owner, said: "We are very happy with such programs because they are very useful for us and can

increase people's trust in domestic companies."

Parwana Habibi, a booth owner, told TOLONews: "Holding such exhibitions is very effective for us, and we want more exhibitions like this to be held because they are very useful for our marketing and sales."

The exhibition manager at the Ministry of Industry and Commerce says that 50 domestic and international exhibitions are planned to be held this solar year.

Khadem Mohammad Abid, the exhibition manager at the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, said: "The Exhibition

Directorate of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce of the Islamic Emirate plans to hold fifty exhibitions in the year 1403. This Balkh exhibition is one example, and more exhibitions will be held. Out of these 50 exhibitions, nine will be held outside Afghanistan in countries like Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Russia, and Turkey."

According to information, the holding of exhibitions in various provinces of the country has increased in recent months, and industrialists consider it beneficial for the growth of domestic products.

## 4000 Afghan migrants deported from Iran, Pakistan in a single day

KABUL (Khaama Press): Following the deportation of Afghan migrants from Iran and Pakistan, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation of Afghanistan has reported the expulsion of nearly four thousand Afghan migrants from Pakistan and Iran.

On Wednesday, the ministry announced in a press release that a total of 3,437 Afghan migrants were deported from Iran and 275 from Pakistan.

The Ministry of Refugees stated in the press rele-

ase that the returnees entered the country on June 11.

According to the press release, the mentioned migrants entered the country through the Islam Qala, Tokham, and Spin Boldak borders after being deported.

Afghan migrants are being expelled from Pakistan while the process of deportation from neighboring countries, especially Iran and Pakistan, has significantly increased in recent months.

The dire situation in Afghanistan has been exacerbated by the recent forced deportations and deadly floods.

These crises have further strained the country's resources and worsened the living conditions for many.

The floods have caused widespread destruction, displacing thousands of people and leaving them without basic necessities.

Amid these challenges, the shortage of funds from international aid agencies has left Afghanistan in a vulnerable position.

The lack of financial

support is hampering efforts to provide relief and rebuild infrastructure, making it difficult for the country to recover from these multiple crises.

The international community's reduced financial commitment has created a significant gap in humanitarian aid.

This shortage is affecting various sectors, including healthcare, education, and food security, leading to a worsening of the already dire humanitarian situation in Afghanistan.



KABUL (BNA): The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum opened a tender for nine important projects in the Amu Darya oil fields.

The tender opening session for nine important projects in Amu Darya oil fields was held under the chairmanship of Sheikh Shaha-

buddin Delawar, Minister of Mines and Petroleum, with the presence of Sheikh Ziaur-Rahman Al-Aryoubi, Deputy Minister for Planning and Policy, several directors, bidding companies, and the media.

The Acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum ini-

tially spoke about the value and importance of the Amu Darya oil fields, particularly regarding the equipment and needs of the Afchin Oil Company.

In this process, nine companies were declared winners by offering their good offers.



# Pilgrims flock to Makkah for Hajj

MAKKAH (AP): Hundreds of thousands of Muslims have flocked to the Saudi holy city of Makkah for the Hajj pilgrimage unfolding this year in the shadow of the Gaza conflict.

One of the world's largest annual religious gatherings officially begins on Friday, and Saudi officials are trying to keep the focus on prayers. The Gulf kingdom's minister in charge of religious pilgrimages, Tawfiq al-Rabiah, warned last week that "no political activity" will be tolerated.

The Hajj, one of the five pillars of Islam, must be performed at least once by all Muslims with the means, and as of Wednesday around 1.2 million pilgrims had already arrived in Saudi Arabia from abroad to take part. Last year saw more than 1.8 million people complete the Hajj rites which last for several days. Around 90 per cent came from overseas, mainly from elsewhere in the Arab world and from Asia, according to official figures.

Israel's withering military operations in Gaza have "created a lot of anger in (the) broader Muslim world", turning this year's Hajj into a "test" for Saudi leaders, said Umer Karim, an expert on Saudi politics at the University of Birmingham. "Protest or performance is bound to happen by individuals or groups of pilgrims, and Saudis understand this is a slippery slope," he said. "Thus for Saudi rulers conducting Hajj is a matter of prestige but also a test of their governance."

The bloodiest ever Gaza conflict broke out after Hamas's October 7 attack resulted in the deaths of 1,194 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli official

figures. The Israeli army then launched a devastating offensive on the Gaza Strip that has left at least 37,164 dead, the majority of them civilians, according to data from the health ministry of the Gaza government.

Saudi Arabia has never recognised Israel but de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was considering establishing formal diplomatic ties with Israel before the October 7 attack. Saudi leaders remain in talks with US officials about a so-called mega-deal that would see Riyadh recognise Israel in exchange for a deeper security relationship with Washington.

However Saudi officials have said ties with Israel are impossible without "irrevocable" steps towards recognition of a Palestinian state, which Israel has long opposed. Saudi King Salman issued a decree on Monday to host 1,000 pilgrims "from the families of martyrs and the wounded from the Gaza Strip", bringing to 2,000 the number of Palestinian pilgrims to be hosted this year, according to the official Saudi Press Agency.

The Hajj is a source of legitimacy for Saudi rulers, and King Salman's title includes "Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques" in Makkah and Madina. Yet the Saudi government also "uses the pilgrimage to control Muslims worldwide", as it can potentially bar critics from performing an essential religious rite, said Madawi al-Rasheed, a Saudi academic and opposition figure based in London.

"The Saudis will increase their control over the pilgrims to prevent any mobilisation around support for

Gaza. It remains to be seen whether the pilgrims will respect Saudi wishes." The rites in Makkah and its surroundings fall again this year during the hot Saudi summer, with officials forecasting average high temperatures of 44 degrees Celsius (111 degrees Fahrenheit).

Last year more than 2,000 people suffered heat stress, which includes heatstroke, exhaustion, cramps and rashes, according to Saudi authorities. The real figure was probably far higher, as many sufferers were not admitted to hospitals or clinics. Worshipers have already arrived en masse in Makkah to begin circling the Kaaba, the large black cubic structure in the Grand Mosque in Makkah towards which all Muslims pray.

Large crowds at the Hajj have proved hazardous in the past, most recently in 2015 when a stampede during the "stoning the devil" ritual in Mina, near Makkah, killed up to 2,300 people in the deadliest Hajj disaster. Managing the gathering represents "a logistical achievement", said Bernard Haykel, a Saudi expert at Princeton University, with extensive surveillance and monitoring in place for security and health reasons.

Pilgrimages to Makkah are a financial windfall for Saudi Arabia, generating billions of dollars as the world's biggest crude oil exporter tries to develop its tourism sector. Umrah, the pilgrimage which can be performed throughout the year, drew 13.5 million worshippers last year, and authorities are targeting 30 million Hajj and umrah pilgrims by 2030.



GAZA: Palestinians gathered to receive free food in Jabalia.

## Task forces to address problems of universities: KP Governor F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Faisal Karim Kundi has said that a task force comprising representatives of political parties would be formed to fight the case of province.

He was talking to a representative delegation of Peshawar Press Club that was led by President PPC, Arshad Aziz Malik. The governor said that task force would be formed after consultation with political parties with an aim to fight case of province and to improve education system. He told that consultation process with political parties is underway and afterwards political leadership would be contacted to nominate their representatives for inclusion in task force. He said that task force would prepare papers mentioning arguments and reasons adding it would serve as a milestone for others and help getting rights of the province.

KP Governor said that a similar task force would be constituted to address education sector and to resolve issues being faced by universities. He also express concern over deteriorating standard of education in Edwards College and said that it is astonishing that provincial government is ignoring education sector and on the contrary Punjab and Sindh governments have allocated a considerable amount of Rs. 6 billion and 20 billion respectively for universities.

He said that Chairman State Life has also been directed to devise a strategy to resolve pension issues in universities. Governor said that, he was being informed that Peshawar- D I Khan Motorway was not executed according to standard and its length has been increased without any reason.

He also accepted invitation to visit PPC and said that he would also bring federal information minister to the club. The delegation also invited Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari to visit PPC. Earlier, President PPC informed the Governor about affairs of the club including strength of members, audit system and medical facilities. He briefed governor about the working of capacity building committee of the club and the amount provided to members on Eids and under the head of medical expenses.

He said that Chairman State Life has also been directed to devise a strategy to resolve pension issues in universities. Governor said that, he was being informed that Peshawar- D I Khan Motorway was not executed according to standard and its length has been increased without any reason.

## Dar asks Opp leader to address Senate F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Leader of the House in the Senate and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar on Wednesday welcomed the Leader of the Opposition to deliver his detailed address on the Budget 2024-25 to express his concerns instead of holding a "senseless protest".

Speaking soon after the finance minister laid the copy of the Finance Bill 2024-25 in the Senate, Dar criticized the opposition leader for his protest over the Finance Bill. "It is not sensible that the Leader of Opposition is protesting the proposed 25 % salary increase for the government employees of grade 1-16 who are battered by hyperinflation, 20% raise in the salaries of grade 17-22 and 15% in the pensions of the retired employees.

# Gaza ceasefire plan hangs in balance

DOHA (Reuters): US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Wednesday that Hamas had proposed numerous changes, some unworkable, to a US-backed proposal for a ceasefire with Israel in Gaza, but that mediators were determined to close the gaps.

Senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan denied that the Palestinian group had put forward new ideas. Speaking to pan-Arab Al-Araby TV, he reiterated Hamas' stance that it was Israel that was rejecting proposals and accused the US administration of going along with its close ally to "evade any commitment" to a blueprint for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza.

White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said on Wednesday many of Hamas' proposed changes were minor "and not unanticipated" while others differed more substantially from what was outlined in a UN Security Council resolution on Monday backing the plan put forward by US President Joe Biden.

Earlier on Wednesday, Izzat Al-Rishq, from Hamas' political bureau based outside Gaza, said its formal response to the US proposal was "responsible, serious and positive" and "opens up a wide pathway" for an accord. Hamas also wants written guarantees from the US on the ceasefire plan, two Egyptian security sources said.

Biden's proposal envisages a truce and a phased release of Israeli hostages in Gaza in exchange for Palestinians jailed in Israel, ultimately leading to a permanent end to the war. At a press conference with Qatar's prime minister in Doha, Blinken said some of the counter-proposals from Hamas, which has ruled Gaza since 2007, had sought to amend terms that it had accepted in previous talks.

Negotiators from the US, Egypt and Qatar have tried for months to mediate a ceasefire in the conflict — which has killed tens of

thousands of Palestinians and devastated the heavily populated enclave — and free the hostages, more than 100 of whom are believed to remain captive in Gaza.

"Hamas could have answered with a single word: Yes," Blinken said. "Instead, Hamas waited nearly two weeks and then proposed more changes, a number of which go beyond positions that it had previously taken and accepted." The US has said Israel has accepted its proposal, but Israel has not publicly stated this.

Blinken said Washington would in coming weeks float ideas for a post-war Gaza administration and rebuilding of the enclave. "We have to have plans for the day after the conflict ends in Gaza, and we need to have them as soon as possible." Major powers are intensifying efforts to defuse the conflict in part to prevent it spiralling into a wider Middle East war, with a dangerous flash-point being the escalating hostilities along the Lebanese-Israeli border.

Lebanon's Hezbollah militia, backed by Iran, fired barrages of rockets at Israel on Wednesday in retaliation for the killing of a senior Hezbollah field commander. Israel said it had in turn attacked the launch sites from the air. Taleb Abdallah, or Abu Taleb, was the most senior Hezbollah commander killed in the conflict, a security source said, and Hezbollah official Hashem Safieddine vowed that the group would expand its operations against Israel.

The fighting in Gaza began on Oct. 7 when militants led by Hamas burst across the border and killed 1,200 Israelis and took more than 250 hostage, according to Israeli tallies. Israel's air and ground war since then has killed more than 37,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's health ministry, displaced most of Gaza's population of 2.3 million, caused widespread hunger and devastated housing and infrastructure.

# Govt unveils budget

(Continued from Page 1)

The government is committed to facilitating exporters to promote economic growth, recognising that exports are the backbone of the economy. To encourage tax compliance, different tax slabs have been implemented for filers and non-filers, with a capital gains tax fixed at 15% for filers and up to 45% for non-filers. Sales tax exemptions on many products will be reduced or eliminated, with the standard 18% sales tax imposed on mobile phones and motor car taxes based on the vehicle price.

BISP beneficiaries will increase to 10 million, with sales tax on textiles and leather raised to 15%. Efforts to document traders will see an expansion of advance tax scope, while tax on the Pakistan Stock Exchange will be increased from 1% to 2.25%.

Capital gains tax on non-filers to go as high as 45%, while on filers of income tax returns, it will stay at 15%. The FBR will impose personal income tax on incomes exceeding Rs600,000 per annum, with progressive taxation ensuring higher incomes are taxed more. The government has allocated Rs4 billion for e-bikes and plans to support exporters through joint ventures, especially with Chinese companies under CPEC phase-II.

The recent visit to China resulted in several MoUs aimed at promoting trade and investment in sectors such as iron and steel, automobiles, and textiles. The Pakistan Climate Change Authority will be activated to promote solar and wind energy, with Rs206 billion allocated for water projects.

The Finance Minister announced that iron and steel scrap will be exempted from sales tax to eliminate the misuse of fake invoices. Tax rates for textile and leather manufacturing will be adjusted from 15% to 18%, which will not impact normal people. The GST on the tier-1 textile retail sector will be enhanced from 15% to

18%. Sales of cigarettes without tax stamps will be penalized, and the Federal Excise Duty (FED) on cement will be increased to Rs3 per kg from Rs2 per kg.

Customs duty exemptions on imports of hybrid cars will be abolished, and duties on steel and paper products will be increased. Incentives will be introduced for the import of plant and machinery, raw materials, and batteries for the solar panel industry. Salaries of grade 1-16 officers will be increased by 25%, and for grade 17-22 officers, the increase will be 22%. There will be a 15% increase in pensions for retired individuals.

Health insurance will be provided to 5,000 journalists in the first round and extended to 10,000 journalists later. The government proposes Rs79 billion for the IT sector, with incentives for importing plant and machinery for the solar panel industry. Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) Secretary Information Shazia Marri confirmed to The Express Tribune that the party will not attend the session.

Only three of PPPP lawmakers, Naveed Qamar, Khurshheed Shah and Ijaz Jakhani, are attending the NA budget session. According to sources, the main targets of the budget would be mitigating people's problems, transforming agriculture sector, promoting information technology (IT), boosting exports, promoting industrial growth and bolstering businesses.

The budget was formulated while considering the existing challenges facing the economy on domestic and international fronts, the sources said, adding that the government was firmly committed to presenting a pro-people, business-friendly and progressive federal budget. On the revenue side, according to the sources, the government was likely to set the revenue collection target at over Rs12 trillion for the fiscal year 2024-25, given robust revenues growth

during the ongoing fiscal year, 2023-24. "The budget is being prepared in close coordination among all departments and ministries, involved in budget-related events, including the presentation of the budget in the parliament a day after launching the Economic Survey," a source said.

"It will pursue policies aimed at fiscal consolidation to contain budget deficit. In addition revenue mobilization, economic stabilization, reduction in non-development expenditures, job creation would be the main features of the budget," the source added. The budget comes a day after the government said economic growth of 2.4% expected in the current year would miss a target of 3.5%, although revenues were up 30% over last year, and the fiscal and current account deficits were under control.

Pakistan is in talks with the IMF for a loan estimated to range from \$6 billion to \$8 billion, as it seeks to avert a default for an economy growing at the slowest pace in the region. But a recent economic uptick, following stabilization measures and falling inflation, as well as Monday's interest rate cut by the central bank, has made the government optimistic about prospects for growth.

The key policy rate could fall further this year and economic growth would continue to rise, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, set to present his first budget, told reporters on Tuesday. Markets will watch the budget for a target for proceeds from privatization, as Pakistan looks to make its first major sale in nearly two decades with the disposal of a stake in its national airline, kicking off a series of such moves. Tapping under-taxed sectors such as agriculture and retail for additional revenues would prompt protests by farmers and small traders, while spending cuts in discretionary funds for MPs have already squeezed alliances and party loyalties.

## 41 killed in Kuwaiti building fire

KUWAIT CITY (Reuters): A fire that erupted in a building housing workers in the Kuwaiti city of Mangaf early on Wednesday has killed at least 41 people, the country's deputy prime minister Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah said during a visit to the site.

The deputy prime minister accused real estate owners of violations and greed, saying those factors contributed towards the incident. "Unfortunately, the greed of real estate owners is what leads to these matters," said Sheikh Fahad, who also leads the interior and defence ministries.

Major General Eid Rashed Hamad said the fire was reported to authorities at 6am local time. "The building in which the fire occurred was used to house workers, and there was a large number of workers there. Dozens were rescued, but unfortunately, there were many deaths as a result of inhaling smoke from the fire," another senior police commander told state TV.

"We always alert and warn against" cramming too many workers into housing accommodation, he said, without providing details on the workers' type of employment or place of origin. The fire was contained and authorities were investigating its cause, officials said.

## Sindh govt to present budget on 14th F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Sindh government is likely to present the fiscal year 2024-25 budget on Friday (June 24). Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, who is also holding the portfolio of finance, will present the budget in the Sindh Assembly at 3pm.

According to a letter issued by the provincial finance department here, the Sindh cabinet will meet tomorrow at the CM House to give approval for FY24-25 budget. The federal government, on the other hand, will unveil the upcoming budget for the next financial year, 2024-2025, today. Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb will present the budget on the National Assembly floor.

"The budget will be aimed at mitigating the people's sufferings, transforming the agriculture sector, promoting information technology (IT), and boosting exports," the government sources said. The government also claimed that in addition to fiscal management, revenue mobilisation, measures for economic stabilization and growth, reduction in non-development expenditures, job creation and people-friendly policies for the socioeconomic prosperity of the country would feature in the budget.

## Gaza killings amount to crime against humanity: UN inquiry

GENEVA (Reuters): Both Israel and Hamas committed war crimes in the early stages of the Gaza war, a UN inquiry found on Wednesday, saying that Israel's actions also constituted crimes against humanity because of the immense civilian losses.

The findings were from two parallel reports, one focusing on the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks and another on Israel's military response, published by the UN Commission of Inquiry (COI), which has an unusually broad mandate to collect evidence and identify perpetrators of international crimes committed in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. Israel does not cooperate with the commission, which it says has an anti-Israel bias. The COI says Israel obstructs its work and prevented investigators from accessing both Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

Israel's diplomatic mission to the UN in Geneva rejected the findings. "The COI has once again proven that its actions are all in the service of a narrow-led political agenda against Israel," said Meirav Eilon Shahar, Israel's Ambassador to the UN in Geneva. Hamas did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

By Israel's count more than 1,200 people were killed and 250 taken hostage in the Oct. 7 cross-border attacks that sparked a military retaliation in

Gaza that has since killed over 37,000 people, by Palestinian tallies. The reports, which cover the conflict through to end-December, found that both sides committed war crimes including torture; murder or willful killing; outrages upon personal dignity; and inhuman or cruel treatment.

Israel also committed additional war crimes including starvation as a method of warfare, it said, saying Israel not only failed to provide essential supplies like food, water, shelter and medicine to Gazans but "acted to prevent the supply of those necessities by anyone else." Some of the war crimes such as murder also constituted crimes against humanity by Israel, the COI statement said, using a term reserved for the most serious international crimes knowingly committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against civilians.

"The immense numbers of civilian casualties in Gaza and widespread destruction of civilian objects and infrastructure were the inevitable result of a strategy undertaken with intent to cause maximum damage, disregarding the principles of distinction, proportionality and adequate precautions," the COI statement said. Sometimes, the evidence gathered by such UN-mandated bodies has formed the basis for war crimes prosecutions and could be drawn on by the International Criminal Court.

The COI's findings are based on interviews with victims and witnesses, hundreds of submissions, satellite imagery, medical reports and verified open-source information. Among the findings in the 59-page report on the Oct. 7 attacks, the commission verified four incidents of mass killings in public shelters which it said suggests militants had "standing operational instructions." It also identified "a pattern of sexual violence" by Palestinian armed groups but could not independently verify reports of rape.

The longer 126-page Gaza report said Israel's use of weapons such as MK84 guided bombs with a large destructive capacity in urban areas were incompatible with international humanitarian law "as they cannot adequately or accurately discriminate between the intended military targets and civilian objects." It also said Palestinian men and boys were subject to the crime against humanity of gender persecution, citing cases where victims were forced to strip naked in public in moves "intended to inflict severe humiliation."

The findings will be discussed by the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva next week. The COI composed of three independent experts including its chair South African former UN human rights chief Navi Pillay was set up in 2021 by the Geneva council.

## Conspiracies thwarted

(Continued from Page 1)

from the hard work of the government's economic team.

During the meeting, Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb provided a comprehensive briefing on the budget to the members. The members expressed complete confidence in the budget prepared by the government's economic team, led by the Prime Minister Shehbaz. Federal ministers and parliamentarians affiliated with the Pakistan Muslim League-N attended the meeting.

**PM orders building Health Tower in Islamabad to house hospitals, medical, nursing universities:** Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed the authorities concerned to build a health tower of international standard in the federal capital to house hospitals, medical and nursing universities, modern laboratories, and diagnostics centers.

The prime minister, chairing a meeting to review the matters related to the Ministry of National Health Services, instructed to formulate a strategy to build the said tower through the public-private partnership. Highlighting the significant responsibilities of the health sector to save human lives, the prime minister expressed his concerns about the report-

ed new polio cases in the country and resolved the elimination of the disease by utilising all-out-resources in collaboration with partners.

He also called for carrying out the third-party audit of the laboratories working under the purview of the Ministry of National Health Services, besides appointing well-qualified health professionals in the ministry and its allied departments. Vowing to personally monitor health-related matters, Prime Minister Shehbaz also ordered the third-party audit of the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan and the formulation of a strategy to bifurcate the drug processing from the Authority.

Besides, he also instructed outsourcing the human resource of all government hospitals in Islamabad and their waste treatment plants, besides the audit of country-wide nursing schools and colleges. During the briefing, the prime minister was told that a National Blood Transfusion and Blood Products Policy would be introduced soon, and work on a nursing and midwifery policy framework was in the final stage.

It was told that an evening shift was being introduced in the nursing colleges to increase the number of graduates. Moreover, work on a revised National Action Plan 2025-30 has been started to

control the population growth. As the prime minister was told about the installation of new health equipment worth Rs 711 million in Islamabad's hospitals, he instructed the third-party audit of the purchase of the said equipment.

It was informed that a modern hospital management system would be installed in Islamabad's hospitals and that waste management plants were operating in the capital city's five public and four private sector hospitals. The participants of the meeting were told that a strategy for insulin manufacturing in the country was being formulated.

The prime minister was also apprised of the plans to produce different types of vaccines in the country, building plasma fractionation centers and pharma park, and provision of machinery and equipment to Quetta's tertiary care hospitals. It was told that a 50-bed hospital would be set up in Musakhel, a tertiary care and Teshil headquarters hospital in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and an Institute of Medical Sciences and Daanish Hospital in Gilgit Baltistan. Federal ministers Ahsan Iqbal and Ahad Khan Cheema, PM's Coordinators Malik Mukhtar Ahmed and Rana Ehsan Afzal, and relevant senior officers attended the meeting.