

OGRA increases LPG price

LAHORE (INP): Following the increase in petrol prices, the OGRA increased the price of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) by Rs60 per kg. According to a notification issued by the OGRA, the price of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) was increased by Rs60 per kg o Rs264 per kg. The price of domestic LPG cylinder has gone up by Rs703 and commercial cylinder by Rs2706 following the hike in LPG price.



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Peshawar mosque blast toll climbs to 100 dead

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government has observed one day official mourning in the province against the yesterday's deadly suicide bombing in police line mosque that left over 100 dead and 221 injured.

Muhammad Asim, spokesman of Lady Reading Hospital said that death toll of blast raised to 100 as five more injured expired in hospital. Caretaker Chief Minister KP, Muhammad Azam Khan and IGP KP Moazam Jah Ansari have earlier told media at blast site and later addressing police jawans at police lines said that 95 people mostly policemen were killed and 221 others injured in the yesterday suicide bombing.

Azam Khan his government has constituted a high level inquiry committee to probe blast. The committee world identify those elements who are responsible for this inhuman act. The CM said a summary for payment of compensation to the families of the deceased and injured was ready. The government was standing with blast victims in this hour of tribulation and bereaved families would be provided all kinds of facilities including financial assistance.

Police force would be equipped with modern weapons and the law and order situation of the province has been brought into the notice of the Prime Minister, he added. IGP Moazam Jah said about 10-12 kilograms explosives were used in the blast.

He said the suicide bomber blew himself up in the mosque at around 1pm during the Zohr prayers, causing

the roof to come crashing down upon those who were offering the prayers at that time, which increased number of casualties. IGP Moazzam said security lapses could not be overlooked and investigations were underway to ascertain the facts. "We are checking one-month's CCTV footage and tracking the facilitators of the bomber," he added.

A joint investigation team (JIT) has been notified and the probe will clear everything soon, he said. "Those responsible will be identified and brought to book," he added. Bilal Faizi, spokesman of Rescue 1122 told media that search and rescue operations in the collapsed mosque have been completed after shifting of 146 victims including 54 martyred and 94 injured besides retrieving of about 17 dead bodies from the mosque's rubble.

Police sources said a preliminary investigation report of the explosion has been sent to Prime Minister. The evidence found at the site of the incident indicated that it was a suicide attack and its target was police. The roof tumbled down as the pillars collapsed, causing a lot of damage. The CCTV footage from the Police Lines gate and family quarters is being investigated.

There are over 2,000 policemen in the Police Lines working with eight different departments. A large number of civilians visit police lines on a daily basis where family quarters also existed besides construction work going near the blast site with workers coming in and going out every day, the IGP added. To express solidarity with the blast victims and

condemn the horrific bombing, the KP government has observed one day of official mourning in the province where the national flag was kept at half mast at all government and private buildings.

The people continued to gather at the residences of the martyrs and offered Fateha with bereaved families and expressed solidarity with them. Overall a gloomy day prevailed in KP especially in Charsadda, Nowsehra, Swabi, Mardan and Peshawar from where most of the martyred cops belonged to. People of all walks of life strongly condemned the horrific bombing and visited LRH to inquire after the injured cops.

10 cops from Charsadda among martyrs: At least ten police officials hailing from Charsadda district were among those martyred in one of the deadliest suicide attacks in Peshawar that ripped through a mosque in Malik Saad Police Lines here the other day.

According to information received from Lady Reading Hospital, 10 brave sons of Charsadda have so far been identified as martyred from the dreadful blast.

These police martyrs from Charsadda were identified as Inspector Dauran Shah, Assistant Sub Inspector Rizwan Ullah, Senior Clerk Wadood Shah, Hawaldars Ashfaq, Noorul Haq, Amjad, constables Shahab Liaquat, Naseem Shah, Khalid Jan and Gul Sharaf. An atmosphere of bereavement prevailed in Charsadda district on Tuesday as 10 coffins of the sons of the soil were brought to various localities for last rituals and burial.



PESHAWAR: Rescue 1122 workers busy in rescue work on the spot after yesterday's bomb blast in Police Lines. (Another picture on City page)

Terrorist to be dealt with iron hands, says COAS

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir on Tuesday directed all corps commanders to continue to focus on anti-terrorism operations in coordination with intelligence and law enforcement agencies (LEAs) with renewed resolve till the time sustainable peace is established.

The Army Chief presided over the 255th Corps Commanders' Conference held here at General Headquarters (GHQ), an Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said.

The participants were briefed in detail about prevailing and emerging threats, the situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and ongoing intelligence-based operations being undertaken by Army and LEAs for breaking the nexus between terrorists and their support mechanism across the country. The forum paid rich tributes to the martyrs of the Peshawar Police Line blast and vowed that perpetrators would be brought to exemplary justice.

On the occasion, the COAS emphasised that such immoral and cowardly acts could not shake the resolve of the nation but rather reinvigorate their determination to succeed in the ongoing war against terror with zero tolerance for any terrorist entity.

The forum taking notice of human rights violations and Indian design to alter the demographics of IIOJK reaffirmed the Army's commitment to Pakistan's principal support to the indigenous freedom struggle of brave Kashmiri people as per relevant UN resolutions and aspirations of the people of the Kashmir.

Maryam may meet Khaqan

LAHORE (INP): The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Chief Organizer Maryam Nawaz is likely to meet the disgruntled party senior leader and former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi.

As per details, the senior leader of PML-N and former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi is disgruntled with the party. The PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif has directed the party vice president Maryam Nawaz to clear Shahid Khaqan's reservations.

It was learnt that PML-N has been constantly sidelining the senior party leader in important party matters. The party has removed him as a senior vice president which created a rift between Shahid Khaqan and PML-N. The PML-N leader didn't welcome the part chief organizer Maryam Nawaz on her return to Pakistan.

Balochistan's uplift govts top priority: PM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday urged upon all the political parties to show unity against anti-Pakistan elements.

"My message to all political forces is one of unity against anti-Pakistan elements. We can fight our political fights later," the prime minister on his Twitter handle posted while alluding to Peshawar terrorist attack. He said through their despicable actions, terrorists wanted to spread fear and paranoia among the masses and reverse the hard-earned gains against terrorism and militancy.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday stressed that Pakistan, being one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change, needed a global response to build resilience.

Shehbaz urges unity among political forces against anti-Pakistan elements: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday urged upon all the political parties to show unity against anti-Pakistan elements.

The prime minister stated this in a meeting with Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), who is on an official visit to Pakistan. PM Shehbaz Sharif appreciated the work being done by UNEP and called for enhanced efforts to address climate change, biodiversity loss, and ecosystem degradation, more effectively.

He regarded climate change as one of the defining issues of present times. The Executive Director briefed the prime minister on the initiatives being taken by UNEP in Pakistan. The prime minister also encouraged UNEP, as part of the UN system, to contribute to and support Pakistan's efforts to build back better and greener, after the devastating floods in the country.

KP CM visits Police Lines, reviews losses, rescue work

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan on Tuesday paid a visit to Police Lines Peshawar where he inspected the place where a blast took place the other day, and reviewed losses caused by the deadly blast and rescue activities being carried out.

Chief Secretary Dr Shahzad Bangash, IGP Muazzam Jah Ansari, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Amjad Ali Khan and other concerned officials were also present on the occasion. The chief minister was briefed in details about losses by the Inspector General Police. The Caretaker Chief Minister offered Fateha and prayed for the eternal peace of the martyrs of the incident.

Addressing the Police personnel on the occasion, the chief minister said that the caretaker provincial

government stood by the victims of the brutal incident and will not leave them alone at this testing time. Every possible support and assistance would be extended to the bereaved families of martyred and injured. He added that the incident has left the whole nation gloomy and grieved. However, he said that such inhumane attempts cannot shatter the resolve of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police.

"The KP police has faced the tough time bravely in the past and is capable of dealing with any untoward situation in the future", he remarked. Meanwhile, talking to media persons, the Caretaker Chief Minister said that when the blast took place the other day, he was busy in meeting with the Prime minister of Pakistan to discuss the law and order situation of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with him. He said that the caretaker government will take pragmatic steps to equip the

police with the latest arms and weapons on priority basis.

Muhammad Azam Khan made it clear that the incident was in no way linked with the general elections in the province adding that unfortunately the province has been faced with such incidents in the past too. People should stay satisfied; the situation would return to normal, he remarked. He maintained that people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have rendered matchless sacrifices in the war against terrorism; their sacrifices would be remembered forever.

He said that the heirs of the martyrs and injured would be provided with all possible support adding that a summary with regard to provision of compensation packages is ready. Nothing can replace the precious human life; however the government will not let them alone and will go all out to share this testing time, he concluded.

Feb 7 fixed to indict Imran in Toshakhana case

ISLAMABAD (PPI): A district and sessions court in Islamabad on Tuesday fixed Feb 7 to indict Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan in the Toshakhana case.

The indictment date was announced by the Additional Sessions Judge Zafar Iqbal while hearing a criminal case against the PTI chairman, when he (Imran Khan) repeatedly failed to appear before the court despite his summoning.

The court directed Imran Khan to submit surety bonds of Rs20,000 to ensure his presence on the next date

of hearing, which is fixed for his indictment. Earlier on October 21, 2022, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) disqualified PTI chief Imran Khan in the Toshakhana reference under Article 63(1)(p) for making "false statements and incorrect declaration".

The ECP had held that the PTI chief had submitted a false affidavit and was found involved in corrupt practices under Article 63(1)(p). The ECP had also declared that Imran Khan had made "false statements and incorrect declarations, therefore he had also committed the offence of corrupt

practices defined under Sections 167 and 173 of the Elections Act, 2017".

The ECP held that the offence was, punishable under Section 174 of the Elections Act, 2017 and directed legal proceedings and follow-up action under Section 190(2) of the Elections Act. The ECP had also sent a reference to a trial court to begin criminal proceedings in the case. On November 22, 2022, the trial court had taken up the Toshakhana reference filed by Election Commission against Imran Khan for allegedly indulging in corrupt practices.

Peshawar remains gloomy

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Gloom and sadness prevailed over the residents of the provincial metropolis and district Charsadda here on Tuesday after the deadly blast in Malik Saad Shaheed Police Lines that took lives of more than 100 guiltless people.

All the leaders of political parties, traders, students and general public expressed grief over the incident and demanded probe into the incident. Islami Jamiat Talba (IJT) staged protest and afterwards carried out a walk in University of Peshawar that was largely participated by the students. Nazim IJT Islamia College Najeebullah and Nazim UoP Taqweemul Haq while addressing the participants said that institutions should investigate the blast and bring culprits to the court of law.

Former Railway Minister and ANP leader Haji Ghulam Ahmed Bilour visited the house of martyred Saifullah Khan and offered condolences to family members. He said that it is most unfortunate that innocent Pashtuns are being targeted by terrorists and miscreants. He also recalled the sacrifices of Pakhtuns during the wave of militancy.

Provincial Ameer JUI Maulana Ataur Rehman appealed to party workers and mohitamins of religious seminars to hold gatherings of Quran Khwani for the martyred souls of the blast and victims of Tanda Dam incident. He urged affluent persons of the society to extend all possible support and help to the heirs of martyred people.

Similarly, Provincial General Secretary JUI Maulana Ataul Haq Darwesh in a statement said that those who attacked the house of Allah proved that they are real enemies of Islam. He said the whole nation and institutions are united to end terrorism. He said due to policies of former incompetent rulers, law and order has once again deteriorated in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Similarly, the cabinet member of All Government Employees Grand Alliance Pakistan in a statement termed the Peshawar blast as an act of cowardice and demanded to arrest the perpetrators involved in the incident. They said that we equally share the grief of heirs of martyred families.

IMF-Pakistan discuss fiscal policies

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Pakistan here on Tuesday discussed and reviewed the economic and fiscal policies as well as the reforms agenda to accomplish the 9th review under the Extended Fund Facility.

According to press statement issued by the finance ministry, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator, Mohammad Ishaq Dar held a meeting with IMF review Mission led its Chief, Nathan Porter.

The meeting was attended by IMF resident Representative, Ms. Esther Perez Ruiz; Minister of State for Finance and Revenue, Dr. Aisha Ghous Pasha; Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Finance (SAPM), Tariq Bajwa, SAPM on Revenue, Tariq Mehmood Pasha, Governor

State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Jamil Ahmed, Secretary Finance, Chairman Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), members of IMF delegation and senior officers from finance division.

The finance minister welcomed the delegation and shared long standing friendly relations with the IMF. He briefed the mission on fiscal and economic reforms and measures being taken by the government in different sectors including bridging the fiscal gap, exchange rate stability and in energy sector for the betterment of the economy.

He apprised that reforms were being introduced in power sector and a high level committee has been formed for devising modalities to offset the menace of circular debt in gas sector. Dar also extended gratitude to the Managing Director of

IMF on continuation of talks and shared that as Finance Minister he had successfully completed the IMF programme in the past and that the government was committed to complete the current programme.

He further extended all his support to the Mission and committed to work together for reaching an agreement to complete the 9th review under Extended Fund Facility (EFF). IMF Mission Chief, expressed his confidence that the government will meet the IMF requirements for the completion of the 9th review and hoped that Pakistan would continue towards its progress on the reforms in various sectors and complete the IMF Programme within time effectively. He further added that IMF and Pakistan will be working together on fiscal reforms, the statement added.

UNSC members castigate Peshawar attack

UNITED NATIONS (APP): The UN Security Council members have condemned "in the strongest terms" the suicide terrorist attack against the Peshawar mosque, and called for those responsible for the "heinous and cowardly" action to be brought to justice.

A statement issued by the President of the 15-member Council for the month of January, Ambassador President Ishikane Kimihiro of Japan, expressed "deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims and to the Government of Pakistan, and they wished a speedy and full recovery to those who were injured."

Noting that the attack was claimed by the Tehrik-e-Taliban (TTP), the statement said that The members of the Security Council reaffirmed that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. "The members of the Security Council underlined the need to hold perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism accountable and bring them to justice," the statement said.

They urged all States, in accordance with their obligations under international law and relevant Security Council resolu-

tions, to cooperate actively with the Government of Pakistan, as well as all other relevant authorities in this regard. "The members of the Security Council reiterated that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, wherever, whenever and by whomsoever committed," the statement further said.

"They reaffirmed the need for all States to combat by all means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and other obligations under international law, including international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts."

Also condemning the attack, the High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), Miguel Angel Moratinos, emphasized in a statement that all forms of violence and acts of terror against civilians and religious sites on account of their religion or belief, are intolerable and unjustifiable and should be unequivocally condemned.

"Houses of worship are sacred places where worshippers should be able to practice and declare their faith safely and freely," he said, also expressing deep concern at the overall rise in

instances of discrimination, intolerance and all acts of violence directed against members of any religious or other communities. This includes incidents motivated by Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and Christianophobia and prejudices against persons of other religions, beliefs, gender or race.

UN Chief slams deadly terrorist attack

UNITED NATIONS (APP): UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has strongly condemned Monday's suicide bombing at a mosque in Peshawar in which some 59 people were martyred and many more wounded, saying it was "particularly abhorrent" that the attack occurred at a place of worship.

"Freedom of religion or belief, including the ability to worship in peace and security, is a universal human right," his Spokesman Stephane Dujarric said in a statement he read out at the regular noon briefing at UN Headquarters in New York. "The Secretary-General extends his heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and wishes a prompt recovery to those injured," the statement said.



PPP emerged as single largest party in local bodies elections: CM Sindh

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has emerged as the single largest party in the local bodies' elections, therefore it has the right to have its mayor.

"Had the MQM not boycotted the [local govt] elections our opponents would not have taken such a number of seats and this they know very well", he said while talking to the media after presiding over the convocation of the National Academy of Performing Arts (NAPA) at Hindu Gymkhana here on Tuesday.

To a question, the CM said that had there been some compulsions that's why the Sindh government wanted to delay the election, otherwise PPP would have taken many more seats than it has taken. "We requested MQM to avoid boycotting the election, but their party decided to do so, as a result their votes went in their (JI) share, otherwise they were not in a position even to take such a number of seats".

Murad Ali Shah said that in the history of the city, the PPP appointed its Administrator Murtaza Wahab for the first time and what he had delivered is not a secret to any Karachiites. "Our party has the history of serving this city and its people and In sha Allah we [PPP] will serve them as chief minister and mayor," he said.

Talking about the rehabilitation of

flood-affected people, the CM said that he has convened a post-Geneva Conference on January 8 in which the donor agencies would be given projects for the financial support they had pledged at Geneva. He added that the donors would be requested to execute the projects for their organizations or their vendors. "Everything must be transparent," he said.

The CM Sindh said that over 2 million houses, katcha and Pacca, have been damaged. "We have conducted their survey which was a gigantic task and now just after the conference, we would start distributing money through well-reputed NGOs which have been made partners for the housing project.

Replying to another question, Syed Murad Ali Shah said that around 20,000 school buildings have been damaged by the heavy rains and floods. "In such dangerous buildings students could not be allowed to take classes," he said and went on saying therefore, we have decided to house such schools in tents so that the education process of the children must continue. Regarding a question about Safe City, the CM said only the installation of cameras was not enough, but we have to strengthen our police with the latest equipment and gadgets.

He said that PPP was the worst victim of terrorism "We all, as a nation, have to defeat them [terror-

ism] with our vision, unity, policies and with our patriotism," he said and added they were the enemies of our country and religion, otherwise they wouldn't have exploded in the mosques and killed our brothers.

Earlier, speaking at the Convocation Ceremony of NAPA the CM lauded the efforts of Zia Mohiuddin and his team for successfully running the Performing Art institution under the name of NAPA. "Sindh is the land of Sufis who believed in co-existence, plural society and interfaith harmony," he said and added music, art and culture were the best tools to promote peace and tranquility in the plural society.

Sindh Minister for Culture Syed Sardar Shah tracing the history said that the Muslim Rulers in India ruled for centuries arts, music and crafts and brought people of different faiths into their fold. Sardar Shah said that if respect, obedience and love could not be snatched at gunpoint but it is the culture and the music that connected people of different faiths and nationalities. At the conclusion of the programme, the CM distributed degrees among the successful graduates of NAPA and congratulated them on their graduation. He also condemned the Peshawar blast and said "we have to identify such enemies of humanity and have to ward them off from our ranks," he concluded.

Punjab sends medical teams for blast victims' treatment

LAHORE (PPI): The caretaker Punjab government on Tuesday dispatched medical teams to assist the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa administration in treatment of people injured in a suicide attack on a mosque in Police Lines area of Peshawar. Punjab Health Minister Dr Javed Akram has sent the teams in line with the directives of interim Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi. He also held a telephonic conversation with Dr Amir Khan of Peshawar's Lady Reading Hospital and offered to provide assistance.

A team of the Jinnah Hospital's burn unit, which is led by Prof Kamran Khalid, has left for Peshawar where they will provide treatment to the injured people. The Punjab government will provide medicines and other medical facilities to the victims. Read More: KP govt announces one-day mourning as death toll in Peshawar blast reaches 83 On Monday, a suicide bomber, who was standing in the first row when Zuhr prayers were being offered in the mosque, blew himself up. The blast was so powerful that a part of the mosque caved in, leaving several worshippers trapped under the rubble. The death toll in the attack has surged to 87 and the casualties could surge as efforts are under way to recover people stuck in the rubble since Monday afternoon.

IGP reshuffles 47 DSPs in Lahore

LAHORE (PPI): Punjab Police Inspector General Usman Anwar made a reshuffle of 47 DSPs across the province, it emerged Tuesday. According to a notification, 47 deputy superintendents of police have been transferred and posted in the Punjab capital Lahore. It added that Ehsanullah, Iftikhar Rasool and Qadeer Bashir were ordered to report to the Central Police Office of the provincial capital.

Naveed Akmal transferred and posted DSP Islampur, Arshad Lower Mall, Mustehsan Tibbi City, Iftikhar Ahmed Awan Rang Mahal, Sohail Kazmi Gwalmandi, Mansoorul Hassan Racecourse, Asif Nadeem Gulzar Shahdara, Atif Meraj Shafiqabad, Shahzad Awan Misri Shah, Kashif Khalil Qila Gujar Singh, Zulfiqar Ali Butt Old Anarkali, Shafaq Nadeem Mughalpur, Muzam Ali Defence, Taimur Khan Sarwar Road, Muhammad Khan Garden Town, Sidra Chohang, Farhat Abbas Ichhra, Mian Qadir North Cantonment, Javed Siddique Barki, Ayaz Khan Baghbanpura, Syeda Shahr Bano Gulbarg, Abdul Hameed Manawan, Ali Akbar Muslim Town, Saber Ali Sabzar, Salman Zafar Iqbal Town, Hafiz Majid Police Lines, Iftikhar Ahmed Township, Hasan Aziz Gulshan Ravi, Ghulam Dastgir Sumanabad, Jamshed Ali Nawankot and Aamir Malik Raimond.

Chief Secretary GB along with school children visits Safe City

ISLAMABAD (APP): Tuesday. The delegation was given a complete tour of Safe City Islamabad, including the command and control centre and the centralized system of the project. They were also briefed about modern cameras, smart cars and monitoring system.

As per the vision of the prime minister and following the directions of the Interior Minister, the IGP said, the Safe City Islamabad had been upgraded and the project was helping to ensure modern policing in the city. He said the project was playing an important role in combating crime and

assisting various wings in policing affairs, including the operations and monitoring center, emergency control center, dispatch control center, e-challan system and 'Pukar-15' helpline.

The Eagle Squad has been linked to Safe City. The emergency services have been brought together under one roof while major shopping centers, toll plazas, hotels and motels have also been connected with Safe City, besides the extension of its services in different parts of the city", he added.

It was told that facial recognition cameras had been installed at the entry and exit points of the city.

The IGP said there had been a significant reduction in the violation of traffic rules, and fatal accidents in Islamabad had decreased

due to monitoring through safe city cameras.

Dr Akbar informed the delegation that thousands of complaints of citizens had been resolved through 'Pukar-15' helpline. "In addition, investigation officers visit Safe City to obtain video evidence of cases under investigation."

He further said that Safe City cameras were playing an important role in preventing crimes and bringing criminals to justice, improving the transparency and quality of investigations.

Mohiuddin Wani appreciated the use of modern technology in the Safe City project, and praised the performance of the Islamabad Police. He said that quick response to emergency calls and providing assistance to the affected people through 'Pukar-15' is commendable.



LAHORE: IG Railway Dr. Rao Sardar Ali Khan distributes prize and certificate among the position holders at passing out ceremony of 5th Intermediate. —APP Photo

Asif Zardari suggests Rs 35000 monthly wage for laborers

KARACHI (APP): Former President Asif Ali Zardari on Tuesday suggested that the government should set the monthly minimum wage of the labourer at Rs 35000 to provide relief to them.

While urging the government, he said that an official decision should be made to fix the aforesaid wage so that the laborers could live an easy life.

Asif Ali Zardari said that the government should take steps to redress the problems and difficulties of the laborers and resolve their issues. He said that it was the responsibility and duty of a government to provide relief to the people.

Youth killed over old indignation

LAHORE (INP): A youth was shot dead by two brothers over old indignation here on Tuesday. Police arrested the culprits with murder weapon.

SSP Iqbal Town, Usman Tippu said that key accused Ali Raza along with his brother Fazl gunned down 26-year-old Adnan Dilawar in Nawankot area of Lahore over old offense.

Accused Ali Raza was also injured in firing. The culprits attempted to flee from the scene but police held both besides recovering a pistol from their possession. The body and injured accused were shifted to hospital and police after registering a case into the incident started an investigation.

Rangers arrest accused murderers

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan Rangers Sindh and Police in a joint intelligence based operation in Machar Colony area of the megalopolis arrested an accused of murdering three brothers and recovered arms and ammunition from his possession.

According to spokesman for Rangers, the accused arrested, identified as Asadullah Afghani, on December 10, 2022 along with his other accomplices shot dead three brothers, namely Nazam Muhammad, Saeed Muhammad and Khayal Muhammad over a dispute of drug den. The FIR of the incident was registered with the Gabol Town police station.

Rangers and Police upon receiving the information of incident, constituted a joint strategy and acting on an intelligence based information arrested Asadullah Afghani. During initial interrogation, the arrested confessed to killing the three brothers, with the help of his accomplices, namely Milad Shah Afghani, Sadiq Afghani alias Qari and Yaseen. He also revealed his involvement in numerous street crimes and robberies.

The Rangers recovered a 9mm pistol along with ammunition. Raids were being carried out to apprehend his other accomplices.

Saad Rafique admits railways facing financial crisis

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Federal Railways Minister Khawaja Saad Rafique on Tuesday admitted that the railways was in a financial crisis, but hoped to secure a 'booster dose' of cash cache from the federal government.

Addressing a ceremony on Tuesday, Rafique said that they had over Rs1.14 billion in payables of which Rs930 million were being released today and another Rs210 million will be released tomorrow.

"Railways is facing a financial crisis, that is plain for everyone to see," he said. He added that this month, employees were

paid on January 20.

On increasing revenues, he said that they were working on short term lease.

He claimed that no one had bothered to fully read the Supreme Court order and as a result, some 2,600 shops along its network around the country were not leased. As a result, it caused a loss of billions to the railways.

He said that with the relaxation secured from the top court, tenders for leasing these shops has also been issued and it is hoped that they will be put on rent soon.

Contracts of agricultural land of the railways is

also up for renewal and together with the launch of the Green Line train, they hope to be able to raise around Rs2-3 billion in revenues.

Till that time, Rafique said that they will approach the federal government for a 'booster dose' of short-term cash bailout.

On conserving energy, he said that they will all have to make some sacrifices and change some habits to be able to live within means.

"It cannot be that you do not sacrifice but also want the country to get back on track," he said.

Responsible leadership in post pandemic world requires trust rebuilding

KARACHI (APP): The speakers have stressed the need for trust rebuilding among the countries especially, after the post-pandemic world.

Addressing the participants of the 11th annual International Women Leaders Summit held at a local hotel here on Tuesday, the speakers shared their stories of success and expressed their commitment to creating more awareness about the importance of girls' education and women participation in public offices.

Yasmin Hyder from New World Concepts highlighted that the conference was a culmination of a decade of achievements in Women Leadership and Empowerment.

The vision for this conference is to make women draw inspiration from global and Pakistani leaders and overcome the stereotypical barriers which restrict their growth and provide a forum for dynamic female leaders, entrepreneurs, opinion makers in the region, to explore their potential, share their success and inspire many more to take their lead, she expressed.

The guest speakers included Devrim Erol from Turkey, Major General Abeera Chaudry from Pakistan Army Medical Corps, Abdul Samad Dawood, Vice Chair Dawood Hercules Corporation, Naz Khan, Principal Country Officer, IFC.

Keynote speaker Devrim Erol from Turkey highlight-

ed the evolution of women's economic empowerment and the importance of promoting inclusiveness of women in the workforce. Major General Dr Abeera Chaudry, Tamghae Intiaz (M) of Army Medical Corps shared her experience of performing her duties in the face of severe challenges, both personal and professional.

The conference displayed the spirit of inclusion through active participation of Special Athletes from Special Olympics Pakistan. The conference explored topics related to Managing a Younger Human Capital, Use of Technology for Sustainable Living among others; and presented success stories of women leaders.

Rights activists demand to close environmentally dangerous factories

KARACHI (PPI): Human rights, labour rights and environmental activists

expressed serious concern about the deaths of 19 villagers near Moachh Goth in Keamari district and demanded the government close down all the illegal factories working in residential areas and causing threats to the human lives and environment of the city.

Speaking at an online consultation via Zoom, organized by The Knowledge Forum, the activists pointed out that the provincial government's labour, environment and industries departments should be made accountable for how factories are working in residential areas.

The speakers pointed out that a large number of unregistered and illegal factories are operating in different residential areas of Karachi and the government has allowed them to operate without any checks.

About seven to eight factories are operational in an old village called Ali Muhammad Goth without the approval of the government, said senior trade

unions leader Nasir Mansoor of the National Trade Unions Federation.

According to him, no one knows how many workers are working in these factories, which are mainly processing plastic material or making chemicals. The deadly fumes coming out from these factories caused 18 deaths in the village. The labour department says the factories are not registered and there is no record of workers with the provincial labour department.

After the news about the deaths, the health department officials visited the area and found that many other people were affected by diseases. Sindh Environmental Protection Agency cannot be absolved from responsibilities for the environmental impact of the factory. The government claimed to have sealed three factories and arrested an owner of the factory. However, the affectees have not provided any compensation.

Ms Nargis Rahman of Karachi Citizens' Forum said the overall air pollu-

tion in Karachi is alarmingly high which is posing danger to the lives of citizens. She said the Forum is going to hold a seminar on the Air Quality of Karachi at PMA house on Feb 6 in which experts from two universities will give a presentation.

Mr. Naeem Qureshi of the National Forum for Environment and Health said the government is not seriously tackling the environmental issues in the city.

The other participant of the consultation demanded the government provide immediate relief and compensation to the affected people of the village and a high-level inquiry be conducted to fix responsibilities on the government departments. The government should take preventive measures to save lives from pollution.

The civil society activists decided to write letters to the concerned government departments regarding the incident and fix their responsibilities. The rights activists demanded the Chief Minister of Sindh order SEPA authorities to conduct the study.

Government of Pakistan
PAKISTAN TELECOMMUNICATION AUTHORITY
www.pta.gov.pk

Tender Number : 1/II/2023

Invitation To Bid

ESTABLISHMENT OF OFFICER AND STAFF ACCOMODATION PESHAWAR.

Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (Government of Pakistan) invites sealed bids from the Contractors, registered with Income Tax and Sales Tax Departments and who are on Active Taxpayers List of the Federal Board of Revenue & valid registration for year 2022-23 with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) in category C-4 & above with PEC Code CE10 for Building works for establishment of officer and staff accomodation peshawar.

Bidding documents, containing detailed terms and conditions, etc. are available from office of Director (Civil Works) PTA HQs, Islamabad. Price of the bidding documents is Rs.5000/- (Non-refundable).

The bids, prepared in accordance with the instructions in the bidding documents, must reach at office of Director (Civil Works) PTA HQs, Islamabad on 7th March 2023 at 11:30 AM. Bids will be opened the same day at 12:00 AM. If the bid opening days fall on a public holiday, the bids will be opened on next working day at the same time. The technical bids will be opened on the same day accordingly. This advertisement is also available on PPRA/ PTA website at www.ppra.org.pk/www.pta.gov.pk. All technical bids must be accompanied with Bid Security as Rs one million in form of Call Deposit Receipt (CDR) in favour of PTA.

Engr.Csif Saeed
Director (Civil Work)

PTA HQs, F-5/1, Islamabad-Pakistan

Phone: 051-2878114, 9225357

Fax: 051-2878149

Email: asifsaeed@pta.gov.pk

PID(0) 4729/22

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PUBLIC NOTICE

Auction of Gold

Finance facilities were extended by Mobilink Microfinance Bank Limited against the security of deposit and pledge of gold to the customer mentioned below. The customer has neglected and failed to repay the finance extended to them by Mobilink Microfinance Bank along with the markup thereon.

Details:	
Branch	Haripur
Branch code	0017
Date of auction	03-Feb-2023
Time	1:00 PM
Call Deposit	Rs. 500/-

Customer Name	Account #	Address
Umer Riyasat	131618336	Doyan Abi P/o KTS Tehsil Haripur

Notice is hereby given to the customer in above mentioned that if payment of entire outstanding amount financed along with markup is not made by them to MMBL within 1 day of the publication of this notice, MMBL shall auction the gold ornaments and no further Public Notice shall be issued to call upon the customers to make the payments.

Mobilink Microfinance Bank Limited



POWA condemns suicide attack on Masjid

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Prosecutor Officer Welfare Association (POWA) KP condemned suicide attack on Masjid at Shaheed Malik Saad Police Lines and announced to observe black day today (on Wednesday) against the brutal blast.

POWA offered prayers for early recovery of injured and for highest places for departed souls. In this regard POWA president Sangeen Khan, general secretary Javeed Ali Mohmand, vice president Fazal Noorani and press secretary Zulfiqar Ali issued condemnation statement for media personnel.

POWA directed public prosecutors at district to hold prayers session at their respective stations for deceased and early recovery injured of suicide attack on Masjid at Peshawar police lines.

Minister, Secretary offer facilities to injured

PESHAWAR (APP): Federal Minister for Health Abdul Qadir Patel and Secretary Health Punjab on Tuesday contacted Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Ghulam Ali on telephone and expressed grief and sorrow over loss of precious lives in the mosque blast.

They offered healthcare facilities including doctors and medicines from Islamabad, Punjab and Sindh for the injured persons, said an official communication issued here by the Governor House on Tuesday.

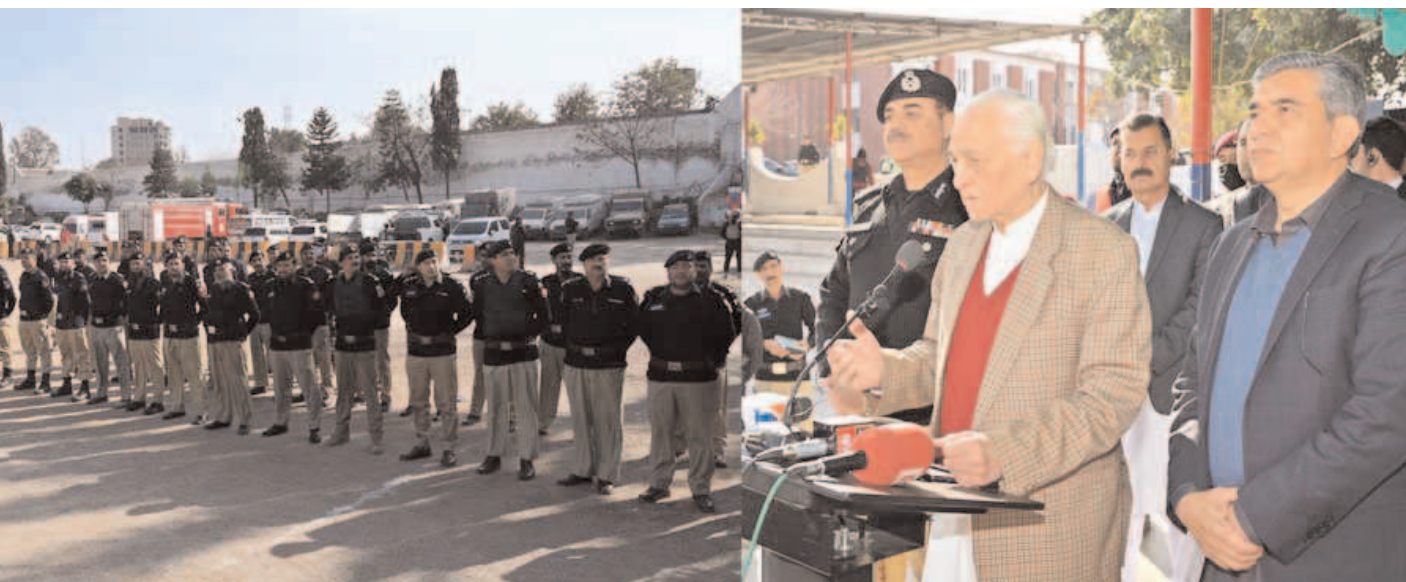
The Federal Minister and Secretary Health said that Islamabad, Sindh and Punjab governments were

ready to extend all kinds of medical facilities for the injured persons of the deadly blast.

They said that the federal and provincial governments share the grief of the bereaved families in this hour of distress.

Governor Ghulam Ali expressed gratitude to the Federal Minister and Secretary Health Punjab for their sympathies and humanitarian support.

He said the whole nation was grieved over the deadliest blast and appreciated that the Pakistani nation always remains ready to support each other in time of need and hour of tragedy.



PESHAWAR: Care-taker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan addressing police officials at Police Line.

KPEZDMC, HIA and COMSATS sign MOU

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A memorandum of understanding was signed between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development & Management Company (KPEZDMC), Hattar Industrialists Association (HIA) and COMSATS University Islamabad Abbottabad Campus. The MOU signing officials were CEO KPEZDMC Javed Khattak, Chairman HIA Muhammad Atta ur Rehman and Director COMSATS Abbottabad Campus Prof. Dr. Maroof Shah.

The Parties recognize the importance of collaboration to serve the needs of society through proper design, construction, and management of the waste facilities.

Consequently, the Parties are hereby establishing a working relationship and undertaking certain commitments & operations related to the environmental issues.

The main tasks include the capacity building on solid waste disposal - management and recycling, contaminated water - wastewater and its treatment, water reusability in the marble industry (reuse of effluents from marble industry), treatment issues of solid & liquid wastes in dispersed industrial zones, design of sewerage system and treatment capacity in new economic zones.

Representatives of the Parties will jointly search and select suitable land for the purpose of initial public dumping in Hattar Economic Zone, Haripur.

Hattar Economic Zone (HEZ) has been developed in 6 phases. The 1443 Acres Economic Zone is one of the major manufacturing hubs of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province with more than 400 manufacturing units operating in it. It is in close proximity to Islamabad and Punjab.

HEZ is located in District Haripur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. HEZ enjoys considerable accessibility since, Ghazi E.Z., Hattar SEZ and Small Industrial Estate under the Small Industrial Development Board are all located in the same district as Hattar Economic Zone.

City remains gloomy; people grief over loss of precious lives

PESHAWAR (APP): Gloom and sadness prevailed over the residents of the provincial metropolis and district Charsadda here on Tuesday after the deadly blast in Malik Saad Shaheed Police Lines that took lives of more than 100 guiltless people.

All the leaders of political parties, traders, students and general public expressed grief over the incident and demanded probe into the incident.

Islamic Jamiat Talba (IJT) staged protest and afterwards carried out a walk in University of Peshawar that was largely participated by the students. Nazim IJT Islamia College Najeebullah and Nazim UoP Taqw-

eemul Haq while addressing the participants said that institutions should investigate the blast and bring culprits to the court of law.

Former Railway Minister and ANP leader Haji Ghulam Ahmed Bilour visited the house of martyred Saifullah Khan and offered condolences to family members. He said that it is most unfortunate that innocent Pashtuns are being targeted by terrorists and miscreants. He also recalled the sacrifices of Pakhtuns during the wave of militancy.

Provincial Ameer JUI Maulana Ataur Rehman appealed to party workers and mohitams of religious seminaries to hold

gatherings of Quran Khwani for the martyred souls of the blast and victims of Tanda Dam incident. He urged affluent persons of the society to extend all possible support and help to the heirs of martyred people.

Similarly, Provincial General Secretary JUI Maulana Ataul Haq Darwesh in a statement said that those who attacked the house of Allah proved that they are real enemies of Islam. He said the whole nation and institutions are united to end terrorism. He said due to policies of former incompetent rulers, law and order has once again deteriorated in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Similarly, the cabinet member of All Government Employees Grand Alliance Pakistan in a statement termed the Peshawar blast as an act of cowardice and demanded to arrest the perpetrators involved in the incident. They said that we equally share the grief of heirs of martyred families.

Rescue 1122 completes operation

PESHAWAR (INP): Emergency service Rescue 1122 on Tuesday completed search and rescue operations in the collapsed mosque of Police Lines blast.

Rescue 1122 spokesman Bilal Faizi said that the Rescue 1122 teams transferred 146 people to the hospital during the search operation including 94 injured and 54 martyred.

He said that 37 operational vehicles and 168 personnel of Rescue 1122 took part in the operation.

He said that the rescue teams transferred the bodies of the martyrs to Peshawar, Nowshera, Khyber, Swabi, Bannu and D.Khan.

CAA staffer returns lost bag to owner

PESHAWAR (INP): An employee of the Civil Aviation Authority on Tuesday returned a lost bag containing valuable items to the airport administration.

As per details, CAA employee Ijlal Maseeh found two gold rings and a purse near the custom counter early morning after flight landings from Bahrain and Abu Dhabi at Bacha Khan airport Peshawar.

Later, Ijlal handed over the purse to the supervisor Amin. He then gave it to the airport administration.

Upon opening the purse, there were 8050 Saudi Riyals, which is equal to almost Rs 5.88 lac.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) appreciated the act of honesty of the employee and the valuable items were returned to their owner.



PESHAWAR: Rescue 1122 workers busy in rescue work on spot after Monday's bomb blast in Police Line.

SCCI condemns suicide bombing on mosque

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) president Muhammad Ishaq strongly condemned the deadliest suicide blast inside a mosque of Peshawar's Police Lines. He paid rich tribute to martyred police officers and 'jawans' in the blast.

In a statement issued here on Tuesday, Ishaq described the Peshawar's suicide bombing was an attempt to sabotage the peace of Pakistan generally and particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

The SCCI chief clarified that those who were trying to sabotage the peaceful atmosphere couldn't succeed with its nefarious designs.

Ishaq noted the peace was restored in the whole country, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as result of matchless sacri-

fices rendered by police and security forces.

Sacrifices of police and security forces will never go into vain, he added. He said the whole nation stands by the police and security institutions and is ready to give any kind of sacrifice anytime to fight against terrorism and for peace building.

The chamber's president termed the Peshawar's suicide blast was a cowardice act, which is strongly condemnable.

He added that the business community shared grief with the victims' fam-

ilies and prayed for Allah Al-might to rest the souls of martyred police officers and jawans with eternal peace and speedy recovery of the injured people of the blast.

Ishaq praised the whole nation, police and security forces' resolve of the nation against terrorism unwavering in face of attacks.

He said despite such deadliest and cowardice acts, the whole nation has united against terrorism and establishment of peace, stability, and security of the country.

PTI condemns suicide attack

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Benish Irfan Khan said that bomb blast in Peshawar Police Lines Mosque is a heartbreaking incident and there are no words to condemn it.

She claimed that this is the worst kind of terrorism and brutality. Prostrate Muslims were martyred in the mosque. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police is our first line of defense.

The government should pay attention to the law and order situation in the province. Benish Irfan Khan, during the rule of Tehreek-e-Insaf, there was peace and order throughout Pakistan, including Peshawar, now the incidents of terrorism have increased.

The sacrifices of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa



police are not hidden from anyone. The central government is sitting only for its own interests.

PTI leader added that incidents of terrorism have increased, while terrorism has increased after the forced removal of the Tehreek-e-Insaf government at the center, the city of flowers, Peshawar, has been bathed in blood once again, while the governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is trying to establish peace and order in Peshawar.



PESHAWAR: Chairman Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Petroleum Dealers Abdul Majid addressing a press conference. — F.P. photo

Ex-lawmakers from KP pledge to sustain collective efforts for girls' education

PESHAWAR (INP): Former lawmakers from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly belonging to different political parties vowed to sustain support and momentum for prioritizing girls' education beyond party lines in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The pledge was made in a meritorious event organized by Blue Veins, a non-governmental organization and the office of the Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly where ex-lawmakers renewed and recharged their commitment through pledged state-

ment to support girls' secondary education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and use their influence as individuals, political activists and representatives of their political parties.

According to a press release issued here on Tuesday, the signed pledge statement reads "We as legislators of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly representing different political parties, have unanimously supported the agenda of girls' education by increasing resources to girls' educa-

tion and allocating budget with the 70: 30 ratios to improve gender parity in education. During our tenure, we did all possible efforts to ensure that girls' education remains a development priority for KP".

Through the pledge, the lawmakers agreed to support and advocate for policies and programs that promote and ensure equal access to quality education for girls while recognizing the importance of educating girls as a mean to achieve gender equality and empowerment.

Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Mushtaq Ahmad Ghani said, "The members of all political parties have made significant contributions in promoting right based agenda including girl's education."

We as political activists, acknowledge that educating girls and women benefits not only individuals, but also families, communities, and entire societies, the lawmakers said and added, we recognize the significant barriers that prevent girls from accessing and completing their education, including

poverty, discrimination, and cultural attitudes".

Dr. Sumera Shams, ex-chairperson of the Women Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) said "Women parliamentarians and political activists beyond party lines believe that when girls and women are educated, they have the power to shape a brighter future for themselves, their communities and the world. "We are committed to inculcate all the efforts for girls' education in our political party manifestos and election campaigns." she added.

Training workshop on preparation of poultry feed held for flood affected women

PESHAWAR (APP): The Faculty of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Sciences of the University of Agriculture, Peshawar, in collaboration with Higher Education Commission on Tuesday organised a three-day training workshop on the economic development and welfare of women in

flood-affected areas.

The title of the workshop was "Production of Meal/Super Insects as Poultry Feed for Employment of Rural Women in Flood Affected Areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa."

Addressing on the occasion Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Jahan Bakht, Dean Prof Dr

Sar Zamin Khan and Chairperson of the Department of Poultry Science Dr Naila Imtiaz addressed the workshop and said that mealworm was very important in poultry feed and insects could be used as a high-quality, efficient, sustainable alternative protein source.

They said that insects are

the cheapest alternative source of protein supplements in poultry feed adding that insects could be used in chicken feed in dry or fresh form.

They said that mealworm was an important insect that has the potential to be used as a protein substitute for soybean and fish

meat in poultry feed and it could be used as an organic feed instead of protein.

They said that it would have the advantage of quality of poultry production due to quality feed and would have omega-3 eggs and meat which would be useful for heart disease patients.



In brief

Nation united against terrorism F.P. Report

QUETTA: Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri said that terrorist elements are trying to establish an atmosphere of fear in the country under a well-thought-out conspiracy, which will not be allowed to succeed under any circumstances. The Peshawar incident is a heinous act of sabotaging the atmosphere of law and order, those responsible for the blast will not escape from the grip of the law. She claimed that such acts are anti-Islamic and anti-national elements are behind the terrorist attacks, who are trying to defame the religion of Islam and Pakistan. At this time, the entire Pakistani nation is saddened. May Allah grant the families of the martyr's patience and courage to bear this shock. The entire nation is united against terrorism and is determined to root out terrorism, providing the best treatment facilities to the injured. Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri has strongly condemned the explosion in the Peshawar Police Line Masjid. Expressing heartfelt sympathy and condolence, she has said that the Peshawar incident is extremely heartbreaking and condemnable. Every Pakistani is sad. May Allah grant the families of the martyrs patience and courage to bear this trauma. She said that anti-humanity terrorists do not deserve any concession. Those responsible for the blast will be arrested soon and brought to justice. Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri said that the suicide blast in the Masjid of Peshawar Police Lines, in which more than 90 innocent people were martyred and more than 200 injured, is a nefarious attempt by the enemies to spoil the peace and order situation of the country. The entire nation shares the grief of the bereaved families and all our sympathies are with the bereaved and the injured.

Preparations in full swing

MUZAFFARABAD (INP): Brisk preparations for observing Kashmir Solidarity Day are at their full swing in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on February 5 to express complete solidarity with the oppressed brethren in Indian illegally occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IOJK). Political parties and activists have pledged to continue extending fullest support to the Kashmiris' legitimate right to self-determination being denied by India for the last 76 years. This year the day is being observed in the most tragic scenario followed by the August 5, 2019, unilateral action of scrapping the special status of the IOJK by the Modi-led Indian government. The bleeding valley has been turned into the world's largest prison following the imprisonment of the innocent Kashmiris protesting against the nefarious Indian action. In AJK, arrangements are being given final shape to observe the day with traditional zeal and fervor. It would be a state holiday on February 5 throughout AJK. People and the Governments of Pakistan and AJK observe the day every year not only to renew their deep-rooted love and affection for the people of IOJK but also to reiterate their commitment and dedication to the liberation of the occupied territory from the Indian subjugation. The day will dawn with special prayers for the martyrs of Kashmir, the success of the freedom struggle and expression of solidarity with the Kashmiri people. Mass rallies, symposia, walk-for-peace, convention meetings and speech declarations would be held in Azad Kashmir, Pakistan and abroad.

Heavy snowfall break 15 old record in Chitral

F.P. Report

CHITRAL: The recent heavy snowfall has break fifteen old record in Chitral due to which the roads of various valleys including Kailash had been blocked for all vehicular traffic or commuters face difficulties while travelling on these roads due to heavy snowfall.

Executive Engineer Communication and Works (C&W) Riaz Wali Shah directed removing snow from these roads in M&R maintenance and repair fund. C&W gave the task to Drosch Construction Company to remove the snow from all the valleys and open them for traffic. In various valleys across Chitral, C&W has engaged tractors that are removing snow from the roads with blades and opening the roads for traffic.

XEN C&W department Engineer Riaz Wali Shah said that we try to remain the roads open for traffic at all times and people should not face any difficulties. This is the reason why, despite the limited resources, the Department of Communication and Works is removing snow from all the roads which were closed for traffic or people face difficulty to walk on these snow bound road where snow water freeze.

Director of Drosch Construction Company Subadar Retired Haider Ali Shah said that as soon as we received instructions that these roads should be cleared, our missionaries started moving and our team visited these valleys and cleared snow from the roads of Rambor Valley, Bomburit Valley, Brier Valley, Sweer Valley, Ursoon, Janjirit Koh, Midgalshit, internal roads of Darosh, Chitral West Road, Beuri, Arundu, Hospital Road, Old Bazar, Mughalanda and Governor Cottage Roads. Our tractors are removing snow from these roads by installing blades as to facilitate the public and provide convenience to the people by opening these roads and to reduce their difficulties.

Ladies Qazi of Kalash community Shahi Gul Kailash, a well-known social worker from Kailash Valley, said that due to the snowfall, we were facing a lot of dif-

ficulties and we could not even take our patients to the hospital, but the C&W department provided tractor and cleared the roads. She also thanked the C&W Department and its respective contractors who started the work immediately and cleared these roads.

Zia ul Qasim, a resident of Kailash Valley, said that our road was very closed due to snowfall, now it has been opened by the C&W department. We demand the Prime Minister to widen our road and build it soon. Residents of Bomburit, also thanked the department as well as the construction company for opening the road in the valley.

Sakina Kailash said that earlier the road was very bad, now our problem has been solved to some extent by opening it, but still we demand the Prime Minister to construct this road as soon as possible and also widen it, now the road is very narrow. We face a lot of difficulties while coming to our homes.

According to Saddam Hussain, a resident of Broom village of Kailash valley who is a shopkeeper, he said we could not bring goods for our shop due to the road closure and we were also facing a lot of difficulties in going to the hospital in case of emergency.

Sher Mast Kalash also spoke and said that our road was very bad but we are disappointed because the work on it was stopped. Ruqia Kalash who is a school student said that the road was closed due to snowfall. There were many difficulties in coming and going to study. Kareena Kalash is also a resident of Kailash. She says that due to heavy snowfall, we could not even go to schools or our tuition centers and now the road has been reopened which made it easier for us.

A female tourist from Karachi Dr. Sadia Khalil has come to Chitral for the first time and she was going to Kalash valley. She was more excited by seeing snow bound road and white mountain after snowfall. However, more attention is needed on these roads so that tourists do not face difficulties in commuting here, she added.

PTI ex-MNA welcomed on arrival to Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Pakistan Tehreek Insaf former MNA from Lower Dir Muhammad Bashir Khan was taken to his native village Gambhir in a vehicular procession from Chakdara on his arrival to the district here on Tuesday after the acceptance of his de-notification by the election commission of Pakistan. A large number of the party workers gathered at Chakdara entry point and on the Khazana bypass road to welcome the former MNA.

The MNA also addressed a protest rally against the Peshawar suicide blast outside the Chakdara press club and at the residence of Syed Taimur Jan at Khazana. Speaking on the occasion the former MNA came down hard on the federal government and said it was unable to rule the country. He said the Peshawar police lines' blast was a total security breach that claimed more than 100 precious human lives. The PTI former lawmaker said the PDM could not control the record inflation and it had now decided to bow before the IMF. The PTI local activists Ubaidur Rehman, Aimal Khan, Fawad Khan and Ziaul Haq also spoke on the occasion.

Bashir Khan said the PTI government at the center was overthrown under a planned conspiracy. He alleged the 'imported' government had ruined the

country during the last eight months and now it had been begging for financial support at any cost. He said the government had taken the right to live from the citizens by increasing the prices of petroleum products by Rs 35 per litre. The former lawmaker said the country was at stake as terrorists were free to carry out sabotage acts while the government did nothing to curb the resurgence.

About his party, he said that voters and supporters firmly stood by Imran Khan and the PTI would come into power with a two third majority if fair elections were held on time. The former MNA offered himself for accountability and claimed that record development projects were completed during his tenure as MNA. The party workers accompanying him also chanted slogans in favour of the PTI chief Imran Khan and Bashir Khan and danced to the party songs on the way to Gambhir.

PHD defence: A Ph.D scholar Muhammad Shafiq on Tuesday successfully defended his thesis and got the degree from the department of Islamic Studies, University of Malakand under the supervision of Dr Najmul Hassan.

He completed his research on 'An investigative and comparative study of problems faced by children in Swat in the light of Islamic teachings and Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989.

The external examiners of the scholars were Dr Karim Dad from the Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan and Dr Abdul Wahab from the International Islamic University Islamabad. The supervisors congratulated the scholar and termed his research an important addition to the knowledge.

Alleged drug-dealer held

F.P. Report

CHITRAL: Narcotics Eradication Team (NET) has arrested one alleged drug-dealer and recovered 30 liters liquor from his possession, on Tuesday.

NET led by SI Bulbul Hassan conducted an operation and seized 30 liters of liquor (tara) from the possession of the notorious drug dealer Liaquat Hayat son of Abdul Ghaffar Sukna Ochshat Bala. The accused was arrested. Further investigation is ongoing.

NET requested to support the police in making Lower Chitral drug-free. Inform the local police about the activities of drug dealers in your area. In case of any further complaints, text/WhatsApp on DPO Lower Chitral's personal number 03225333397. The name of the informant will be kept confidential.

Pllice Lines attack: 6 cops laid to rest in Mardan

F.P. Report

MARDAN: The funeral prayers of six policemen were offered at their native areas with official honor who were martyred in tragic suicide attack at Police Lines Masjid in Peshawar while large number of people from every walk of life were present, on Tuesday.

District Police Officer (DPO) Haroon Rashid Khan, circle SDPOs and other police officers and men including SHO's participated in the funeral prayers. Jabr, Constable Khalid Khan and Constable Sharafat ullah resident of Garhi Kapura, Constable Mohammad Syed resident of Kohi Barmol, Constable Zahid resident of Ghalla Dheer and Constable Irfan Khan Resident Saro Shah were brought to their native village where the funeral prayers were performed with full official honors.

Police personnel saluted the martyrs, police officers placed flowers on the graves of the martyrs and recited Fateha and prayed for the high status of the martyrs. On the occasion of the funerals, the eyes of the local people and citizens of different schools of thought were tearful and determined to stand side by side with their police in the war against terrorism; the sacrifices of the martyrs will not go in vain, slogans of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police Zindabad.

DC assumes additional charge: Deputy Commissioner Mardan Captain Retired Abdur Rahman has assumed additional charge of Chief Executive Officer of Water and Sanitation Services Company Mardan (WSSCM), on Tuesday.

After charge assumption he said that my mission is to further improve supply of drinking water and sanitation services. He directed all officials to use all their abilities and energies for timely delivery of municipal services to the citizens.

He also appealed to the citizens that every member of the society should take care of cleanliness, water safety and avoid water wastage and littering in designated places. Deputy Commissioner said that this is our moral, national and religious duty to make our environment clean and waste free.

Villagers kill two robbers

SHEIKHUPURA (INP): Two robbers were killed while one person was injured after villagers resisted a robbery in a poultry farm here on Tuesday. Police said that four armed robbers barged into a poultry farm in village Galodhian of Sheikhupura for dacoity.

Villagers gathered at the scene after which robbers started firing injuring owner of the poultry farm.

In retaliatory firing of villagers, two robbers wanted in more than a dozen cases were killed while their two accomplices managed to escape. Police cordoned off the area after the incident and started efforts to arrest the escaped robbers. Bodies of the killed robbers were shifted to hospital.

Completion of construction works on RHC demanded



F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Residents of Loy-Shelman, the remote and bordering area of Landi Kotal district Khyber demanded of the concerned authorities to forthwith issue funds to complete construction of Rural Health Center (RHC)suspended for the last one and half year.

Village council chairman Muhammad, Yaseen, councillor Muhammad Riaz Malik Meeram Khan and others lamented that with their hectic efforts, the lonely civil dispensary was upgraded to RHC and construction work on the proj-

ect including wards, rooms and Outdoor Patients Departments (OPDs) was started on it.

However, they added the development work was halted for the last one and half year due to lack of funds while quoting the contractor and said approximately 70% work was done and left incomplete.

The locals of Loy-Shelman blamed that approximately 22 million rupees, a share of total funds allocated for the building of RHC, had been shifted to another project somewhere in the province that was unfair to them.

Since the creation of the

country they faced hardships and because of the dearth of health facilities locally, they took their patients twenty miles away to headquarter hospital, Landi Kotal for medical treatment, they remarked.

The health high-up said that when the RHC was handed over to the department, they would deploy six medical officers and other paramedical staff to treat the people of the area. They urged the government to release funds for the completion of structuring of RHC so that they could avail facilities of curing at their door steps.

Replacement of gates at Sukkur barrage inaugurated

F.P. Report

SUKKUR: The inaugural ceremony for replacement of six gates and related construction works at Sukkur barrage held while financed by World Bank, on Tuesday. The commissioning ceremony of replacement of six number Gates of Sukkur Barrage and associated works on emergency basis under world bank funded SBIP/S0 contract, manufactured and installed by Karachi Shipyard and Engineering Works (KS&EW) was held at the Hotel One Banquet Hall Sukkur on Tuesday 31 January 2023.

The six barrage gates No. 31, 33, 34, 35, 39 and 40 each gate 50-tonne has been fabricated on emergency basis under the supervision of the Consultants joint venture M/s Associated Consulting Engineers and M/s National Development Consultants. The width of each new gate is 60 feet, and height is 23 feet which can maintain maximum pond level of 200.5 feet. Speaking on the occasion as the chief guest, KS&EW Karachi Shipyard and Engineering Works managing director Rear Admiral Salman Ilyas, said that it was yet another landmark project that spoke volumes about the immortal partnership and coordination between KS&EW and Sindh Irrigation Department.

"These Gates will not only enhance the opera-

tional capability of Sukkur Barrage, but it will also go a long way in protecting the national assets and managing water resources of Sindh province. It will play a vital role towards achieving self-reliance in indigenous construction," he said. Earlier, Project Director, Project management office, Sindh Barrages Improvement Project Ghulam Mohiuddin Mughal in his speech said that this project indicated the reliance and confidence that the Irrigation department and Sindh government reposed in KS&EW. "The replacement of six barrage gates has certainly enhanced our capabilities of indigenous manufacturing of gates," he added.

He said that Sukkur Barrage is of vital economic irrigation of Sindh to irrigate 3.2 million hector under it's command, 25percent total canal irrigated land in the country and 70 percent of the Sindh entire command land and considered to be life line for Sindh, constructed 1932 and completed 91 years. He said that all the main barrages gates were replaced in 1986 to 1992. He said that feasibility study was conducted by M/s Atkinson, ACE Associate Consultant Engineers and NDC National Development Consultant joint venture from 2011 to 2017 and rehabilitation of the Sukkur barrage was proposed. He said that gate no 39 failure and misaligned in the hoist

assembly along with five more gates considered as venerable. PD SBIP Mr Mughal further said that in this regards, panel of experts has advised that replace these venerable gates instead of rehabilitation.

Chief Engineer Sukkur Barrage Sardar Ali Shah in his address congratulated the PMO-SBIP officers and team of Consultant ACENDC JV and KS&EW personnel for their excellent performance towards fulfillment of this milestone. He said that the Sukkur barrage, which is the pride of Pakistan's irrigational system and is the largest irrigation network of it's kind in the whole world was constructed across the river Indus with design capacity of 1.5 million cusecs capacity initially, later on, after model study, ten gates were closed permanently and discharge capacity of the barrage reduced and become 0.9 million cusecs, but it passed 1.2 million cusecs in previous supper floods. He said that main problems of the barrage remained in passed excessive silt entry in right bank canals. He said that 1952 to 1956 repair work arches through genit-ing work carried out, 1958 to 1966, cracks in arches were repaired. He said that during 2018, a crack was developed in gate no 39 along with five other gates have been replaced by Karachi Shipyard under SBIP.

Judge announces four times death penalty to murderer

F.P. Report

KHYBER: District & Sessions Judge Khyber Hidayat Ullah Khan convicted has Atta-ur-Rehman for four times death penalty and imposed Rs20 million for killing his uncle along with three sons over dispute on wall in the premises of Malagori area of Khyber, on Monday.

Senior Public Prosecutor Shafiqullah Khan appeared before court and argued that four persons, a father and his three sons namely Ismail khan s/o Mamu, Khalil, Muhammad Aman, and Raseel Ss/o Ismail Khan were done to death on 25-02-2016 which was reported by Naib Tehsildar to Assistant Political Agent Jamrud through special report Ex-Pw/7/1 dated 26-02-2016 alleging that he was informed by line officer Mullagori on 25-02-2016 at 16.30 hours about the murder of four persons in village Zaga Mullagori area.

It is in the report that there was a wall dispute between

Ismail with his brothers Razmat khan and Matakan Ss/o Mamu Khan due to which Razmat Khan and Matakan Ss/o Mamu Khan and Attaur Rehman, Zia ur Rehman Ss/o Razmat khan fired upon their opponent which resulted into the murder of, 1. Ismail Khans/o Mamu khan 2. Rasool Khan 3. Khalil Khan 4. Muhammad Aman Ss/o Ismail Khan. He states that on receiving the information, he along with khasadar contingent of Tehsil Mullagori and Jamrud rushed to the spot, where the house of Muhib Gul (uncle of the accused) was cordoned off and also arrested him having connection with the offenders.

The Khasadar party was strictly alerted for arresting /searching of the actual accused in the area. During the interrogation the said Muhib gul disclosed about the hiding of the accused in some other place. The Political Naib Tehsildar further states in his report that he with the efforts of khasadar party succeeded in arresting the wanted accused

namely Atta Ur Rehman and Zia Ur Rehman Ss/o Razmat Khan at 2400 Hours in Kuki Khel Afridi area. It is further in his report that after the stated arrest one Sial Muhammad s/o Grani Gul Tar khel who had provided the weapon of offense to the accused for killing their opponent party was also arrested from his house and brought to Tehsil Mullagori.

The statement of all arrested accused was recorded and placed on file. The search operation ended successfully at about 01.00 hours on 26th February 2016 and all the accused were sent to Jamrud lock up. Under the scheme of the defunct FCR the matter was then investigated. Accused facing trial Atta Ur Rehman and Zia Ur Rehman along with Sial Muhammad as well as one Ajab Gul s/o Said Asghar were arrested. Latter on Sial Muhammad and Ajab Gul were exonerated through the interference of jirga declaring them innocent. the learned APA Jamrud with the consent of accused Atta Ur Rehman and Zia

Ur Rehman constituted a jirga for handing down an opinion in the matter through Ex-Pw/4/2 and the jirga included Malak Aurangzeb Mullagori, Malak Gul Sahib Khan, Malak Fazal Manan, and Malak Abdul Manan Mullagori.

The case against accused Atta Ur Rehman and Zia Ur Rehman vide reference EX-Pw/4/1 was referred to the council of elders/jirga members for their opinion. The council of elders in their opinion EX-Pw/04/03 declared the accused Zia Ur Rehman innocent and declared the accused Atta Ur Rehman guilty. Lastly, the learned Assistant Political agent Jamrud vide his order dated 08-Jamrud-2017 declared both the accused guilty and convicted accused Atta Ur Rehman to 14 years RI and fine of Rs. 02 lacs and in default thereof to serve 03 years SI for each murder and convicted accused Zia Ur Rehman to 05 years RI and fine of Rs. 02 lacs and in default thereof to serve 18 months SI. They were also extended the benefit u/s 382 Cr.

P.C.

The order of the then APA was assailed in appeal before Learned Additional Commissioner Peshawar Division Peshawar and the court of appeal vide order dated 28-09-2017 acquitted the accused Zia Ur Rehman, however to the extent of accused facing trial Atta Ur Rehman the appeal was dismissed.

Thereafter the matter went to worthy Peshawar High court Peshawar in criminal revision # 97-P/2019 and vide order dated 20-02-2020 the order of APA dated 08-06-2017 and of the additional commissioner FCR Peshawar Division Peshawar dated 28-09-2017 was set aside directing the District Police Officer Khyber to submit challan before the court of ordinary jurisdiction as by then merger in the light of 25th Constitutional Amendment has taken place and FCR had been abolished and the judicial forum under FCR had been replaced by District Judiciary and the erstwhile FATA had been merged with the

province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Thereafter fresh challan within the meaning of section 174 Cr. P.C was submitted with the same investigation report conducted under the FCR in vogue at the time of the incident. The accused were summoned and after complying with legal formalities he was formally indicted to which he pleaded not guilty and claimed trial.

The prosecution was directed to produce evidence. The prosecution produced 09 witnesses. The jirga members pronounced their unanimous verdict available on file as Ex-Pw/4/3 whereby the jirga in their verdict declared the accused facing trial Atta Ur Rehman guilty. The jirga verdict written in Urdu too is reproduced for ready reference, D&SJ Khyber Hidayat Ullah Khan imposed Atta-ur-Rehman for four times death penalty and imposed Rs20 million fine against the murderer after conclusion of arguments in killing of his uncle along with three sons over dispute on wall.



Biden to end Covid emergencies on May 11

WASHINGTON (AP): President Joe Biden informed Congress that he will end the twin national emergencies for addressing COVID-19 on May 11, as most of the world has returned closer to normalcy nearly three years after they were first declared. The move to end the national emergency and public health emergency declarations would formally restructure the federal coronavirus response to treat the virus as an endemic threat to public health that can be managed through agencies' normal authorities.

It comes as lawmakers have already ended elements of the emergencies that kept millions of Americans insured during the pandemic. Combined with the drawdown of most federal COVID-19 relief money, it would also shift the development of vaccines and treatments away from the direct management of the federal government. Biden's announcement comes in a statement opposing resolutions being brought to the floor this week by House Republicans to bring the emergency to an immediate end. House Republicans are also gearing up to launch investigations on the federal government's response to COVID-19.

Then-President Donald Trump's Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar first declared a public health emergency on Jan. 31, 2020, and Trump later declared the COVID-19 pandemic a national emergency that March. The emergencies have been repeatedly extended by Biden since he took office in January 2021, and are set to expire in the coming months. The White House said Biden plans to extend them both briefly to end on May 11. "An abrupt end to the emergency declarations would create wide-ranging chaos and uncertainty throughout the health care system - for states, for hospitals and doctors' offices, and, most importantly, for tens of millions of Americans," the Office of Management and Budget wrote in a Statement of Administration Policy. More than 1.1 million people in the US have died from COVID-19 since 2020, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, including about 3,700 last week.

Congress has already blunted the reach of the public health emergency that had

the most direct impact on Americans, as political calls to end the declaration intensified. Lawmakers have refused for months to fulfill the Biden administration's request for billions more dollars to extend free COVID vaccines and testing. And the \$1.7 trillion spending package passed last year and signed into law by Biden put an end to a rule that barred states from kicking people off Medicaid, a move that is expected to see millions of people lose their coverage after April 1. "In some respects, the Biden administration is catching up to what a lot of people in the country have been experiencing," said Larry Levitt, the executive vice president for health policy at Kaiser Family Foundation. "That said, hundreds of people a day are still dying from COVID." Still, some things will change for Americans once the emergency expires, Levitt pointed out.

The costs of COVID-19 vaccines are also expected to skyrocket once the government stops buying them, with Pfizer saying it will charge as much as \$ per dose. Only 15% of Americans have received the recommended, updated booster that has been offered since last fall. People with private insurance could have some out-of-pocket costs for vaccines, especially if they go to an out-of-network provider, Levitt said. Free at-home COVID tests will also come to an end. And hospitals will not get extra payments for treating COVID patients. Legislators did extend for another two years telehealth flexibilities that were introduced as COVID-19 hit, leading health care systems around the country to regularly deliver care by smartphone or computer.

The Biden administration had previously considered ending the emergency last year, but held off amid concerns about a potential "winter surge" in cases and to provide adequate time for providers, insurers and patients to prepare for its end. Officials said the administration would use the next three months to transition the response to conventional methods, warning that an immediate end to the emergency authorities "would sow confusion and chaos into this critical wind-down."

Crimea will never again be part of Ukraine: President

SARAJEVO (Reuters): Crimea, the Black Sea peninsula annexed by Russia in 2014, will never again be part of Ukraine, Croatian President Zoran Milanovic said in remarks detailing his objection to Zagreb providing military aid to Kyiv.

In December, Croatian lawmakers rejected a proposal that the country join a European Union mission in support of the Ukrainian military, reflecting deep divisions between Milanovic and Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic. A vocal critic of Western policy in Ukraine, Milanovic has said he does not want his country, the EU's newest member state, to face what he has called potentially disastrous consequences over the 11-month-old war in Ukraine.

What the West is doing about Ukraine "is deeply immoral because there is no solution (to the war)," Milanovic told reporters

during a visit to military barracks in the eastern town of Petrinja, referring to Western military support for Kyiv. He added that the arrival of German tanks in Ukraine would only serve to drive Russia closer to China.

"It is clear that Crimea will never again be part of Ukraine," Milanovic added. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has vowed to restore Ukrainian rule over Crimea, seized and annexed by Russia in 2014 in a move not recognised by most other countries. Russia says a referendum held after Russian forces seized the peninsula showed Crimeans genuinely want to be part of Russia. The referendum is not recognised by most countries.

Milanovic criticised Western countries for using double standards in international politics, saying Russia would invoke what he called the international

community's "annexation of Kosovo" as an excuse for taking parts of Ukraine. Milanovic was referring to Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008 following a 1998-1999 war in which NATO countries bombed rump-Yugoslavia, comprising Serbia and Montenegro, to protect Albanian-majority Kosovo. "We recognised Kosovo against the will of a state (Serbia) to which Kosovo belonged," he said, cautioning that he was not questioning Kosovo's independence but the concept of Western double standards.

Milanovic, a Croatian former premier from the Social Democratic party (SDP), has embraced an anti-EU stance since he took the mostly ceremonial job of president, aligning his policies with those of Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban and Bosnian Serb secessionist leader Milorad Dodik.

Making a point:Hong Kong journalists regroup abroad

HONG KONG (Agencies): When Hong Kong's pro-democracy news outlets Apple Daily and Stand News were forced to close by authorities in 2021 under a sweeping Beijing-led crackdown on dissent, Jane Poon made herself a promise. Poon, a Hong Konger who worked in the city's media for nearly three decades before moving to Australia in 2017, promised to do whatever she could to keep the spirit of the defunct outlets alive.

After more than a year of planning, Poon's vision became a reality in mid-January with the launch of The Points, a new online media outlet dedicated to covering news about Hong Kong and its growing diaspora. Based entirely overseas, The Points, which publishes in Chinese, hopes to fill the gap left by the demise of most independent media in Hong Kong, where journalists now face the risk of arrest and imprisonment for coverage considered critical of Beijing. The Points's staff is made up of former employees of Hong Kong media, including Apply Daily and Stand News, who moved overseas amid the city's crackdown on press freedom and other civil liberties. With staff in Australia, Canada and the

United Kingdom, the outlet hopes to be the first 24-hour news operation for Hong Kong that is based outside the city. The Points's recent coverage includes the Hong Kong Legislative Council's unannounced decision to redact the names of legislators in transcripts of official proceedings, and a recent meeting between Hong Kong activists and Australia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Penny Wong. "As some Hong Kong journalists disperse to other places, I think that although the Hong Kong media is in a difficult situation, it might also be a chance to turn a crisis into an opportunity," Poon, who worked for Apple Daily's parent company as the head of digital news for Next Magazine, told Al Jazeera.

"We could set up a media platform for the journalists in various places who may work together to cover stories across countries for the Hong Kong diaspora, and also cover stories which are not allowed to be published in Hong Kong anymore," Hong Kong, a British colony for more than 150 years before its return to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, was long regarded as one of Asia's most vibrant and freewheeling media scenes until the imposition

of a Beijing-drafted national security law in 2020. Since then, most of the city's pro-democracy media have been forced to shut down or decided to close out of fear of being targeted by authorities. Jimmy Lai, the garment-factory owner turned media tycoon who founded Apple Daily, is facing up to life in prison in a sedition and foreign collusion trial scheduled to begin in September following repeated delays.

In November, six of Lai's former employees, including Apple Daily's editor-in-chief, pleaded guilty to conspiring to collude with foreign forces by advocating for sanctions against the Hong Kong and mainland Chinese governments. Two former editors of Stand News, which closed in December 2021 after its offices were raided by national security police, are currently on trial for sedition. Last year, Hong Kong's global press freedom ranking plunged nearly 70 places to 148, according to Reporters Without Borders. The territory, which was promised a high degree of autonomy and civil liberties that do not exist in mainland China for at least 50 years after the handover, ranked 18th in 2002.

Bomb hits bus in Syria wounding 15

BEIRUT (AP): A roadside bomb targeting a bus transporting Syrian police in the country's south wounded 15 of the officers, the Interior Ministry said. The ministry said in a terse statement that the officers were returning to the capital Damascus from the southern province of Daraa. The bomb exploded on the north-south highway near the town of Khirbet Ghazaleh.

It said seven officers were seriously wounded. Such attacks are not uncommon in Syria, where a nearly 12-year-old conflict has killed hundreds of thousands and displaced half the country's pre-war population of 23 million. In October, a bus bombing killed 18 Syrian soldiers in a Damascus suburb and wounded at least 27 others. Similar attacks over the years have killed and wounded dozens of soldiers in government-held parts of the war-torn country. In March last year, militants attacked a military bus near the historic town of Palmyra in central Syria, killing 13 troops and wounding 18 others.

Syrian authorities usually blame members of the Islamic State group who have been active in southern and central Syria, despite their formal defeat in Syria in 2019. The leader of IS, Abu al-Hassan al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi, was killed in battle with Syrian opposition fighters in Daraa province in mid-October.

Florida GOP leaders want to get rid of gun permits

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP): Saying gun owners don't need a government permission slip to protect their God-given rights, Florida's House speaker proposed legislation to eliminate concealed weapons permits, a move Democrats argue would make a state with a history of horrific mass shootings less safe.

Republican leaders, including Gov. Ron DeSantis, have expressed support for the idea, so the bill should not have a problem passing in a legislature with a GOP a super-majority. "What we're about here today is a universal right that applies to each and every man or woman regardless of race, gender, creed or background," Speaker Paul Renner said at a news conference.

Democrats immediately responded that the proposal could lead to more gun violence and accidents. They said that the bill supporters call constitutional carry will allow people to buy guns with no training or background checks. "Untrained carry is what it is," said Democratic Rep. Christine Hunschofsky, who was mayor of Parkland when a former Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School student fatally shot 17 students and faculty. "You are not making our communities, our schools or any places safer with this." Renner said law-abiding gun owners will take safety seriously. "Anybody that is a gun owner and uses guns knows that safety comes first," Renner said. "That's important, but it's not required. So the permit and all aspects of that permit will go away." Manuel and Patricia Oliver became advocates for tighter gun regulations after losing their 17-year-old son Joaquin in the 2018 massacre at the Parkland high school. They said with more people carrying guns without restrictions, Florida will become a more dangerous state.

"How about a little paperwork, some norms, before we take that step. It's not right and it's not protecting (the carrier) from anything. It is actually putting in danger a lot of people," Manuel Oliver said. Brevard County Sheriff Wayne Ivey said people who want to do harm to others won't be stopped by the permit requirement. "Criminals don't get a permit. Not one of them. They don't care about obeying the law. Our law-abiding citizens have that immediate right, guarantee and freedom to protect themselves," Ivey said.

UN chief backs democracy for Myanmar two years after coup

UNITED NATIONS (AP): Two years after Myanmar's military seized power, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres voiced support for the democratic aspirations of Myanmar's people and warned that the military's planned elections amid a crackdown on civilians and political leaders "risk exacerbating instability."

UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said the secretary-general strongly condemns all forms of violence in Myanmar as the crisis in the country deteriorates "and fuel serious regional implications." The army seized power on Feb. 1, 2021, from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, arresting her and top members of her governing National League for Democracy party, which had won a landslide victory for a second term in a November 2020 general election.

Security forces suppressed widespread opposition to the military takeover with lethal force, killing almost 2,900 civilians and arresting thousands more people who engaged in nonviolent protests. The savage crackdown triggered armed resistance in much of the country. The military government has deemed major organizations opposed to army rule to be "terrorist" groups. The military enacted a new law on registration of political parties, which was published, that will make it difficult for opposition groups to mount a serious challenge to army-backed candidates in a general election scheduled for later this year. It sets minimum levels for parties, including membership levels 100 times higher than in 2020 elections, plus stiff funding requirements.

Guterres "is concerned by the military's stated intention to hold elections amid intensifying aerial bombardment and burning of civilian houses, along with ongoing arrests, intimidation and harassment of political leaders, civil society actors and journalists," the UN spokesman said. "Without conditions that permit the people of Myanmar to freely exercise their political rights, the proposed



polls risk exacerbating instability." The secretary-general "continues to stand in solidarity with the people of Myanmar and to support their democratic aspirations for an inclusive, peaceful and just society and the protection of all communities, including the Rohingya," Dujarric said.

Longstanding discrimination against Rohingya Muslims in Buddhist-majority Myanmar, including denial of citizenship and many other rights, exploded in August 2017 when Myanmar's military launched what it called a clearance campaign in northern Rakhine state in response to attacks on police and border guards by a Rohingya militant group. More than 700,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh, where they remain in camps, as troops allegedly committed mass rapes and killings and burned thousands of homes. In January 2020, the International Court of Justice, the UN's top court, ordered Myanmar to do all it could to prevent genocide against the Rohingya. Two days earlier, an independent commission set up by Myanmar's government concluded there were reasons to believe security forces committed war crimes against the Rohingya - but not genocide.

Guterres welcomed the first-ever resolution on Myanmar adopted by the UN Security Council on Dec. 21 demanding an immediate end to violence in the Southeast Asian nation

and urging its military rulers to release all "arbitrarily detained" prisoners, including Suu Kyi, and to restore democratic institutions. The resolution calls for the opposing parties to pursue dialogue and reconciliation and urges all sides "to respect human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law."

The secretary-general considers the resolution "an important step and underlines the urgency for strengthened international unity," Dujarric said. The spokesman said the UN special envoy for Myanmar, Noeleen Heyzer, will coordinate closely with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations on the Security Council's call "to engage intensively with all relevant parties in Myanmar to achieve an end to the violence and to support a return to democracy." Indonesia took over as ASEAN chair on Jan. 1 from Cambodia.

"The United Nations is committed to staying in Myanmar and addressing the multiple vulnerabilities arising from the military's actions since February 2021," Dujarric said, urging unhindered access to all affected communities. "The secretary-general renews his call for neighboring countries and other member states to urge the military leadership to respect the will and needs of the people of Myanmar and adhere to democratic norms," the UN spokesman said.

Burkina Faso says 28 soldiers, civilians killed in rebel attacks

BURKINA FASO (Agencies): At least 28 people, including soldiers and civilians, have been killed in two attacks by armed assailants in Burkina Faso, a regional governor and the army said in separate statements. The army said that a combat unit in Falagountou, in the north of the country near its border with Niger, came under attack and that 10 soldiers, two fighters of the volunteer force and a civilian were killed. The army said the bodies of 15 assailants were found after the attack.

In a separate statement, Jean Charles dit Yenapono Some, governor of the country's Cascades region in the south near the border with Ivory Coast, said the bodies of 15 men, all civilians, had been found following an attack. The governor said armed men had stopped two transport vehicles carrying eight women and 16 men. The women and one man were freed, he said. "This January 30, the corpses of the victims, showing signs of bullet impact, were found near Linguokoro village," the governor said in the statement.

The latest killings come as Burkina Faso - and its neighbours in Mali and Niger - battle armed groups linked to al-Qaeda and ISIL (ISIL) who have occupied territory in the

country's arid and mainly rural north, executing hundreds of villagers and displacing nearly 2 million people. The fighters have blockaded towns and villages, worsening a food crisis. At least 10 civilians were killed in two attacks in the town of Dassa in west-central Burkina Faso, approximately 140km (90 miles) west of the capital Ouagadougou. With more than a third of Burkina Faso now beyond the control of the government, frustration within the army regarding the handling of the security situation triggered two coups last year and has intensified political instability and strained relations with former colonial power France, which has fought against the armed groups in the Sahel region.

Thousands of demonstrators rallied in the capital Ouagadougou in support of the ruling military government's decision to order France to withdraw within a month its contingent of about 400 soldiers currently stationed in the country to assist in the fight against the armed fighters. Packing Nation Square in central Ouagadougou, protesters held signs bearing slogans including "Down with imperialism", "Down with French policy in Africa", and

"Forwards for Burkina's sovereignty".

"We do not want any more foreign military bases on our soil," Lazare Yamogo, spokesperson for the Inter-African Revolutionary Movement, told the crowd. "We will remain on the lookout until Burkina Faso is liberated from Western imperialism," he added. The presence of French troops in its former colonies in the Sahel has come under intense scrutiny as anti-French sentiment in the region grows. The military government in neighbouring Mali also ordered French troops to leave, and the last contingent departed Malian territory in August 2022. France said that it was recalling its ambassador from Burkina Faso, a day after agreeing to the demand to withdraw its troops from the country.

Rinaldo Depagne of the International Crisis Group think tank said that the decision to push French forces out of Burkina Faso was motivated by several factors. "The government wants the country to defend itself and promote a patriotic spirit, to look for new external partners to get easier access to military equipment and to satisfy its political base," Depagne said in a statement.

5 Ukrainian civilians killed as warring sides mull next move

KYIV (AP): Fighting remained largely deadlocked in eastern Ukraine where Russian shelling killed five civilians over the past day, according to Ukrainian officials, as the warring sides sized up their needs for renewed military pushes expected in coming weeks.

The casualties included a woman who was killed and three others who were wounded by the Russian shelling of Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city in the country's northeast, regional Gov. Oleh Synyehubov said. Russia's troops seized large areas of the northeastern Kharkiv region in the months following its invasion of its neighbor last February. But Ukrainian counteroffensives that began in August snatched back Russian-occupied territory, notably in Kharkiv.

Those successes lent weight to Ukraine's arguments that its troops could deliver more stinging defeats to Russia if its Western allies provided more weaponry. Kyiv last week won promises of tanks from the United States and Germany. Poland's Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki hinted at the prospect of more upcoming pledges, saying that "any activity aimed at strengthening Ukraine's defense powers is under consultation with our NATO partners."

Such a move could encounter some familiar political obstacles, however. Chancellor Olaf Scholz, after demurring for weeks over sending Germany's Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine, looks set to dig his heels in over providing fighter jets. Germany would not have the key role in aircraft deliveries that it did with the Leopards, which are German-made and require German export approval.

Scholz, who is on a trip to South America, said he regretted the emergence of the discussion on aircraft.

He said in Chile that a serious debate is necessary and not a "competition to outdo each other ... in which perhaps domestic political motives are in the foreground, rather than support for Ukraine." Military analysts say more aid is crucial if Ukraine is to block an expected Russian spring offensive and launch its own effort to push back Russian forces. "The pattern of delivery of Western aid has powerfully shaped the pattern of this conflict," the Institute for the Study of War, a US-based think tank, said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said keeping up the pace of allies' support is crucial. "The speed of supply has been, and will be, one of the key factors in this war. Russia hopes to drag out the war, to exhaust our forces. So we have to make time our weapon," he said in his nightly video address. "We must speed up the events, speed up the supply and opening of new necessary weaponry options for Ukraine." With the war approaching its one-year mark and draining both sides' resources, the Western call for weapons for Kyiv is spreading beyond NATO.

The alliance's secretary-general, Jens Stoltenberg, called for South Korea to send direct military support to Ukraine, too. South Korea is a growing arms exporter with a well-equipped, US-backed military. France and Australia announced plans to jointly produce and send several thousand 155-millimeter artillery shells to Ukraine. The first deliveries are expected in the first quarter of this year. On the Russian

side, indications are emerging that more manpower may be enlisted for the fight.

The British Ministry of Defense noted that the Kremlin never formally rescinded last September's order for a partial mobilization of reservists that boosted troop numbers for combat in Ukraine. It said Russia may be keeping the door open for further call-ups. The mobilization in the fall was reported to have amassed 300,000 more troops. "The Russian leadership highly likely continues to search for ways to meet the high number of personnel required to resource any future major offensive in Ukraine, while minimizing domestic dissent," it said in a tweet. Russian officials have denied plans for additional troop mobilizations, while also tapping into a mercenary force.

With more talk of military aid from Ukraine's allies, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov insisted Western weapons won't stop Russia. "Ukraine keeps demanding new weapons and the West is encouraging those demands," Peskov said in a conference call with reporters. "It's a deadlock. It results in a significant escalation and makes NATO countries increasingly involved in the conflict." Ukraine's presidential office said the situation in the eastern Donetsk region, which has been the scene of intense fighting for months, remains "invariably hard." Heavy fighting continued around Bakhmut and Vuhledar, with regional Gov. Pavlo Kyrilenko saying 15 towns and villages came under shelling. Russian authorities claimed advances in Vuhledar, contentions that could not be independently verified.

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Peshawar attack and leaders’ nationalism

PRIME Minister Shehbaz Sharif has declared that terrorism was the foremost national security challenge and his message to the perpetrators of the mosque terror attack in Peshawar was that they could not underestimate the resolve of the Pakistani people. Premier was expressing his grief during his visit to Peshawar, which came in the backdrop of the deadly terrorist attack in Police Lines Mosque costing over eighty deaths and nearly 150 injuries. The Prime Minister said that the cowardly terror attacks could not weaken the resolve of the nation against terrorism, and the miscreants and their facilitators involved in attacks on innocent citizens would be punished for their heinous crimes.

A renewed wave of terrorism has resurrected across the country which particularly hit the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in recent days. There had been recurrent incidents of terrorism, kidnapping, and ransom in Swat, Dir, and Waziristan over the past few months while mass Public rallies were arranged by the civil society and political parties to sensitize the government about the worsening law and order situation in the area but the political rivalry between the center and province largely caused a hurdle in effectively tackling this menace. The terrorists had been continuously targeting LEAs and Police in Peshawar, Malakand divisions, and newly merged districts during these days, whereas Monday's suicide attack on Peshawar Police Lines Mosque has shaken the entire nation.

Realistically, Pakistan has lost its conquered battle, and the Country's all gains against terrorism had been reversed over the past six years. Once again we are battling the worst situation of a pre-2010 era when death was dancing everywhere and terrorism flourished every day. There have been multiple calls from civil society, media, and politicians for the reimplementation of the 2014 National Action Plan (NAP) and reinitiation of military operations against terror outfits to defeat the menace of terrorism. Unfortunately, neither the public nor leaders ever inquired about the reasons for the no completion of the NAP, the causes for the resurrection of terrorism, and the renegades who reimported this monster in the country and helped resume its death trading and blood bathing.

In fact, the Peshawar Police Lines attack was not a mere terror incident but was a well-planned war that had been waged against the state of Pakistan and clearly illustrates the gravity and magnitude of the threat that confronts the Pakistani nation in the shape of terrorism. Historically, the Pakistani nation had always been betrayed by its leaders and institutions, as the public had never been apprised of the true origin and motives of the terrorist elements, the reality of the truce struck by the government with banned outfits, and role of Afghan interim government's role and Afghan cooperation with Pakistan in this regard.

The current situation displays utter disappointment and indignation among the masses as the state and People of Pakistan are under attack, inflation and energy crises are on the rise while the national economy is on the verge of collapse, and even then political leadership is embattled with each other for mere politics. There is a dire need for an all-parties conference to deliberate on the current situation and adopt a consensus regarding the handling of terrorism, an economic issue, and the resolution of prevailing political disagreement. Although, Pakistani leaders have a high ego, however, if today they could not sit together for the country, then what is the proof of their nationalism?

UK’s probabilistic politics

ACCORDING to the media, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak sacked Conservative Party chair and Finance Secretary, Nadhim Zahawi, after an investigation found him of committing a serious breach by not being open about a tax probe. According to the details, an independent investigation revealed that British Finance Secretary Zahawi didn't declare that his tax affairs were being investigated when he was appointed finance minister last year, and also failed to disclose details when Prime Minister Sunak appointed him to his current role of Conservative Party Chair.

The UK's Conservatives are persistently under ignominy and hardluck as their government shook up twice as recurrent scandals forced Boris Johnson to quit Downing Street while poor performance and a lack of ground realities compelled Liz Truss to leave the administrations. Rushi Sunak, the third Conservative leader in a single year is battling the repercussions of poor performance and scandals of his aides and Conservative High ups. Presently, two Conservatives MPs, Finance Secretary, Nadhim Zahawi and Deputy Prime Minister Dominic Raab are under probe for their alleged tax evasion and sexual misconduct respectively. The recent scandals have become a great setback and challenge for the administration of Rushi Sunak during the fourth month of rule in the crisis-hit UK. Rushi Sunak, who assumed power with the sole agenda of merit and transparency after his two predecessors stepped down for their failed legacies and selfish politics. Although, British Tories had denied the charges and they have lot of tactics and tools to prove their innocence yet they had been fired from the public offices.

In fact, misdemeanor and felonies are the human weaknesses and no one ever claims exemption from it. However, their acknowledgement, remorse and confirmation of reward/ penalty is the essence of high morality and very rare in the nations around the world. Realistically, thirdworld leaders deliberately lie before the court and deceived adjudicators to wave off their crimes and clear their way to the top slots, many ruled their nations twice and others mulling to contest elections. Thus, this is the rule of the law which set apart royal from bondsman and segregate pure from the prone.

IT has been two years since a major wave of street protests provoked by the arrest of opposition leader Alexey Navalny hit Russia. To many, the events of January and February 2021 may seem unrelated to the war in Ukraine, but they are, in fact, closely linked. Let us remember how this story unfolded. In August 2020, Navalny suffered a near-lethal poisoning, which landed him in a German hospital. An investigation by Bellingcat and Der Spiegel established with a high level of certainty that he was poisoned by Russian secret service operatives.

Having barely recovered from the poisoning, Navalny surprised many by returning to Russia five months later. He was apprehended at the airport and has been in jail ever since. In the following weeks, hundreds of thousands of people demonstrated in 185 cities across the country, calling for the opposition leader's release. According to OVD-Info, a group monitoring political repression in Russia, more than 11,000 people were arrested, dozens were injured and about 90 people faced criminal charges. President Vladimir Putin's main dark art, which has helped him stay in power for so long, is that of shifting public attention away from domestic troubles. Less than two months after the Navalny protests were suppressed, he ordered the deployment of a massive force at the Russian border with Ukraine in what became a prelude to the full-scale invasion of this country a

year later.

These two themes - Russia's internal instability and the war in Ukraine - are fundamentally interlinked. By waging a war in Ukraine, Putin is avoiding confrontation with his own population and keeping the opposition at bay. He has essentially outsourced his domestic conflict to Russia's neighbour

Domestic unrest was certainly not the only reason why Putin started preparing for the invasion. That same fateful month, which saw Joe Biden enter the White House, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy made a drastic change of tack in his Russia policy. He launched an attack on Putin's chief ally in Ukraine, Viktor Medvedchuk, whose party climbed to the top of opinion polls in December 2020. Simultaneously, he initiated much-publicised campaigns for joining NATO and doing away with the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project. With Medvedchuk still in the game, Putin could have safely counted on the political environment in Ukraine gradually changing in the way that was conducive to his political goals of ending the conflict in the eastern Ukrainian region of Donbas on his terms. But the forceful removal of his ally from the political scene and the destruction of his increasingly influential media empire made this impossible, prompting the Russian president to resort to a more drastic line of action.

Yet it is on the domestic front where Putin has achieved the most by trig-

gering an escalation in Ukraine. Rising tensions served as a smokescreen for the ultimate destruction of Navalny's movement and the Russian opposition. There is a perverse logic to the Kremlin's actions if you look at the events from its vantage point. Putin and his

Leonid Ragozin

ment, which rocked Moscow in 2011 and 2012. But the relatively calm years following the hot phase of the war in Ukraine in 2014 and 2015 saw public attention in Russia shift again to domestic grievances. In 2017 and 2018, opinion pollsters started

That was also the time when Navalny launched his presidential campaign and set up the largest opposition network in recent history, opening offices in most regions of the country. Fearful of his movement and its Maidan potential, the Kremlin first knocked Navalny out of the presidential race on a made-up pretext and then tried to poison him. The escalation and eventual full-scale invasion of Ukraine, allowed Putin to do away with the Russian opposition and remove the threat to his regime. This was reflected in opinion polls as well. The share of Russians hoping for change fell to 47 percent in 2022 in Levada's poll. Today, Navalny is lingering in jail where he is being treated in a way that borders on outright torture. Every other major opposition politician is either jailed, under house arrest or in exile.

entourage genuinely believe that Navalny and his supporters are paid agents of the West intent on staging a Russian version of the Maidan protests. Russia's initial attack on Ukraine in 2014 was a way of punishing it for its Maidan revolution but, even more importantly, of showing the Russian public what they would face if they followed the Ukrainian example.

The 2014 invasion allowed Putin to quash what remained of the Bolotnaya protest move-

picking up a dramatic shift in public sentiment: The demand for stability was diminishing in favour of political change. In 2018, a Levada Centre poll showed 57 percent of respondents believed "full-scale changes" were needed in the country. This figure rose to 59 percent the following year. That was also the time when Navalny launched his presidential campaign and set up the largest opposition network in recent history, opening offices in most regions of the country. Fearful of his

was reflected in opinion polls as well. The share of Russians hoping for change fell to 47 percent in 2022 in Levada's poll. Today, Navalny is lingering in jail where he is being treated in a way that borders on outright torture. Every other major opposition politician is either jailed, under house arrest or in exile. Hundreds of thousands of anti-Putin Russians have fled the country, including pretty much all independent journalists and most civil society activists. As a result, Putin's political regime

appears to be more stable than ever - even if it loses the war in Ukraine. At the end of the day, there is nothing more stable than an isolated authoritarian regime under Western sanctions. Iran, Cuba and North Korea are a testament to that.

A hostile, isolated Russia is also good for the war hawks in the West and in Eastern Europe promoting headline policies and militarisation. Meanwhile, pro-Ukrainian infowar groups and hawkish commentators in the West are bashing the Russian opposition with even greater fervour than Putin's regime while also calling for the breakup of Russia. There is a steep learning curve ahead for Russian leaders and activists before they formulate their (as well as Russia's) genuine interests and learn to tell friends from foes in the political terrarium of the visionless and disoriented West of the Trump and Brexit epoch. Western ambiguity on Russia's future does not help when it comes to promoting anti-Putin sentiments in Russia. That explains why the main figures in Navalny's movement are keeping a fairly low profile in Western media while focusing on developing a propaganda machine to reach out to audiences in Russia, mostly via YouTube. They are also attempting to relaunch the movement's regional network, but we won't hear much about the progress for some time, given that these days activist can only operate in clandestine mode. In the meantime, with the war raging, Putin can consider himself fairly Maidan-proof.

Why tanks will be decisive in the next battle for Ukraine

David A. Andelman

Defense Strategies.

Zahorodniuk said the Russians "will try to create a bigger group, a bigger army and try again. We expect the new offensive in the springtime." In other words, it's time for Ukraine to arm up. And as Zahorodniuk and western defense experts believe, tanks will be the decisive arms of choice in the next battle for Ukraine. The world watched in wonder - and with a strong dose of schadenfreude - as Russia's intended blitzkrieg dash for Kyiv in the first days of the war last February dissolved in disaster.

At the time, satellite imagery of a 40-mile-long armored convoy suggested an all-out assault on Ukraine's capital was imminent - but then it all but stopped moving. Why? First, it simply ran out of gas. Deeply flawed supply systems left bogged-down columns running dry of fuel and food, according to US defense officials. Then there was the mud. Russian tanks fell victim to the "Rasputitsa," that in-between period between winter and spring when melting snows turn everything to mud, bogging down some tanks up to their turrets.

They became sitting

ducks for Ukrainians to pick off. In the course of this invasion, Russia has lost more than 1,400 battle tanks. Fast forward almost a year later and this time, the Russians are expected to have learned their lesson. "It would be unwise for them to start their attacks in late winter or early spring," said Zahorodniuk. "They should wait until the end of the spring when things are actually much drier." But don't count out the value of tanks of the right variety to turn the tide of a war that has threatened to descend into a long stalemate.

The West now has an opportunity to put to the test its most advanced main battle tanks in an active war situation. Its adversary has long been woefully ill-prepared for any such scenario. I first stumbled across a Soviet tank driver in Moscow back in the 1980s when NATO was still preparing for, an admittedly remote, possibility of hordes of Soviet armor pouring through the Fulda Gap, overrunning Western Europe. This driver laughed at any such prospect. He told me Soviet tank drivers would be issued sledgehammers to pound their transmissions

into submission when the gears all too frequently jammed.

They also had no heating or cooling inside the tank, so the crews froze in winter and suffocated in summer, especially with the turrets closed. Decades later, some of these problems have been solved, but the vulnerabilities of Russian tanks in Ukraine continue. In particular, there's the "jack-in-the-box" design flaw. Most Russian tanks carry their guns' ammunition right next to the crews that pilot the tanks, load and fire the guns - up to 40 high-explosive charges. While the tanks are heavily armored on their front, they are not so much on their sides and especially their turret.

So, a direct hit by an American-made Javelin or British-Swedish NLAW anti-tank missile targeting a hot engine can impact the thinnest skin of the tank's armor, exploding the entire ammunition stock and incinerating the crew. Western tanks - both America's M-1 Abrams and Germany's Leopard 2 - have their crews carefully isolated from the ammunition behind blast-proof barriers. The Russians also have a new tank - the T-14

Armata - that is every bit a match for the M-1 Abrams or the Leopard 2. The problem is they have produced only a handful of Armatas. Just three were in the last May Day parade in Red Square, after the first ones stalled during rehearsals for the 2015 parade.

Latest intelligence reports suggest production and deployment has been halted due to high cost and complexities. So, if the war in Ukraine turns into a tank battle, and it's the Abrams and Leopards against even the newest Russian tanks it could be no contest, especially if the western varieties arrive in time. But without this advantage, it will be a matter of Ukraine's current updated Soviet-era tanks against similar, perhaps even far more numerous Russian counterparts.

"It's how you use them, what sort of concept of operation you have, how effective you are," said Zahorodniuk. "And as 2022 has shown, Ukraine is more effective, so we can do better with less equipment." It is not a gamble most would like to take. Still, Russia may need to be doing the same - making do with less. According to the Oryx blog, which tracks armament deployments and loss-

es, Russia has lost at least a quarter of its pre-war inventory of 3,000 tanks with some elite armored units like the 4th Guards Tank Division losing an even higher percentage.

Ukraine officials believe they need 300 modern battle tanks to supplement their own equipment and fully even the score with Russia. Zahorodniuk told me, citing ministry of defense estimates. But it seems unlikely that even a fraction of that number have been pledged by all western allies for some still uncertain future date. So far, the tally is 31 M-1 Abrams from the US, 14 Leopard 2s from Germany, 14 British Challenger 2s. With more promised by Poland, Portugal, Norway, Spain, Finland, and the Netherlands. France will only be sending its light AMX-10 RC armored combat vehicles, not its main Leclerc battle tank, though President Emmanuel Macron has not ruled this out.

But with at least three months needed to train tank commanders, gunners, drivers, technicians, and mechanics on these complex machines, time is of the essence. Barely four months remain before the ground begins to dry out from the spring thaw. Little room for error or dithering.

Ukraine is locked in a war with corruption as well as Putin - it can't afford to lose either

Orysia Lutsevych

SINCE 2014, it has been a maxim that Ukraine is in fact fighting two enemies: Russia and corruption. The horrifically destructive Russian invasion is an existential threat to Ukrainian statehood, but corruption both undermines effective resistance in the war and derails Ukraine's ambitions for closer ties with Europe. Eradicating corruption is now literally a matter of life and death.

Eroding international trust in Ukraine's government is one of Russia's key objectives, in the hope that it could slow or reduce western material and political assistance. The narrative that Ukraine is a basket case, unreformable and utterly corrupted, has long been a Kremlin propaganda narrative. In his speech ahead of the invasion, Putin said that, despite the efforts of Ukraine's anti-corruption bodies, "Corruption has been in full bloom, and it is still in full bloom, more than ever."

The high-profile corrup-

tion scandal that erupted last week, the first since Russia's full-fledged invasion, was no ordinary affair. Leaked official documents exposed a wildly inflated \$350m food-procurement contract signed by the ministry of defence. In another office a deputy minister of infrastructure, Vasyl Lozinskiy, was accused of siphoning money out of a winter aid budget. Now all eyes in Ukraine and abroad are on the response of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's team and the law-enforcement agencies. The resignation of the deputy defence minister, Vyacheslav Shapovalov, was a good start, and unprecedented, considering he was unlikely to be personally involved in the corrupt deal. The mid-level official in charge of the contract was fired. The defence minister, Oleksii Reznikov, spoke at a parliamentary hearing. The national anti-corruption bureau (NABU) started investigating the case before it became public knowledge. If the allegations are substantiated, the

case will be sent to the high anti-corruption court (HACC) for trial.

Reznikov's subsequent public response was less encouraging. The investigative journalist Yuri Nikolov, who exposed the corrupt deal, says he contacted both the office of the president and the defence ministry in early January, but received no answer. Once the information became public, Reznikov wrote a Facebook post talking about "technical errors" and claiming the leak was undermining unity at home and the trust of international partners. Some in the media community are worried the security service may be looking into whether the leak constitutes state treason. Zelenskyy reassured Ukrainians that this case would be investigated to send a clear signal to all. But Ukraine and its partners should watch for actions, not declarations. The country must show it can prevent misuse of funds if it wants to sustain its war effort. Any perception that Ukraine is

returning to the bad old days of widespread corruption will threaten supply of both economic and military aid.

The good news is that, even in a time of war, Ukrainian independent media and civil society are working to expose corruption. We can be sure they will monitor the progress of the investigation and court rulings. As part of anti-corruption reforms launched after the Revolution of Dignity in 2014, Ukraine created new, independent agencies such as NABU and HACC, led by professionals appointed independently of the executive. Since then, Ukraine's pro-reform coalition has worked hard to safeguard these agencies from undue influence. Loopholes in the health ministry system were eliminated and the ProZorro digital public procurement system was created to allow anti-corruption groups to see all contracts. Most significantly, Ukraine stopped buying Russian gas using private intermedi-

aries, long a major source of high-level corruption.

The Achilles heel of anti-corruption efforts was always, and remains, the unreformed court system. The creation of an anti-corruption court improved the situation: in 2022, it issued 33 guilty verdicts and transferred more than 1.22bn Ukrainian hryvnia (£27m) of recovered funds and seized assets to support the armed forces. But the war also presents new constraints for anti-corruption crusaders. Martial law limits access to public information, and the government has temporarily cancelled procurement tenders. Secrecy has increased across all parts of government, undermining transparency efforts. With about 50% of the budget directed to defence and security, the risk of misappropriation of funds has increased.

So far, Ukrainians trust Zelenskyy to lead the fight against Russia, but they also support outside conditionality and oversight over aid and reconstruction funds. A poll conducted in

November showed that 55% of Ukrainians felt that rebuilding projects should be monitored by the outside funders. A system to protect whistleblowers should also be set up to help expose and prevent corrupt schemes. Officials accustomed to the old ways must be replaced with new civil servants who will be impersonal and strict in following the rules, and are genuinely committed to the public good. Ukraine's battle with corruption is far from over. However, just as many people underestimated the country's ability to resist the Russian invasion, many today miscalculate the strength of its own anti-corruption movement and the scale of change in the last eight years. War-hardened citizens who resist the invasion, donate to the armed forces and rebuild their communities have zero tolerance for corruption. They simply cannot afford public resources to be wasted for the enrichment of immoral officials. They will cheer government officials who combat it.

Another uprising is in the making in Tunisia

IN Tunisia, almost everyone agrees on one point: The economy is the country's greatest vulnerability. Twelve years after its revolution, widespread economic dissatisfaction and blind adherence to counter-productive austerity measures dictated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are still the primary challenges to Tunisia's prospects for building a resilient and progressive democracy.

Since the 2011 revolution, which was fuelled by economic discontent, none of the administrations that came to power managed to take concrete steps to address the country's lingering economic woes. The resulting perpetual economic crisis eventually translated into a crisis in democracy and, as the recent Arab Opinion Index demonstrates, significantly weakened the Tunisian people's faith in and support for the country's young and fragile democratic institutions and processes. The lack of improvement in the state of the economy led many Tunisians to the conclusion that no group within the political establishment is capable of enacting policies that would resolve the country's deep-rooted economic struggles. This growing distrust in the ability of the established political classes to fix the economy was the main reason behind the Tunisian people's embrace of populist, anti-establishment President Kais Saied as a potential saviour during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In October 2019, Saeid was elected president on a promise to end corruption, strengthen the rule of law, hold the establishment to account for its mistakes and, perhaps most importantly, reform the economy. When Saied assumed absolute power in a coup two years later, Tunisia's economy was on the brink of collapse - poverty and unemployment were rising, inflation was skyrocketing, corruption and clientelism were still pervasive

Haythem Guesmi

and debts to predatory multinational institutions such as the IMF were ballooning.

Despite wielding unlimited power to instigate change, however, Saied took no meaningful action

from the IMF to keep the country afloat. Repeating the mistakes of the Ben Ali era, Saied appears willing to do everything necessary to remain in the good books of the IMF.

These policies will likely include the complete elimination of food and fuel subsidies, the slashing of public health, education, and social protection spending, and the privatisation of key public companies. These policies will of course not be able to rescue Tunisia's economy and end the suffering of its people. After all, even the IMF experts admit austerity policies often do more harm than good to the people subjected to them. They boost inequality and deepen poverty, make economic crises more frequent, increase unemployment and limit the prospects for economic growth, creating the perfect conditions for a social explosion. There is, however, a silver lining to this grim state of affairs. The history of revolutionary progress in Tunisia is also a history of resistance to IMF interventions supported by dictatorial regimes.

to fix the dire economic and social situation. Rather than attempting to find sustainable solutions to the country's many deep-rooted problems, he attempted to crack down on all forms of opposition through a series of repressive and violent measures - his regime brutalised anti-government protesters, imposed travel bans on opposition politicians, and even tried to jail activists over critical social media posts. On the economic front, his authoritarian regime failed to come up with an alternative to borrowing

After reaching a preliminary agreement with the IMF to secure a \$1.9bn loan and finance the 2023 budget last year, Saied's government is now gearing up to implement ravaging new austerity measures the financial institution presented as a prerequisite to sealing the deal. These policies will likely include the complete elimination of food and fuel subsidies, the slashing of public health, education, and social protection spending, and the privatisation of key public companies. These policies

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There is, however, a silver lining to this grim state of affairs. The history of revolutionary progress in Tunisia is also a history of resistance to IMF interventions supported by dictatorial regimes. The ongoing protests in Tunisia are similar to past demonstrations against austerity that have shaped Tunisian politics over the decades. The 1984 bread riot against the elimination of bread subsidies demanded by the IMF was an early sign of the political crisis that led to the 1987 coup d'état led by Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. Similarly, the 2008 Gafsa mining basin uprising that became one of the most impactful revolts in Tunisia's history and inspired the 2011 popular uprising was caused by the Ben Ali regime's alignment with the IMF's infamous structural adjustment programme.

History suggests Saied's decision to adopt austerity policies dictated by the IMF will sooner or later sound the death knell for his authoritarian and undemocratic regime. Despite abundant evidence, Saied appears oblivious to the warning signs of a looming social explosion - an explosion that will undoubtedly topple his dictatorship. United against the failure of Saied's regime to solve the nation's economic problems and its compliance with the IMF's dangerous demands, Tunisians will once again rise to try and save their democracy and ensure that they remain able to put food on their tables. Another Tunisian uprising is in the making.



Apocalypse in Palestine: The rise of Israeli fanaticism

SAY what you may about Israel's ruling fanatics but listen carefully to what they say. Unlike their coalition partner, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, they are blunt about their racism and bigotry. These straight-talking maniacs say what they think and do what they say. Their vision may be disastrous, even catastrophic, but their candour is refreshing in the way it exposes the myth of a secular, liberal and enlightened Israel.

Marwan Bishara

must stay, then can only be second or third-class citizens, vowing total loyalty to their Jewish masters. Unlike their political and ideological partner, Netanyahu, who helped pass the racist law "Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People" in 2018, but continues to peddle the debunked "Jewish and democratic state" cliché, Kahane's followers boast of Jewish supremacy in the "Jewish State". Indeed, as Kahane himself put it, "Those who refuse to give the Arab that right but tell him he is equal think he is a

and peace with the Palestinians. Many wish for an apocalyptic end to this age to pave the way for the advent of the "kingdom of heaven". It is no surprise then, that they reject international law and the entire peace process jargon about the two-state solution, which Israel's Western backers continue to peddle, either foolishly or dishonestly.

Which brings me to the last point. Unlike mainstream secular Israelis who are passionate about the American style of life, the religious camp rejects the influence of liberal America on Israel and its

They are upfront about deepening the occupation, multiplying the illegal Jewish settlements, and eventually annexing them altogether, regardless of the consequences. Unlike Bibi, the spin doctor, they feel no need to lie or justify their disinterest in diplomacy and peace with the Palestinians. Many wish for an apocalyptic end to this age to pave the way for the advent of the "kingdom of heaven". It is no surprise then, that they reject international law and the entire peace process jargon about the two-state solution, which Israel's Western backers continue to peddle, either foolishly or dishonestly. Which brings me to the last point. Unlike mainstream secular Israelis who are passionate about the American style of life, the religious camp rejects the influence of liberal America on Israel and its way of life. These fundamentalists wish for a kingdom, not a republic. They want Israel to live according to Jewish law and tradition, not Western liberalism or universal values on issues of gender, sexuality and family. Although they get enormous financial and other assistance from the United States, they believe Jewish redemption in the land of Israel must be biblical, not American or liberal.

party and Israel's new

finance minister. After a recording of him admitting to being a fascist became public in recent days, he retorted sardonically: "I may be a far-right person, a homophobe, racist, fascist, but my word is my bond". True that. And more. He and his fellow zealots believe that: first, Israel cannot and should not be both Jewish and democratic; second, Israel has the exclusive right over all of what they call "the Land of Israel", i.e. historic Palestine; and third, Israel should beware the ways of the liberal West, and reject American dictates or overtures.

Let us take these gems one at a time. Today's fanatics lament the early Zionists' failure to rid the "Jewish State" of all its Palestinian inhabitants. They believe their forefathers were right to evict hundreds of thousands of Palestinians back in 1947-1949, but wrong to allow for a small minority to stay behind, or allow it to grow in numbers and influence. So, what to do? Rabbi Meir Kahane, the departed guru of many of today's fanatics, argued in a 1980 book with the telling title, They Must Go, that the Palestinians are a "cancer" in the body of the "Jewish State" that must be removed by whatever means necessary.

His present-day disciples, like the minister of national security, Itamar Ben-Gvir, also believe Israel is better off without its Palestinian citizens, but they reckon if Palestinians

fool. He is not."

Indeed, he is not. Unlike the Jewish fanatic who believes Israel must be a theocracy or the foolish and delusional liberal who is convinced Israel could be Jewish and democratic, the Palestinian Arab knows Israel must be a true democracy in order to be at peace with itself and its neighbours. This brings me to the second point. Like all other religious fanatics, Israel's fanatics believe "the end justifies the means" when fighting for the almighty. This includes the forced reconsecration or Judaisation of Jerusalem and its holy sites, including Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third-holiest site in Islam, regardless of its catastrophic ramifications, peace and coexistence be damned. Needless to say, there is "nothing novel about the victorious Jews' takeover of sites sacred to the Muslims", in the words of former deputy mayor of West Jerusalem, Meron Benvenisti. If anything, the new fanatics are simply picking up where their Zionist elders left off, but with more religious zeal.

Combining messianic Judaism with Israeli chutzpah, these fanatics are determined and they are dangerous. They are upfront about deepening the occupation, multiplying the illegal Jewish settlements, and eventually annexing them altogether, regardless of the consequences. Unlike Bibi, the spin doctor, they feel no need to lie or justify their disinterest in diplomacy

way of life. These fundamentalists wish for a kingdom, not a republic. They want Israel to live according to Jewish law and tradition, not Western liberalism or universal values on issues of gender, sexuality and family. Although they get enormous financial and other assistance from the United States, they believe Jewish redemption in the land of Israel must be biblical, not American or liberal. They also insist on subjugating the country's rather liberal Supreme Court to the whim of the parliamentary majority they are part of. No wonder, then, that secular and liberal Israelis oppose the fanatical forces in power, who, they believe, are "turning Israel into an insular, suspicious, and chauvinistic Sparta" - to quote Israeli journalist Ari Shavit's book, My Promised Land. But most of them focus only on the government's domestic agenda while ignoring the violent occupation.

That is selfish and short-sighted - indeed foolish. Israeli fanaticism is the culmination of decades of war, occupation, and colonisation. Israel's fanatics and fascists draw their force and fervour from their messianic mission in the occupied Palestinian territories, where they have expanded their power base at the expense of the Palestinians. To stop the fanatics, concerned Israelis, Americans and others must do all to end the colonisation of Palestine, first and foremost. It's the occupation, stupid.

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Never forget that British political and media elite endorsed slavery

Michael Taylor

TWO hundred years ago tomorrow, a few dozen old friends and comrades gathered in a tavern on Poultry, the short street in central London. That tavern, the King's Head, was known for its "unsophisticated wines and honest measures". It acquired its name in 1660, when the restored Charles Stuart rode past and bowed to the tavern's mistress. Who promptly fainted.

Now, there is no trace of the place at all. When I last looked for it, I found only the premises of a pharmacist, a tailor and a travel agency. Yet on 31 January 1823, a date for which there is no monument and not even a blue plaque, the King's Head tavern played host to the inaugural meeting of the Anti-Slavery Society.

The year of 1807, when William Wilberforce and his allies secured the abolition of the British slave trade, is seared into British national consciousness. But the act of parliament that forbade ships from carrying enslaved Africans had done nothing about slavery itself. The abolitionists had not even mentioned slavery; instead, they had hoped that, deprived of "new blood", it would simply wither away and die. It did not. Indeed, since 1807 Britain had even acquired more slave colonies - Mauritius and Demerara among them - after the wars against Napoleonic France. On that night in 1823, therefore, almost three-quarters of a million men, women

and children were enduring bondage in the British West Indies. But now, led by the independent MP and East Anglian brewer Thomas Fowell Buxton, who was joined in his fight by veteran abolitionists such as Thomas Clarkson and Zachary Macaulay, the British Anti-Slavery Society would pursue the ultimate extinction of colonial slavery and the emancipation of the enslaved people of (most) British colonies.

This was no small matter. Ranged against the abolitionists were a host of formidable enemies, chief among them the West India "Interest" of planters and merchants whose livelihoods depended on the survival of slavery. If "the West Indians" were not MPs themselves, they had dozens of allies in both Lords and Commons. In government, they counted the home secretary, Robert Peel; the foreign secretary, George Canning; the Duke of Wellington; and the colonial office minister in charge of the West Indies as friends. In the conservative press, they had outlets for pro-slavery apologetics. The Bible condoned slavery, they argued, and Christ said nothing against it; enslaved people were like Frankenstein's monster, physically powerful but morally unfit for freedom; and the sugar colonies were essential to the British empire. Moreover, asked certain British radicals who aligned with the slaveholders, wasn't the enslaved

black population of the Caribbean - on fertile islands, under sunny skies - better off than the cotton-weavers and miners of northern England?

Those same papers and magazines, of course, despised the abolitionists. They damned Buxton and his colleagues as "fanatics", as Puritan extremists, as "Praise-God Barebones" and the like. Today, they would probably call them "woke". Yet even if it took a while, a decade in fact, the abolitionists would win through. They built a formidable political machine, constructing massive petitions to parliament, sending anti-slavery lecturers around the country, and boycotting slave-grown sugar in preference of free-grown alternatives; they also used the story of Mary Prince, a black woman marooned in London, to illustrate the horrors of enslavement.

They took advantage of political breaks. When the Tories splintered over the rights of Catholics, and when the Whigs forced through the Great Reform Act, they persuaded hundreds of parliamentary candidates - not to mention thousands of new voters - to do the moral thing and press for abolition. And the enslaved people of the West Indies made their own, decisive contribution. The Demerara uprising of 1823 was a warning shot and then, over the Christmas period of 1831-32, thousands of black Jamaicans rose, under the leadership of Sam

Sharpe, to seize their freedom. They lost that time, but the rebellion at last convinced British ministers that slavery was unsustainable, insupportable. When will Britain face up to its crimes against humanity?

When freedom came, it came at a cost. The government raised a £20m loan to buy off the slaveholders, and compensate them for the confiscation of their property. And the "free" people of the West Indies suffered under the grisly system known as "the apprenticeship", which required former slaves to continue working unpaid until 1838. Still, the eradication of colonial slavery - a triumph of liberal politics, nascent democracy and black resistance - was a major milestone in British history. And it all began 200 years ago on Tuesday, 31 January.

There is no national monument to the British history of slavery. There probably should be. But to erect a monument that simply celebrated abolition would miss the point; it would be like raising a memorial to the liberation of Auschwitz without anything that spoke to the atrocities that went before. There was only ever abolition because there was slavery; there was only ever anti-slavery campaigning because there was pro-slavery profiteering, and more than 200 years of it. We should remember these uncomfortable truths, and this Tuesday would be a good time to start.

Putin has paved the way for Ukrainian membership in NATO

Boris Johnson

WELL, we tried creative ambiguity, and see where it got us. For decades, we have used diplomatic doublespeak on the subject of NATO and Ukraine - and it has ended in total disaster. We spent years telling Ukrainians that we have an "open door" policy in NATO, and that they have the right to "choose their own destiny," and that Russia should not be able to exercise a veto.

And all that time we have overtly signaled to Moscow that Ukraine is never going to join the alliance - because so many NATO members will simply exercise their veto themselves. In principle, yes; in practice, no. That has been the message.

And what is the result of all this sucking and blowing at once? What have we achieved by speaking softly out of both sides of our mouths? The result is the worst war in Europe for 80 years. Russian President Vladimir Putin has destroyed countless lives, homes, hopes and dreams. He has also destroyed the slightest reason to sympathize with him or to humor him in his paranoia.

Along the way, he has vaporized the case against Ukrainian membership of NATO. People used to say that the Ukrainian population was too divided on the subject of NATO membership; and before 2014 you certainly could have made that argument. Look at the

numbers now. Support for NATO membership in Ukraine is now stratospheric - 83 percent, according to one recent poll. People used to claim that Ukraine wasn't properly militarily compatible with NATO. Today, Ukrainians are deploying a dizzying variety of equipment from NATO countries, with the utmost skill and bravery.

There is absolutely nothing that NATO could teach Ukrainians about fighting a war - in fact, there is a lot that they could teach us. Above all, people used to argue that the prospect of Ukrainian membership in NATO was "provocative" to Putin and to Russia. In truth, we should never have accepted this argument. We should have insisted on the reality - that the Kremlin had nothing to fear from NATO because it is a defensive alliance. But member countries accepted this bogus point; I admit that for a time I accepted it. So look at what happened when we went out of our way not to provoke Putin. We mollified him at the Bucharest NATO summit in 2008. Ukrainians wanted a NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP). They got some warm words about eventual NATO membership, but no MAP. Putin attended that summit and pronounced himself satisfied with the result.

What did he do next? In 2014, he invaded Donbas and Crimea, with

his trademark combination of blatant lies and brutality. Instead of properly punishing him, we responded with a policy of craven appeasement. Far from helping Ukrainians to evict him from their country, we set up the tragicomic "Normandy Format," under which Russia and Ukraine were treated as though they were equally at fault, when Russia was plainly the aggressor and Ukraine was the victim. Ever since then, NATO membership has been theoretically on the agenda, but everyone has known that it just wasn't going to happen, or at least not in the political lifetimes of anyone around the table.

So, Ukrainians had the worst of both worlds. NATO had spouted enough fine phrases about Ukrainian membership for Putin to use in his propaganda and to claim that Russia was being threatened with encirclement. And yet the reality was that NATO had done nothing to protect Ukraine and nothing to advance the cause of Ukrainian membership. The truth is, if you had asked me before Putin's invasion when Ukraine would join NATO, I would have said, "Roughly when hell freezes over, or not for at least 10 years."

But then, if you had asked me whether we would now be sending Challenger tanks to Ukraine, or Abrams tanks, or whether the Germans would now be sending

Leopard tanks - I would have thought you were mad. Just as I would have thought you were mad if you had told me that Putin was going to invade. Putin didn't invade because he thought that Ukraine was going to join NATO. He always knew that was vanishingly unlikely. He attacked Ukraine because he believed - with abundant evidence - that we were not really serious about protecting Ukraine. He attacked because he wanted to rebuild the old Soviet imperium and because he believed - foolishly - that he was going to win. If we had been brave and consistent enough to bring Ukraine into NATO - if we had actually meant what we said - then this utter catastrophe would have been averted.

I know that, in some European capitals, this outcome will seem hard to digest. But the logic is inescapable. For the sake of stability and peace, Ukraine now needs clarity about its position in the Euro-Atlantic security architecture. All our dodging and weaving has ended in slaughter. Ukrainians should be given everything they need to finish this war, as quickly as possible, and we should begin the process of admitting Ukraine to NATO, and begin it now. It would be no use if Moscow complains. They had a case once, and they were heard with respect. That case has been pulverized by the bombs and missiles of Putin.



PSX turns around to bullish trend, gains 801 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to a bullish trend on Tuesday, gaining 801.79 points, a positive change of 2.01 percent, closing at 40,673.06 against 39,871.27 points the previous day.

A total of 153,324,094 shares were traded during the day as compared to 140,465,951 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 7.441 billion against Rs 5.458 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 328 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 217 of them recorded gains and 89 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 22 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 13,426,966

shares at Rs 1.14 per share, Pak Petroleum with 10,194,870 shares at Rs 77.53 per share, and Pak Refinery with 7,748,506 shares at Rs 13.65 per share.

Pak Services witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 155.00 per share price, closing at Rs 2,265.00, whereas the runner-up was Colgate Palm with a Rs 139.91 rise in its per share price to Rs 2,029.91.

Rafhan Maize witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 674.00 per share closing at Rs 8,325.00 followed by Bhanero Tex with Rs 26.75 decline to close at Rs 1,000.01.

Rupee gains Rs 1.75 against dollar

The exchange rate of the Pakistani rupee appreciated by Rs 1.75 against the US dollar in the interbank trading on Tuesday and closed at Rs 267.88 against the

previous day's closing of Rs 269.63.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 270 and Rs 272.70 respectively.

The price of the euro depreciated by Rs 2.19 and closed at Rs 290.52 against the previous day's closing of Rs 292.71, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese yen decreased by 02 paise to close at Rs. 2.05, whereas a decrease of Rs. 2.98 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British pound, which was traded at Rs. 330.83 as compared to its last closing of Rs. 333.81.

The exchange rates of the Emirates dirham and Saudi riyal increased by 44 paise and 53 paise to close at Rs 71.38 and Rs 72.93 respectively.

Gold prices decrease by Rs.9,000 to Rs 201,500 per tola

The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs.9,000 on Tuesday and was traded at Rs.201,500 against sale at Rs.210,500 the last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs.7,716 to Rs.172,754 against Rs.180,470, whereas that of 10 grams of 22 karat declined to Rs.158,358 from Rs.165,431. All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of one tola silver decreased by Rs.50 to Rs.2250 whereas that of ten gram silver declined by Rs42.88 to Rs.1,929.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by US\$22 to US\$ 1,902 as compared to its sale at US\$1,924 on the last trading day, the association reported.



ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar addressing agreement signing ceremony of launching Pilot project of Digitization/Dematerialization on NSCs through CDC.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Three ships namely, Maersk Boston, Hong Cheng and Maria Topic carrying Containers, Wheat and Coal, berthed at Qasim International Containers Terminal, Grain & Fertilizer Terminal and Pakistan International Bulk Terminal respectively on Monday.

Meanwhile, two more ships, AT Middle Bridge and MSC Diya F scheduled to load/offload Rice and Containers also arrived at outer anchorage of the port on the same day.

A total of 11 ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them a containers ship 'MSC Beijing' left the Port on Tuesday morning, while 05 more ships, Maersk Boston, IVS Atsugi, Hafnia Excelsior, Al-Thakhira and Sea Crystal are expected to sail on today in the afternoon.

A Cargo volume of 146,114 tonnes, comprising 121,464 tonnes imports cargo and 24,650 tonnes export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 1,839 Containers (389 TEUs Imports and 1,450 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 15 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them, 03 ships, AT Middle Bridge, Hafnia Excel and MSC Diya-F & 02 more ships, Northern Magnitude and Umm Al-Amad scheduled to load/offload Rice, Gas oil, Containers and LNG are expected to take berths at FAP, FOTCO, QICT, and EETL on Tuesday.

Tokyo shares end down ahead of CB decisions

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo shares gave up early gains to close lower on Tuesday, with traders awaiting economic events worldwide including key central bank decisions.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index lost 0.39 percent, or 106.29 points, to end at 27,327.11, while the broader Topix index fell 0.36 percent, or 7.13 points, to 1,975.27.

"With a number of important overseas events scheduled for this week, there was little aggressive trading activity," IwaiCosmo Securities said.

On Monday, Wall Street kicked off an eventful week on a downcast note, with investors retreating in anticipation of several major central bank announcements, including a rate decision by the US Federal Reserve on Wednesday.

The European Central Bank is also scheduled to announce a monetary policy on Thursday.

The dollar fetched 130.20 yen, against 130.43 yen on Monday in New York.

Nissan jumped 2.07 percent to 463 yen a day after the Japanese automaker and its French partner Renault unveiled a deal rebalancing their decades-old alliance.

Renault will reduce its stake in Nissan from 43.4 percent to 15 percent, the same size as Nissan's stake in Renault, in what the firms said would produce "a balanced governance".

Uniqlo operator Fast Retailing slid 0.39 percent to 78,420 yen while SoftBank Group fell 0.32 percent to 6,144 yen.

Sony Group slipped 0.17 percent to 11,580 yen.

NSCs, CDC sign digitization accord

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar witnessed agreement signing ceremony of the pilot project of Digitization/Dematerialization of National Saving Certificates (NSCs) through Central Depository Company of Pakistan Limited (CDC).

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) CDC, Badiuddin Akber and Director General CDNS, Hamid Raza signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organizations, according to press

statement issued by finance ministry.

Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Finance, Tariq Bajwa, Chairman Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), Akif Saeed, Chairman CDC, Moin M Fudda, DG CDNS, Mr. Hamid Raza and others attended the ceremony.

Addressing the ceremony, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar extended his felicitations to chairman CDC & senior executives, DG

CNDS and chairman SCEP for launching important project for the facilitation of investors of CDNS in digital form.

He further lauded the contributions of CNDS and CDC in the economic growth of the country and said that there was a great potential in CNDS to attract more investors for the economic betterment of the country. The Minister also appreciated the team of the Finance Division, especially the Secretary Finance and the AFS (Budget), the statement added.

Punjab Chamber committee to be revived

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Minister of Industries, Commerce and Energy SM Tanveer on Tuesday decided to revive the Punjab Chamber of Commerce Coordination Committee (PCCC).

Chairing a meeting here at Punjab Board of Investment & Trade (PBIT), he said that representatives of chambers, industrialists and government officers would be members of the committee that would take steps to solve the problems faced by

the industry in Punjab.

SM Tanveer also directed the PBIT to move forward by setting targets and ensure the provision of all possible facilities to the investors. He said that the new investment bill would be brought through concrete measures in Punjab. Vocational training courses would be designed according to the needs of the local industry, he assured.

Briefing the meeting about the board's performance and future plans, the PBIT Chief Executive

Officer (CEO) Jalal Hassan said that 13 Special Economic Zones (SEZs) were approved in Punjab, of which ten had been set up while six were in the pipeline. He said, Punjab Investment and Promotion Strategy was in the preparation stage. A one-window facility center had also been set up at PBIT for convenience of investors.

Representatives of the Chambers of Commerce, industrialists and officers of the PBIT attended the meeting.

Upward trend in chicken items witnessed in market

ISLAMABAD (APP): An upward trend in poultry prices was witnessed here on Tuesday as currently, poultry chicken is being sold at Rs 370 per kg, chicken meat at Rs 630 per kg, boneless chicken at Rs 890 per kg and eggs at Rs 295 per dozen in the local market. The price of eggs is expected to increase gradually.

Talking to APP during the market survey, Ghulam Mehmood Niazi, a wholesale trader of poultry in Islamabad, said that today, the rate of poultry chicken in the wholesale market was Rs 14200 rupees per maund and it was increasing since the last two months, mainly due to the decrease in poultry production and high cost of poultry feed.

He said that due to the demand and supply issue in

the market, the prices of poultry in the market were fluctuating.

According to the market rate, the price of poultry chicken in the twin cities has increased by 38 percent per kg in the last two months, while the price of poultry egg per dozen has increased by 33 percent.

Another former chairman PPA Rana Sajjad said that the poultry industry was presently facing many difficulties besides demand and supply.

Talking to APP, former chairman Pakistan Poultry Association (PPA) Khalil Sattar said that chicken feed ingredients were being imported which were increasing the cost of doing business. Due to this demand and supply issue, the prices of poultry have been continuously increasing, he said.

On this occasion, poultry feed industrialist and former chairman PPA, Dr. Hassan Sarosh Akram said that soybean is included in the basic ingredients of poultry feed. Dr Sarosh said that at present the import of soybeans has stopped and several ships of soybeans were stopped at Karachi port and only one ship had been released yet. He said that soybeans for poultry feed are imported from America, Brazil and Argentina.

According to the market survey, a chicken buyer Asad Ikram said that the price of poultry chicken was increasing continuously and it was now beyond the reach of the poor and middle-class. He said that the government should take steps to control the price of chicken.

US, China, UK top three destinations of Pak exports

ISLAMABAD (APP): The United States (US) remained the top export destination of Pakistani products during the first six months of the current fiscal year (2022-23), followed by China and the United Kingdom.

Total exports to the US during July-December (2022-23) were recorded at US\$ 3065.989 million against the exports of US\$ 3323.470 million during July- December (2021-22), showing a decline of 7.74 percent, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

This was followed by China, wherein Pakistan exported goods worth US\$ 1058.055 million against the exports of US\$ 1332.823 million last year, showing a decrease of 20.61 percent.

UK was the third top export destination, where Pakistan exported goods worth US\$ 1003.238 mil-

lion during the months under review against the exports of US\$ 1146.171 million during last year, showing a decline of 12.47 percent, SBP data revealed.

Among other countries, Pakistani exports to Germany stood at US\$ 881.045 million against US\$ 864.241 million last year, showing an increase of 1.94 percent while the exports to UAE were recorded at US\$ 725.975 million against US\$ 687.766 million last year.

During July- December (2022-23), the exports to Holland were recorded at US\$ 747.700 million against US\$ 687.766 million whereas the exports to Afghanistan stood at US\$ 251.580 million against US\$240.504 million.

Pakistan's exports to Italy were recorded at US\$ 572.851 million against the exports of US\$ 488.689 million while the exports to

Spain were recorded at US\$ 690.693 million against US\$ 508.334 million last year.

Whereas, the exports to Bangladesh stood at US\$ 420.829 million against US\$ 399.426 million.

Similarly, the exports to France during the months under review were recorded at US\$ 297.543 million against US\$ 256.323 million while the exports to Saudi Arabia stood at US\$ 221.376 million against US\$ 195.688 million.

Pakistan's exports to Türkiye were recorded at US\$ 164.255 million during the current year compared to US\$ 157.733 million last year whereas the exports to Canada stood at US\$ 243.146 million against US\$ 194.453 million, and Australia stood at US\$ 151.970 million during the current year against US\$ 138.700 million during last year.

Pak consortium set to lead French pharma giant Sanofi's business

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Packages Group is leading a consortium that includes the Arshad Ali Gohar Group to acquire management shares of Sanofi-aventis Pakistan Limited. The group's association with Sanofi spans over five decades. Syed Babar Ali, the founder of Packages Limited, has been guiding Sanofi-Aventis Pakistan Limited for over half a century since its inception in 1967 as Hoechst Pakistan. He is the current Chairman of the company and Packages Limited has been a long-time respected local partner. Over the past couple of

years, Sanofi has been evaluating its international footprint. Their long-term strategic roadmap seeks to simplify international operations while retaining a presence and interest locally. The goal is to simplify international organizations and operations in multiple countries, around the world, while ensuring that patients continue to have sustainable access to Sanofi medicines and vaccines.

According to Sanofi's Head of Corporate Affairs, Laila Khan, "Sanofi is not exiting the Pakistan market. It is simply implementing a different business model that will drive long term growth and secure broad and sus-

tainable access to Sanofi medicines and vaccines for patients in Pakistan."

The agreement reached between Sanofi and Packages as part of a New Business Model, focuses on the potential of growth of the business and industrial activities in Pakistan. The manufacture, import, promotion, and distribution of Sanofi products will continue unaffected to the Pakistan market. Sanofi will continue to have a stake in the future success of Sanofi products in Pakistan through the supply of raw material for manufacturing as well as managing brand reputations of Sanofi products.

Furthermore, products that are imported from France including insulins, vaccines and other products like Plavix, Clexane, Enterogermina etc., will continue to be available under this agreement.

This deal is a substantial investment for the Packages Group and such entrepreneurial ventures must be encouraged to boost socio-economic conditions of the country. A quick closure of this deal is not only in the best interest of patients but is also likely to generate accelerated industrial and commercial activity, thereby creating much-needed jobs and supporting allied industry.

Pakistan-Iran need to make PTA effective: Consul General

LAHORE (APP): Consul General of Iran Mehran Movahedfar said on Tuesday that Pakistan-Iran needed to make Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) effective. Talking to business community here at Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), he said, "We need to focus on preferential trade agreements." The Iranian government was in the process of following up on it while the Pakistani Chambers should also follow up on it. He said that the problems of banking channels had started since 2010. "We need to create a Conflict Resolution Committee or system that will be the responsibility of a financial institution," he maintained.

He mentioned, "We have presented our suggestions in this regard. Three months ago, the Governor of the State Bank of Iran came to Karachi and signed the agreement for the Conflict Resolution Committee. This is an important step that will resolve the disputes between traders on both sides."

The Consul General said that tragic terrorism incident in Pakistan had underlined the need for strengthening relations between the two countries in other fields

apart from economic relations. Cooperation needed to fight terrorism, a common threat to both countries, he maintained.

The Consul General said that terrorism was a common affliction and it required joint action to combat it. He said that Iran preferred to develop relations with neighboring countries. "Keeping this in mind, we have to determine the size of our relationship for the long term," he said.

He said that Pakistan and Iran had a common border of 900 kilometers. "Our capacity requires planning together. Both the countries can multiply the volume of trade with the cooperation of various institutions and ministries," he observed. He said that businessmen of the both sides were not satisfied with the current trade volume. The Consul General said that it was sad to say that despite the cooperation of the two governments regarding barter trade, there had been no improvement, asserting that difficulties were faced by the companies exporting rice from Pakistan, due to which many companies refused to continue cooperation.

He said that Iran had banned Indian rice and now there was a golden opportunity for Pakistani rice exporters. "From Pakistan we can import rice, meat to Iran and give LPG and raw materials in return."

He said that recently, Iran had removed Preferential Agreement restrictions on import items and allowed the import of Kinross from Pakistan. It was expected that Pakistan would not obstruct the import of Iranian apples and kiwis.

He said that Punjab was an agricultural province and they wanted the agricultural chambers of Iran to be connected with Punjab. He said that importance of exchange of delegations could not be denied. He said that 50 percent of the market in Iran was captured by Pakistani rice. "We want you to cooperate with us for the first exhibition of Iranian products," he suggested.

LCCI President Kashif Anwar said that there were excellent working relations between Lahore Chamber and Consulate General of Iran in Lahore. He said that both the countries had large domestic markets and unique geo-strategic competitive advantages but both had yet to enhance their trade volume by making use of these opportunities.

He said that potential sectors where Pakistan and Iran could enhance trade were value-added textiles, pharmaceuticals and rice. "Iran is one of the biggest consumers of Denim in the region while Pakistani rice has a strong market in Iran. There is also a great potential for the pharmaceutical Industry in Pakistan to enhance its exports by tapping the Iranian market," he said.

He said that lack of sound banking channels was the prime cause of this low trade volume. Both Iran and Pakistan should collaborate to devise a specialized mechanism for enhancing trade. The presence of Iranian financial institution in Pakistan could greatly help in this regard. Moreover, through ensuring strict vigilance from both sides on undocumented trade, they could also improve the figures of formal trade, he added.

The LCCI President hoped that there would be a regular exchange of export-oriented delegations for bridging the communication gap among the private sector representatives from both the countries. This would help both in gaining knowledge and understating about each other's markets.

Samsung quarterly profits plunge to 8 year low on demand slump

SEOUL (AFP/APP): Samsung Electronics said on Tuesday that its fourth-quarter operating profits plunged nearly 70 percent, the biggest drop in more than eight years, as the global economic slowdown dealt a blow to electronics and chips sales.

The South Korean tech giant said operating profits for the October to December period slumped to 4.3 trillion won (\$3.4 billion), a 69 percent drop from a year earlier.

The drop is in line with the estimate Samsung released earlier this month and marks the company's worst decline in quarterly profits since the third quarter of 2014.

"The business environment deteriorated significantly in the fourth quarter due to weak demand amid a global economic slow-

down," Samsung said in a statement.

Sales fell eight percent to 70.46 trillion won from the same period the previous year.

Samsung singled out weak demand for memory chips, saying the sector had been hit hard "as prices fell and customers continued to adjust inventory amid deepening uncertainties in the external environment".

The firm is the flagship subsidiary of the giant Samsung Group, by far the biggest of the family-controlled conglomerates that dominate business in Asia's fourth-largest economy.

The fourth-quarter drop is the second consecutive margin squeeze for Samsung, which saw a 31 percent fall in operating profits in the third quarter year-on-year.

For the full year,

Samsung reported 43.38 trillion won in operating profit and a record-high annual revenue of 302.23 trillion won.

Until the second quarter of 2022, Samsung, along with other tech companies, significantly benefited from strong demand for electronic devices -- as well as chips that power them -- during the pandemic.

But the global economy is now facing multiple challenges, including soaring inflation, rising interest rates and higher energy costs.

Global memory chip revenue dropped 10 percent last year, as electronic equipment manufacturers "started to deplete memory inventory they had been holding in anticipation of stronger demand," according to tech research firm Gartner.

"Consumers also began to reduce spending, with PC and smartphone demand suffering, and then enterprises starting to reduce spending in anticipation of a global recession, all of which impacted overall semiconductor growth," said Andrew Norwood, VP Analyst at Gartner. The macroeconomic uncertainties are expected to persist in 2023, Samsung said, adding: "the Company anticipates demand to begin recovering in the second half."

"Samsung was dealt a heavy blow with deteriorating external factors, like weaker demand and rising costs," Samsung Electronics vice chairman Han Jong-hee said during CES 2023 in Las Vegas earlier this month, according to the Yonhap News Agency.



In brief

Balochistan seeks names of officials for PSL

QUETTA (PPI): Government of Balochistan on Tuesday directed all administrative secretaries and heads of attached departments to forward names of officers / officials of their respective departments to participate for watching PSL match to be held on February 5, 2023 at Bughti Stadium, Quetta. A circular of Services and General Administration Department, Government of Balochistan addressed to all administrative secretaries, commissioners and heads of attached departments on January 31, 2023, copy available with PPI, states, "Government of Balochistan is arranging PSL cricket match on February 5, 2023 at Bughti stadium, Quetta with the collaboration of 12 Corps Quetta Cantt. In this regard, the high official which include politicians, military and civil officers and high profile businessmen are expected to participate and watch the said match live as guest, therefore, officers / officials of your respective departments / divisions / districts / offices be directed to participate for watching PSL match on 5th February, 2023 at Bughti Stadium, Quetta."

Watson wins 3-hour match

BANGKOK (Agencies): British number six Heather Watson came from behind to beat Yulia Putintseva in the first round of the Thailand Open. Watson, 30, won 5-7 6-4 7-6 (7-5) in Bangkok in a match that featured 14 breaks of serve and lasted three hours. Kazakhstan's Putintseva, 28, is 44th in the WTA rankings, 116 places above Watson. Watson will play South Korea's Na-Lae Han, who beat Romanian Elena-Gabriela Ruse, on Wednesday for a place in the quarter-finals. This month Watson failed to qualify for the Australian Open for the first time since 2011.

23 arrested in match-fixing probe

MADRID (AP): Nearly two-dozen people, including players, have been arrested as part of an investigation into match-fixing in lower-division soccer matches in Spain, Andorra and Gibraltar, authorities said Tuesday. The European Union police agency Europol said those arrested are alleged members of a betting syndicate where "several footballers are suspected of having used their position to steer the outcome of games in which they participated in." Authorities said 30 games are under investigation, with profits from the betting estimated at more than 500,000 euros (\$542,000). The arrests were made in a joint operation by Europol, Interpol and Spanish police. Europol said the arrests were made in November in several Spanish provinces and followed 21 arrests of members of the same organization in 2021. Authorities said the organization had two leaders with close connections with players and team staff. "The intermediaries were responsible for the coordination of the match-fixing schemes, while the corrupted athletes would provide confidential information in order to influence matches," Europol said. "This organized crime group also relied on mules who would place sports bets at bookmakers and collect the prize money, and a network of procurers responsible for providing identities for online betting on rigged matches."

Pakistan to face Palestine in West Asia Baseball finals

ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan will play Palestine in the final of the 2023 West Asia Baseball Cup tomorrow as they defeated Sri Lanka in the semifinal.

A stand-up double sealed the victory for Pakistan over defending champions Sri Lanka 16-1, here on Tuesday. Mohammed Waseem starred for the Green Shirts with a gigantic

home run to the deepest side of the field.

Whereas, Palestine defeated Bangladesh by 14-3 in the first semifinal held earlier on Tuesday.

A tough and exciting competition between the two sides is on the cards for Wednesday's final as both, Pakistan and Palestine, remain undefeated throughout the tournament. Both teams also quali-

fied for the Asian Baseball Championship in Taiwan, a qualifying tournament for the Baseball World Cup.

It is pertinent to mention here that seven teams took part in the 15th West Asia Baseball Cup held in Islamabad which includes hosts Pakistan, Palestine, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Nepal.

PHF bans Olympian Junaid banned for life

LAHORE (NNI): Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) Tuesday imposed a lifetime ban on the former Olympian and manager of the national hockey team, Khawaja Junaid.

Junaid was the manager of the national hockey team during the Asia cup.

During the tournament, an incident took place regarding the placing of 12 players on the field against Japan.

The national team could not enter the world cup tournament because

Pakistan's goal had been disqualified.

After the incident, former PHF secretary Asif Bajwa formed a committee to probe into the matter. Junaid tendered his resignation before appearing in front of the committee.

Later, PHF secretary Haider Hussain again sought the report of the committee and as per the report, a ban was imposed on Olympian Junaid.

PHF Legal Advisor Mian Ali Ashfaq said that PHF was ridiculed all over

the world, adding: "Misconduct was carried out, which resulted in the disqualification of Pakistan from the world cup."

The committee summoned the Olympian but he did not appear before it, which led to his ban. He further said that the action was taken according to the directions of the PHF laws.

President PHF approved the prohibition orders, under which the former manager national hockey team will not be able to take part in any activity.



SYLHET: Tamim Iqbal and Shai Hope put on 184 runs for the second wicket.

Russian Olympic chief says athletes must compete without restrictions

MOSCOW (Agencies): The head of Russia's Olympic Committee said Tuesday that athletes representing Russia must not be subjected to different conditions from those of other countries, amid a growing row over their participation in the 2024 Paris Games.

"Russians must participate exactly on the same conditions as all other athletes. Any additional conditions or criteria are unwelcome, especially any that have political overtones, which are completely unacceptable for the Olympic movement," Stanislaw Pozdnyakov said, according to Russian news agencies.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) said last week it was examining a "pathway" for Russians to take part in the summer Games next year, probably as neutral athletes rather than under their national flag.

Russia and its ally Belarus, which allowed its territory to be a stage ground for the offensive, have been sidelined from most Olympic sports since Russian forces invaded Ukraine last February.

That announcement sparked an immediate backlash from Kyiv, with a Ukrainian presidential aide accusing the IOC of being a "promoter of war".

Ukraine has threatened to boycott the Paris Games if Russians are allowed to take part.

Pozdnyakov said his organisation welcomed efforts by the IOC to allow Russian athletes to compete.

"But as for additional

conditions, we strongly disagree. The Olympic Charter states that all athletes must participate on an equal footing," he added.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Russia's participation in the Paris Olympics would amount to showing that "terror can allegedly be something acceptable".

Zelensky also last week said he had invited IOC president Thomas Bach to visit the frontline Ukrainian city of Bakhmut, "so that he can see for himself that neutrality does not exist".

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said on Monday that of the 71 medals that Russian competitors won at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, 45 were won by athletes who were members of the Central Sports Club of the Russian Army, or CSKA.

"The army that commits atrocities, kills, rapes, and loots," Kuleba said.

"This is whom the ignorant IOC wants to put under (the) white flag allowing (them) to compete."

The Olympic Council of Asia, however, last week offered Russian and Belarusian athletes the chance to compete in this year's Asian Games, arguing that "all athletes, regardless of their nationality or the passport they hold, should be able to compete in sports competitions".

That was a significant move because it would allow athletes from those two countries to achieve qualifying standards they would need to compete in the Paris Olympics.

The IOC reiterated last

week that the international federations for each Olympic sport were "the sole authority for its international competitions".

India hockey coach quits after World Cup debacle

NEW DELHI (NNP): India hockey coach Graham Reid resigned Monday, the sport's administrators said, a day after a World Cup that the side embarrassingly exited at the group stage. Once a powerhouse of hockey with eight Olympic golds to their name, India hosted the tournament but went out when they lost to New Zealand in a play-off for a quarter-final place.

Hockey India (HI) said president Dilip Tirkey and secretary Bholanath Singh "met with players and the support staff of the team to understand and analyse the team's performance and strategy for the way ahead".

Reid, a former Australia player, coached the Indian team to a bronze at Tokyo 2020 — their first Olympic medal for 41 years and silver at last year's Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. "It is now time for me to step aside and handover the reins to the next management," said Reid, who joined the Indian set-up in 2019.

His role had been "an honour and privilege", he said, wishing the team the best for the future. Analytical coach Greg Clark and scientific adviser Mitchell David Pemberton also quit, the governing body said.

Najam Sethi briefs PM on PSL 8, revival of departmental cricket

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB)'s Interim Management Committee Najam Sethi on Tuesday called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here and briefed him on the upcoming PSL 8 and revival of departmental cricket.

Najam Sethi apprised the prime minister of the steps being taken for the revival of departmental cricket and for success of the Pakistan Super League 8 edition scheduled to be held in February. The prime minister appreciated Najam Sethi's efforts for the promotion of cricket in Pakistan and instructed him to keep up the dedication.



Leicestershire sign India's Rahane

LONDON (Agencies): Leicestershire have signed India's Ajinkya Rahane for part of the 2023 English domestic season, the Midlands county announced Tuesday.

The 34-year-old, who has captained his country in all formats, will arrive at Grace Road in June and be available for eight first-class County Championship matches and all of the One-Day Cup.

Rahane has scored 4,931 runs, including 12 centuries, in 82 Tests and 2,962 runs in 90 one-day internationals, although it is just over a year since he last represented India.

Leicestershire finished bottom in last season's Second Division of the County Championship without winning a match.

Rahane, who previously had a county stint with Hampshire in 2019 where he scored a century on debut against Nottinghamshire, said in a statement: "I'm really happy to be joining Leicestershire for the upcoming season."

"I can't wait to play alongside my new teammates and explore the vibrant city of Leicester." Leicestershire director of cricket Claude Henderson added: "He (Rahane) comes with a lot of experience and a tremendous work ethic. It's a great opportunity for us to tap into that."

Meanwhile Surrey have re-signed West Indies spinner Sunil Narine for the 2023 Blast. Narine will be available for all fixtures that do not clash with his commitments to the Kolkata Knight Riders in the lucrative Indian Premier League.

Last year, Narine took 14 wickets at an economy of 5.96 per over in the Blast, and hit 199 runs at a strike rate of 163.11.

"Getting knocked out in the quarter-final last year was a real disappointment with the team we had," Narine said in a club statement. "I know we can do better this year and will do what I can to help get us to Finals Day."

3rd Allama Iqbal Polo Tournament: three matches decided

LAHORE (APP): BN Polo, Inara Polo/Black Horse Paints and Diamond Paints registered victories in the 3rd Allama Iqbal Polo Tournament Sponsored by Lahore Smart City matches played here at Jinnah Polo Fields on Tuesday.

Haider Naseem's heroics helped BN Polo beat 4 Corps by a narrow margin of 7½-7 in the first match of the day played here at Pakistan Park Cavalry Ground. Haider Naseem was in sublime form and displayed outstanding polo and mallet skills and contributed with four fabulous goals while Raja Monnoo and Daniyal

Samiullah thrashed in three tremendous goals for BN Polo. Lt Col Rab Nawaz Tiwana played well for 4 Corps and fired in four goals while Raja Muhammad Mekayial Sami scored two goals and Ibrahim Khalil struck one for 4 Corps.

The second match also proved a thrilling encounter where Inara Polo/Black Horse Paints defeated Platinum Homes/Master Paints by a close margin of 6½-5. For Inara Polo/Black Horse Paints, Hissam Ali Hyder hammered four goals while Abdul Rehman Monnoo and Daniyal

Shaikh struck one goal each. Amirreza Behboudi converted three tremendous goals while Agha Musa Ali Khan banged in a brace for Platinum Homes/Master Paints.

The third match saw dominance of Diamond Paints, who defeated FG/Din Polo by 7-4½. Nico Roberts emerged as hero of the match by smashing in six superb goals while Lt Col Omer Minhas (R) struck one goal for Diamond Paints. Abbas Mukhtar scored two goals while Shah Shamyil Alam and Saqib Khan Khakwani converted one goal each for FG/Din Polo.

Wolf Pack Club lifts title of COMBAXX Karachi Powerlifting C'ship

KARACHI (APP): In a superb display of talent, the Wolf Pack Club won 4 gold, 2 silver and 1 bronze medals to lift the title of the COMBAXX Karachi Powerlifting Championship organized by the Pakistan Powerlifting Federation and Karachi Division Powerlifting Association with the support of Combaxx Sports at Beach View Club here on Tuesday.

Energetics Club emerged as the ultimate runners-up by winning 3 gold, 3 silver and 1 bronze medals while Karachi Gymkhana won 1 gold, 1 silver and 1 bronze medal to secure third place in the championship.

The winners' Wolf Pack Club got a total of 92 points while the runners-up Energetics Club got 87 points and Karachi Gymkhana secured 31 points.

More than 60 powerlifters participated in this high-profile Push and Pull Powerlifting Championship.

Shehroze won in the 59kg category while Sarmad won in the 66kg category, Muhammad Taha in 74kg, Ahmad Irfan in 83 kg, Muhammad Jahangir in 93 kg, Nasrullah in 105 kg, Nadir Khan in 120 kg, and Murad Ikram in plus 120 kg wins the gold medal.

On the occasion of prize distribution, Chief Guest CEO Combaxx Sports Omar Saeed, Rashid Malik of Pakistan Powerlifting Federation, Advisor Powerlifting Athar Kamran Butt, Director Combaxx Sports Taimur Saeed and General Manager Zubair Macha were also present on the occasion.

Chief Guest Omar Saeed said powerlifting sports are gaining popularity among the youth which is a good augury and added that physical fitness is very important in this sport.

"Karachi Powerlifting Association has taken an important step by suc-

cessfully organizing the championship, which will prove to be a milestone for the promotion of powerlifting in the coming times, he said, adding, "Our organization is providing international standard products for international events and inter-provincial and inter-divisional tournaments, training courses and coaching clinics, including national and inter-provincial championships held in Pakistan, for sports federations and associations, quality and international standard kits and sports equipment are supplied and provided at discounted prices for the sake of promotion of sports, he concluded.

Rashid Malik thanked the sponsors of the championship especially Combaxx Sports and JS Bank for their great support to popularize and promote the sport of powerlifting in the country and introduce young athletes to this sport with unwavering support.

21 international, 15 local players to make debuts in HBL PSL 8

LAHORE (PPI): As many as 21 foreign internationals and 15 local players will make their debuts in the HBL Pakistan Super League 8, which will be played in Karachi, Lahore, Multan and Rawalpindi from 13 February to 19 March.

Multan will host five matches, Karachi and Lahore will stage nine matches each and Rawalpindi will stage 11 matches.

The internationals to appear in the HBL PSL for the first time include: Adil Rashid, Akeal Hosein (both Multan Sultans), Andrew Tye (Karachi Kings), Bhanuka Rajapaksa (Peshawar Zalmi), Dwayne Pretorius.

(Quetta Gladiators), Fazalhaq Farooqi, Gus Atkinson (both Islamabad United), Ishaan Nishad (Multan Sultans), James Fuller (Karachi Kings), Jimmy Neesham (Peshawar Zalmi), Josh Little (Multan Sultans), Kusal Mendis (Lahore Qalandars), Matthew Wade (Karachi Kings), Naveen-ul-Haq, Nuwan Thushara, Odean Smith (all Quetta Gladiators), Richard Gleeson (Peshawar Zalmi), Shane Dadsell

(Lahore Qalandars), Tabraiz Shamsi (Karachi Kings), Tom Curran (Islamabad United) and Wanindu Hasaranga (Quetta Gladiators).

In addition to the foreigners, the local lads aiming to make a big impression in their debut event are: Aamer Jamal (Peshawar Zalmi), Ahsan Bhatti (Lahore Qalandars), Aimal Khan (Quetta Gladiators), Arafat Minhas (Multan Sultans), Haseebullah (Peshawar Zalmi), Hassan Nawaz (Islamabad United), Irfan Khan Niazi (Karachi Kings), Mirza Tahir Baig (Lahore Qalandars), Mohammad 'Karnal' Zahid (Quetta Gladiators), Mohammad Sarwar Afridi (Multan Sultans), Omair Bin Yusuf (Quetta Gladiators), Saud Shakeel (Quetta Gladiators), Shawaiz Irfan (Lahore Qalandars), Sufyan Muqem (Peshawar Zalmi) and Tayyab Tahir (Karachi Kings).

In the HBL PSL 8, Lahore Qalandars will aim to become the first side to win back to back title, while Islamabad United will aim to become the first team to win three titles since the event started in 2016.

In the seven impressive years of HBL PSL, Babar Azam is the leading run-getter with 2,413 runs in 68 matches, but is yet to notch up his maiden century. Kamran Akmal, who will miss the event, is the second leading run-getter with 1,972 runs in 75 and is the holder of most centuries — three.

Explosive opener Sharjeel Khan has smashed two centuries while Fakhar Zaman, Rilee Rossouw, Cameron Delpert, Colin Ingram, Chris Lynn, Usman Khawaja, Harry Brook and Jason Roy have stroked a century each.

Wahab Riaz of Peshawar Zalmi is the only bowler who has broken the 100-wicket barrier in the HBL PSL. He has taken 103 wickets in 77 matches and is followed by Hasan Ali (81), Shaheen Shah Afridi (70) and Shadab Khan (65).

In the absence of Kamran Akmal, Mohammad Rizwan of Multan Sultans will aim to become the most successful wicketkeeper in HBL PSL. Rizwan (60 dismissals) trails Kamran by two dismissals, while Sarfaraz Ahmed is third on 43 dismissals.



In brief

Two bids to smuggle wheat foiled

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Food Department Rawalpindi and district police here on Tuesday foiled two bids to smuggle 700 wheat and flour bags. According to a district administration spokesman, the authorities of the food department along with Naseerabad police conducted raids in different areas and rounded up two drivers namely Aqib and Sajid Khan on the recovery of 700 flour bags. He informed that the accused were trying to illegally ship out wheat flour bags out of the Rawalpindi division. He said, the Food Department Rawalpindi and district police on the directives of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rawalpindi and City Police Officer, Rawalpindi were strictly monitoring all the exit points of Rawalpindi district to foil wheat and flour smuggling bids.

Nine held for decanting LPG Illegally

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested nine accused for illegally decanting the Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) into cylinders here on Tuesday. According to a police spokesperson, gas cylinders and decanting equipment were recovered during a crackdown. Saddar Barooni Police arrested 02 accused Saeed and Ahmad. Similarly, Rawat police arrested 03 accused Arsalan, Abu Bakr, Zaheer Rashid while Kahuta Police arrested 03 accused Shehzad, Raffakat and Arif. Following the operation, Jatali police held accused Abdul Masood and recovered gas cylinders and other related equipment from their possession. Police have registered separate cases against all of them and further investigation was in progress. SP Saddar Bilal Mehmood Sulihari said that operations will be continued against law-breaking elements.

ANF recovers 506 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in an operation at a hashish factory managed to recover 506 kg drugs. According to an ANF Headquarters spokesman, ANF Balochistan in an operation conducted a raid at a hashish factory in a mountainous area near Qilla Abdullah and recovered 459.220 kg charas and 46.950 kg cannabis seeds. He informed that the factory used to manufacture and pack hashish. During the operation, devices used to manufacture drugs were also seized. A case has been registered against the accused under the Anti-Narcotics Act while further investigation is under process.

IRSA releases 52,000 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 52,000 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 53,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1493.63 feet and was 95.63 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow in the dam was recorded as 17,200 cusecs while the outflow as 25,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1129.70 feet, which was 79.70 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 13,300 cusecs and 4,000 cusecs respectively.

Islam, Constitution protect rights of believers of all religions: Ashrafi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Special Representative for Interfaith Harmony and Middle East Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Tuesday said Islam and the Constitution had protected the rights of believers of all religions across the board.

Addressing a seminar on 'Forced Conversion to Religion', organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, here at a local hotel, he said there was no room for forced conversion in Islam and this unholy

practice was strictly forbidden in the religion.

Ashrafi, who is also the Chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council, said in the last two and a half years, not even ten complaints of forced conversion or forced marriage had been reported in the country.

He said the law of blasphemy was not being misused in the country, adding that when he was the chairman of Muttahida Ulema Board Punjab, he received 114 complaints, out of which 106 complaints were addressed promptly after reaching an under-

standing or giving warning to the accused.

On the recommendation of the religious body, the court also announced their decisions on the cases pertaining to blasphemy, he added.

He said the Holy Quran did not support any move of insult or degradation to any faith or to raise a finger at the followers of other religions. He also added that the divine command directed Muslims to have an inter-faith dialogue to develop a peaceful society based on religious pluralism.

PU sub campus in Gujar Khan to start new classes within a month

ISLAMABAD (APP): The new classes in Punjab University's sub campus, Gujar Khan, would start within a month, Higher Education Commission (HEC) Chairman Dr Mukhtar Ahmed assured National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf in a meeting held in Parliament House on Tuesday.

Talking to the speaker, HEC Chairman said initially the university was offering four courses including Mathematics, Computer Sciences, English and Business Administration as the necessary infrastructure has already been established in the sub campus.

Earlier HEC, Chairman

briefed the speaker about the progress in establishing the sub campus in Gujar Khan, the home town of the Speaker.

The Chairman also shared the details of establishing a full fledged university in Rawalpindi division. On completion, the university would impart students of Rawalpindi division technical and non technical education.

Speaking on the occasion, Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf said establishment of sub campus of Punjab University was demand of the people of Gujar Khan.

He lauded the efforts of HEC Chairman Dr

Mukhtar Ahmed and Vice Chancellor, Punjab University Professor Dr Niaz Ahmed Akhtar for establishing sub campus in Gujar Khan.

Highlighting the importance of education especially higher education, speaker said that the higher education was key in country's progress and prosperity. No society can progress sans defeating the menaces of terrorism and extremism.

He said the sub campus would provide opportunities of higher education to the students of Gujar Khan but also to the students of adjoining districts and Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

National unity imperative to defeat terrorism resurgence: Shahadat Awan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Law and Justice, Shahadat Awan on Tuesday said that national unity was imperative to defeat terrorism resurgence in the country.

While concluding the Senate discussion on the recent terrorism incidents in Peshawar, other parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and the country, he said that the nation had emerged resilient against terrorism throughout its war on terror.

Awan said the nation had not given up despite the Army Public School (APS) tragedy, where the nation got united at one

platform to decide to take the terrorists to task with iron hands.

However in the aftermath, the security forces carried out operations Zarb-e-Azb, Rah-e-Haq 1 and 2 successfully which helped in restoring peace in the country.

The State Minister regretted that unfortunately, some of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) terrorists were released from detentions in the previous government. "Our armed forces have the capacity to deal with terrorism provided we all stand united beside them," he added.

Awan said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif being the chief executive, visited Peshawar to condole and sympathize with the bereaved families of the martyrs and the injured.

Moreover, the Defence Minister and Interior Minister would present their reports on the incident to the prime minister, he mentioned.

Concluding the discussion, he said, "We will have to unite and I request all the Senate members to unite for peace and stop bickering on new polls narrative rather support nation-building steps."

Denmark embassy organizes 2nd Islamabad Marathon



ISLAMABAD (APP): The Embassy of Denmark, in collaboration with 'Islamabad Run With Us (IRU)', organized the 2nd Islamabad Marathon with over 1,000 runners who participated in different categories, including 42.2 km marathon, 21.1 km half marathon, 10 km and 5 km for both men and women.

"Danish Ambassador Jakob Linulf and his brother Michael Linulf participated in the 42.2 km marathon. Moreover, to

engage and encourage children there was 'Kids Fun Run', said the embassy spokesperson.

"I ran 42 kilometers in the beautiful surroundings of Islamabad. It is very important to inspire people to live a healthier life", the ambassador said while talking to media persons after the marathon, here on Tuesday.

Answering a question on wind energy, he said that Denmark and Pakistan were committed to work-

ing together and helping each other to become greener and more sustainable. "Denmark is one of the leading countries in the world when it comes to renewable energy", he added.

It is pertinent to mention here that the IRU was formed in September 2016 with the intent of creating a running community that supports and encourages a healthy and active lifestyle through group events and participation.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Ashraf addressing the notables of his constituency regarding establishment of Sub-Campus of university of Punjab, Gujar Khan at Parliament House.

Fog disturbs traffic flow on different motorway sections

ISLAMABAD (INP): Several sections of motorways, including the M5, M3, and M4 have been closed due to a dense fog that has reduced visibility on the roads.

According to an official from the National Highways and Motorway Police on Tuesday, the M5 section of the motorway has been closed from Sher Shah to Zhair Pir, the M3 from Rajana to Darkhana, and the M4 from Sham Kot to Gojra.

The official advised motorists to use their fog lights, maintain a safe following distance, and slow down to adjust to the reduced visibility.

In addition, the official advised against unnecessary travel during bad weather conditions and, in case travel is necessary, to reach the destination before dusk.

He also encouraged motorists to reach out to the Motorway Police helpline 130 for assistance if they encounter any difficulties on the road.

This closure is likely to cause disruption to the travel plans of many motorists and may lead to delays, he said and urged the travellers to exercise caution and follow the guidelines provided by the authorities to ensure their safety while on the road.

The official also advised the travellers to check the weather and road conditions before embarking on a journey.

He assured that Motorway Police would continue to monitor the situation and provide updates on the official website and social media handles.

185 ASIs pass out from NHMP college

ISLAMABAD (APP): A passing out parade was held at the National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) Training College in Sheikhpura on Tuesday to celebrate the graduation of 185 Assistant Sub Inspectors who were trained by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA).

The ceremony was attended by high-ranking officials, including Commandant of the Training College Hashmat Kamal and Director General of FIA Mohsin Hassan Butt.

During the ceremony, prizes were distributed to the officers who demonstrated exceptional performance throughout the course.

The graduates received their certificates and were recognized for their hard work and dedication during the training programme.

Commandant Kamal presented a commemorative shield to the FIA DG as a token of appreciation for his support and encouragement.

With the graduation of these 185 Assistant Sub Inspectors, the NHMP is well positioned to continue its mission of preventing crime, and protecting the rights of the people.

Govt to provide two million jobs to youth under NYEP

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) on Youth Affairs, Shaza Fatima Khawaja has said that the present government will provide two million jobs to the country's youth through the National Youth Employment Policy (NYEP).

Addressing the opening ceremony of the Commonwealth Year of Youth, Shaza Fatima said that Pakistan has a huge youth bulge and about 150 million people of Pakistan are under 30 years of age which means that about 68 percent of our population consists of youth.

She said that youth were not only our future but our present and we believed that if the youth were empowered by providing opportunities, they could become a strong asset for the country. "Our aim is to attract youth towards edu-

cation, business and positive activities," she added.

The government's priority domains for the uplift of youth are "Girls Learn Girls Earn", "Blue Collar Jobs" and "Providing dignified jobs to the youth in the future", she added.

Shaza Fatima further told that under the Prime Minister's Youth Program, importance is being given to 4-Es which are education, employment, engagement and environment.

Shaza Fatima said that in 2013, a flagship youth program was launched directly under the leadership of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif with objective to empower the youth and utilize their capabilities for the development of the country.

She said that the Prime Minister's Youth Program has been designed after intensive consultation with youth and relevant stake-

holders to make it more effective and productive.

The SAPM further informed that a National Youth Council had been organized consisting of dynamic youth who were playing a positive role for the welfare and development of the society.

She added that young men and women of all classes, different religious minorities and persons with disabilities have been given priority in all projects of the government.

She informed that Green Youth Moment has been initiated by the government in view of climate change disasters being faced by Pakistan.

Shaza Fatima expressed her gratitude to Secretary General for organizing this special event and asked for further mobilizing the initiatives for the youth of the country this year.

Registration process of transgenders in Benazir Kafalat commences

ISLAMABAD (APP): The registration of the transgender population in the Benazir Kafalat program being executed under the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) has been started across the country.

The decision of including the transgender community in the Benazir Kafalat program has been taken for the first time in the history in view of the social and economic hardships faced by the transgender community.

According to the National Socio-Economic Register (NSER) survey carried out by BISP, the total number of transgender persons is 53,800. Despite the limited number, the community is denied of their basic rights and has been facing various challenges.

The transgender community is constrained to rely on begging as their main source of livelihood or they get associated with a profession that is scorned upon. Bajo and Sumera, who are transgenders, said that some people close their doors when we come around in the streets and others push us away.

Talking to APP, they said that, "people ask why we do not work since we look healthy and fit."

Who will give us jobs? They all make fun of us," they said while thanking the BISP for including them in the Benazir Kafalat program.

Another transgender named Saba said that "I am thankful to the BISP that they thought of us and include us in Benazir Kafalat initiative. No one

has ever thought about us. Thanks to BISP".

Due to unacceptable behavior of the society, the transgender community is compelled to live a miserable life, below the poverty line. Collective efforts are needed at all levels to enable this community to live a dignified life.

The objective of BISP is to provide financial support to people living below the poverty line as around nine million families are being provided a stipend of Rs. 7000 every quarter.

The decision of including the transgender community in Benazir Kafalat program has been taken in view of the economic difficulties and the discrimination they face and in order to ensure that no vulnerable segment is left out of BISP.

13 outlaws arrested; drugs, liquor and weapons recovered

ISLAMABAD (NNT): Islamabad capital police

apprehended thirteen outlaws from different areas of the city and recovered liquor, drugs and weapons with ammunition from their possession, a police public relations officer said.

He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city.

Following these directives, the Aabpara police team arrested two accused namely Qasir and Gulshan involved in illegally gas refilling. Likewise, the Kohsar police team arrested two accused namely Ejaz Ul Haq and Zia Ur Rehman involved in possessing illegal weapons and recovered two 30 bore pistols with

ammunition from their possession.

Likewise, the Bhara Kahu police team arrested an accused namely Tabraiz involved in drug peddling and recovered 1307 gram heroin from his possession. The Phulgran police team arrested an accused namely Waqas Naseer and recovered one 30 bore pistol with ammunition from his possession.

Similarly, the Karachi company police arrested 03 accused namely Muhammad Saeed, Asif Masih and Samer Iqbal involved in drug peddling and recovered 1020 gram hashish, 705 gram heroin and 06 liquor bottles from their possession. Shahzad Town police team arrested an accused namely Sher Afzal and recovered one 30 bore pistol with ammunition and motorbike used in crime from his possession. Moreover, the Khanna

police team arrested an accused namely Muhammad Riasat and recovered one 30 bore pistol with ammunition from his possession. The Nilore police team arrested an accused namely Amar Ali involved in illegally cylinder gas refilling.

Furthermore, the Noon police team arrested an accused namely Muhammad Gul and recovered one 30 bore pistol with ammunition from his possession. Cases have been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway.

IGP Islamabad directed all senior officials for effective crackdown against the accused involved in drug peddling and possessing illegal weapons. The performance of police officials in this regard would be reviewed on a continuous basis, he maintained.

Winter clothes assisted

SAMANGAN (Agencies): The United Nations Children's Fund provided winter clothes for women prisoners in Samangan province of Afghanistan. The provincial head of Samangan prison, Hafiz Zainullah Bokhari, told this news agency, that 34 women and 48 children are imprisoned in this prison. For each female prisoner, one package of baby clothes, one package of health kit and two sheets of blankets have been distributed.

9 people arrested in Kabul

KABUL (Agencies): Security forces arrested nine people in connection to criminal offenses in Kabul city of Afghanistan. Kabul Police Headquarters in a statement On Tuesday said that security officers arrested nine people in connection to criminal offenses in the last two days in ninth police-district of the capital. The detainees will be introduced to judicial organs for investigation, the source concluded.

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

Tribal & Border Affairs Minister visits Zabul



ZABUL (Agencies): The Acting Minister of Tribal and Border Affairs travel to Zabul province and visited Shamlazi district.

The Ministry of Tribal and Border Affairs in a statement expressed that the Acting Minister of

Tribal and Border Affairs Mullah Noorullah Noori visited the people and officials of Shamlazi border district.

The officials shared information, challenges, and problems with Noori and asked for finding solu-

tions to them, the source said.

Haji Qamaruddin and Haji Nadar, local tribal elders in the district asked the central government to provide facilities particularly in areas of hospitals, roads, schools, potable

water, agriculture, and livestock.

Noori assured the people to share their problems and challenges with the central government and said that the central government will pay attention to these matters.

DAB to auction 16m USD today

KABUL (Agencies): Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB) said today that it will put in auction 16 million US dollars Wednesday as part of efforts to keep the local currency Afghani stable.

The Central Bank has asked eligible banks and money changer services to participate in the tender, adding that the winners of the auction are obliged to settle their accounts by the end of the day.

Partial settlement of transactions is not allowed and the winners of the auction are obliged to deliver the money owed to Da Afghanistan Bank in cash once, within a certain time, the bank added.

This is the second time in a week that the central bank auctioning US dollars to further strengthen the value of the Afghani currency. The exchange rate of one US dollar has been announced at 89.75 Afghanis on Tuesday.

IEA condemned blast in Peshawar

KABUL (Agencies): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan condemned the attack on the worshippers in the mosque in Peshawar of Pakistan.

"We are saddened to learned that numerous people lost their lives and many others were injured by an explosion in a mosque in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Monday," said Afghanistan Foreign Ministry in a statement.

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan condemns the attack on the worshippers in the mosques and deems such actions to be in contradiction to the teaching of the Holy religion of Islam, the statement added.

On Monday, after noon payers an explosion hit a mosque in Peshawar of Pakistan that killed and injured scores of people.

Kabul residents call for better care of banknotes

KABUL (TOLONews): Kabul residents said that many citizens are careless in keeping the country's banknotes and for this reason, banknotes become worn out sooner.

All daily transactions in Afghanistan are done with physical money and residents, especially sellers, are careless in keeping banknotes, they say.

"With a wet hand, they take the money and make them worn-out, but if they

pay attention to keeping money no problem will be created," said Zarif a baker in Kabul. "We say to the Islamic Emirate that we would be very happy if it has the ability to accept bank cards that are common in foreign countries," said Mohammad Sarwar, a shopkeeper in Kabul.

Meanwhile, Da Afghanistan Bank asked all citizens to pay attention to taking care of banknotes.

"If we pay attention to

keeping banknotes, we can take the money spent on printing new banknotes and spend it on infrastructure projects," said Hasibullah Noori, spokesman for Da Afghanistan Bank.

Recently Da Afghanistan Bank distributed 100 million new banknotes to private banks, but the money changers' union believes that the distribution of this amount of money is not enough to replace the worn-out money.

Retired employees call on IE to pay their pensions



KABUL (TOLONews): Retirees expressed concern and called on the Islamic Emirate to pay their pensions as they are facing dire economic conditions.

The retirees said that they have not received their pensions for the past two years. Abdul Qadeer, 72, worked for 30 years in the Ministry of Interior.

Qadeer said that he is the breadwinner of his family of ten people.

"We don't purchase anything. We bought wood—and gone into debt-- and have not received the pension. If the pension does not arrive, what will I do," he said.

There are hundreds of

other retirees who have been facing the situation of Qadeer.

They urged the Islamic Emirate to pay their pensions. "It is our right. It (pension) was once put aside from our salaries. We don't want charity," said Bori Qol, a retiree.

"I have 14 members in the family. All of them are jobless and are at home. Then, what we should eat," said Abdul Latif Salamzada, a retiree.

"I have a rented house. I don't have water. Currently, I don't have a heating stove and you see the conditions of the electric power," said Safora, wife of a retiree.

But the Ministry of

Finance (MoF) said that the new plan for the payment of pensions for retirees has been finalized by the Islamic Emirate.

"The plan which was formed for the retirees has been passed by the cabinet and has been sent to the office of the supreme leader of the Islamic Emirate. Once we receive the instructions from the leader, we will immediately act, accordingly," said Ahmad Wali Haqmal, a spokesman for the MoF.

Hundreds of retirees have staged protests several times over delays in their payment of pensions but they have not yet received their salaries.

'Ban on women's education against Islamic principles'

KABUL (TOLONews): Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, the foreign minister of Iran, said at a meeting with Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, the foreign minister of Qatar, that the banning of women from education in Afghanistan is wrong and is against Islamic principles.

Speaking at the meeting, Abdollahian said that Tehran is ready to work with the current Afghan administration to provide educational facilities for women and girls in Afghanistan.

"We consider denying Afghan women and girls an education a wrong action in conflict with the teachings of the merciful religion of Islam," Abdollahian said.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) called the decree preventing the registration of women in the university entrance exams disappointing, and asked the Islamic Emirate to reconsider its decision.

"OIC General Secretariat expressed its disappointment over the decision announced on Saturday 28/1/2023 by de facto Administration in Afghanistan, banning female students from taking university entrance exams this year in all public and private universities across the country," OIC tweeted.

"The Islamic Emirate should share its plan for the educational process with the Afghan people as soon

as possible," said Mawlawi Hasibullah Hanafi, a religious cleric.

Female students meanwhile asked the Islamic Emirate to remove ban on girls' education and to reopen schools and universities for them.

"We ask the Islamic Emirate to open the doors of schools and universities to students," said Negina, a student.

"The restrictions they imposed are not acceptable from the perspective of Islam or the people of the world, and I hope that they would lift these restrictions so that the women of Afghanistan can continue to grow as they have in the past," said Manizha, another student.

Stefania Giannini, assistant director general for education at UNESCO, criticized the continued ban on women's and girls' education in Afghanistan.

"Currently, all Afghan girls and women above the age of 12 are denied access to secondary schools and, more recently, to universities following the decisions of the de facto authorities," Giannini said.

Nearly 500 days have passed since girls in Afghanistan were denied access to education, and, most recently, the Ministry of Higher Education ordered private universities and other higher education institutions to forbid girls from enrolling in admission tests.

Snowfall boosts higher harvest hopes



GHAZNI CITY (Pajhwok): Agriculture officials in southern Ghazni province hope enough irrigation water will be available next season in the wake of heavy

snowfall this winter.

Mountainous areas received up to one metre of snow, with 50 centimetres of snow falling in deserts and low-lying localities,

officials say.

As drought-like conditions continue in many provinces of the country, officials are optimistic of abundant irrigation water

availability in Ghazni next season.

Noorullah, a farmer from Khwaja Omari district, told Pajhwok Afghan News there had been heavy snowfall over the last few days. He hopes the snowfall will continue in the days to come.

The snowfall contributed to boosting underground water sources and killed harmful insects in fields, Noorullah said.

Rains or snowfall not only enriched water sources but also benefited livestock and pastures, he explained.

Khair Mohammad, another farmer from Khogyani district, said growers were happy with the snowfall. They expect a better harvest.

Following the heavy snowfall, farmers would have plenty of water for irrigating their farms next year, Mohammad maintained.

Provincial agricultural officials agree the snowfall would end drought on the

one hand and give a new lease of life to farmlands on the other.

Agriculture Director Maulvi Abdul Manan Akram said Khwaja Omari, Khogyani, Zana Khan, Andar, Giro, Qara Bagh, Aab Band, Maqur and Gilan districts had received half a meter of snowfall.

In Jaghori, Aristan, Malistan, Jaghato and Nawar districts, he reckoned, one metre of snow had fallen.

The snowfall was enough to feed water sources, filled dams and flowed into rivers, Akram added.

If the snowfall continued till the winter's end, drought would end and farmers reap a good harvest, he predicted.

About 80 percent of Ghazni residents, like their compatriots in other provinces, are reliant on farming and raising livestock.

Residents of Nangarhar call for school buildings

JALALABAD CITY (TOLONews): Due to the absence of school buildings in the province of Nangarhar, students from various schools take exams while sheltering under umbrellas from the rain.

The lack of buildings has had a negative impact on the educational process, according to the teachers and students of these schools.

"We have passed so many tests under this umbrella this year," said Sharifullah, a student.

"If the sun is shining, we cannot learn due to the sun, and if it is raining, we cannot learn due to the rain," said Omidullah, another

student.

"I wished that structures would be built for schools, yet I graduated and this goal was not fulfilled," said Asif Khan, another student.

In the Shulani district of Nangarhar, five acres of land were allocated for the construction of a school three years ago, and the leveling of the ground and the construction of a well were carried out at personal expense.

"What we need does not exist. In the summer, the sun burns the students, and in the winter there is the chilly weather," said Wasil Khan Zahir, the principal of Shulani High School.

"Many of our students

have changed their schools because our schools do not have structures," said Samiullah Sajid, a teacher.

Meanwhile, local Nangarhar officials said that efforts to build schools in the province have begun.

"We are attempting with the resources we have. If you visit the schools every day, you will find that the building work continues in some location," said Farhad Ahmad Stanikzai, the spokesperson of the Nangarhar Department of Education.

There are 905 schools in Nangarhar, and 100 of them do not have structures, according to figures provided by local officials.

30 million Afs collects in revenue



KABUL (Agencies): Local officials at the Torkham customs department say that they collect 30 million Afghanis daily from the transit taxes.

An official at the Torkham port, Mawlawi Seddiq Khalid said that

800-1300 trucks and containers travel through Torkham daily, which 30 million Afghanis in revenue collected daily, which transfers to the government treasury account after.

According to him, suitable facilities for males and

females to spend the night have been provided for the patients traveling to Pakistan, at the Torkham port.

He said that in the last 6 months, 49,800 patients have traveled to Pakistan for treatment, through the port.

Thousands kgs of drugs burned by police in Samangan

SAMANGAN (Agencies): Police of Samangan informed burning of over 13,750 kilograms of chemical substances that were used in narcotics production were burned by police in that province.

The provincial head of counter-narcotics police of Samangan told this news agency that the police had recovered and seized these substances in several police inspections from different sites of the province.

According to the police sources of Samangan, some arrested on charges the seized chemical substances drugs.

Thousands of needy families received food aid in Nangarhar

NANGARHAR (Agencies): The distribution of food items to over 3,500 needy families started in Nangarhar province, officials said Tuesday.

Local officials told Bakhtar News Agency that the aid will be distributed to these families in Achin district of Nangarhar to meet their needs for the next six months. The aid is provided by World Food Program.

The aid includes 50 kilograms of flour, four bottles of cooking oil, six kilograms of pulses, two packets of baby formula, half a packet of salt and an amount of cacao.

According to another report, 6,500 needy families in Barmal district of Pakitka province also received aid.

An official of Rural



Development and Rehabilitation Department of the province told

Bakhtar that the aid was distributed with the financial support of WFP.

The assistance includes flour, oil, pulses, salt and baby formula.

President orders restoration of property to a woman citizen

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has upheld the orders of the Federal Ombudsman for Protection against Harassment of Women (FOSPAAH), and directed the restoration of a valuable property of a female citizen of Islamabad through the appointment of a local commissioner.

The order asked for its vacation from the illegal occupation, breaking open the locks of the premises, in case found locked, removal of any other hurdles or barriers in the way of taking possession of the property, and giving it back to the rightful owner under the Enforcement of Women's Property Rights Act, 2020. The president said "a local commissioner be appointed to restore or confer possession of the title of the property, a valuable house in Bahria Town, to Ms Aalya Fazal (the complainant) including measures to per-

fect such title and to submit a compliance report within seven days".

The local commissioner could avail the aid of local police if necessary, and the SHO of the local police station should extend full aid to the local commissioner and be present with her at the relevant time along with the police contingent for the safety and security of the local commissioner, it was further added. The president in his decision rejected the unqualified and baseless stance of the accused person that he had been condemned unheard by FOSPAAH, adding that the accused had not produced anything to establish the title of the disputed house in his favour, and thus, had no locus standi to bring the representation against the orders of FOSPAAH, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release on Tuesday.

As per details, Aalya Fazal had filed a complaint before FOSPAAH stating that her father Chaudhary

Fazal Hussain has appointed her as his attorney to manage the affairs of his house in Bahria Town, Islamabad. This house was rented to different persons from 2007 to 2016 and afterwards, it remained vacant. According to the complainant, when her brother visited the house in 2020 it was found that the house was illegally occupied by some unknown persons wherein the matter was reported to Bahria Town and the local police.

The police summoned the person residing in the house who gave the undertaking to vacate the house. Afterwards, a suit was filed in court that the house was purchased in 2008 based on a forged agreement dated 02.07.2008. The complainant approached FOSPAAH for the vacation of the house that passed the orders in the complainant's favour. The orders were then challenged by the accused person by filing a representation with the president, which was rejected.



ISLAMABAD: Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director of United Nations Environment Programme, called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Asif urges unity to defeat terrorism

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Defense Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Tuesday urged all political forces to unite against the hostile elements as terrorists were targeting not a sect or any particular segment of society but the entire nation.

Speaking on a point of order in National Assembly, he said the internal differences were posing serious threats to our country, adding "We must put our House in order first." He said "Soul searching and self accountability has become imperative due to our own follies and blunders as the seeds of terrorism were sown during the dictatorial tenures."

The country has already endured over 126 billion dollars economic losses and 83,000 people including, armed forces personnel, Police officials and other martyred but the world does not acknowledge our sacrifices. He said over 450,000 Afghans had been settled in Pakistan after crossing the Pak-Afghan border on valid document. They did not return to their country and had now occupied transport business in Pakistan, he added.

He said Afghan authorities had already committed in Doha agreement that their land would not be used against Pakistan. The minister said Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) brought the country on path of progress, prosperity and peace in its tenure by eliminating terrorism from the country. He criticised Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan for portraying negative picture of the country.

Pakistan may face fuel shortage

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Pakistan could face a fuel shortage in at second fortnight of February, Reuters news agency reported Tuesday citing sources from industry and commerce.

"There is no shortage this fortnight. If we don't have LCs (letters of credit) open right now, we might see shortages in the next fortnight," Reuters quoted a senior official at one of the oil companies as saying. According to the news agency, the crisis is expected to take place as banks have stopped issuing LCs (Letter of Credit) to facilitate oil import. The main reason however, is country's depleting foreign exchange reserves.

A week ago, the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) had rubbished reports of any expected fuel shortage in country. "Ogra strongly rebuts the speculations on petrol/diesel shortages," OGRA spokesperson Imran Ghaznavi had said in a press release. "Furthermore, ships carrying 101,000 metric tonnes petrol are at berth/outer anchorage," the press release added. "The local refineries are playing their due role in meeting the demand for petroleum products."

It is pertinent to mention here that an International Monetary Fund (IMF) team is in Islamabad currently, deliberating completion of the ninth review of the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) program. In the discussions continuing from Tuesday to Friday, the two sides will exchange information during technical phase of negotiations. Reuters reported Tuesday that delays in the opening of LCs could "lead to a fuel shortage in the country", according to the Oil Companies Advisory Council (OCAC).

Election for KP Pakhtunkhwa Assembly PTI approaches court against Governor, ECP

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) approached Peshawar High Court (PHC) seeking to direct Election Commission of Pakistan to complete all activities mentioned in election program as per Section 57 (2) of the Election to hold election between "15th April 2023 to 17th April 2023" for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly following its premature dissolution.

The writ seeking to direct the Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to act according to the provision of Constitution of Pakistan and his assertion that the decision regarding holding of election has to be made by Intelligence Agencies and other agencies in the light of report of establishment may be declared un constitutional, illegal, unlawful, without jurisdiction and without legal effect.

Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa through Chief Secretary were made respondents while PTI's provincial president Muhammad Atif Khan filed the writ petition before PHC.

The counsel Muzzam Butt Advocate stated in the writ that to direct respondents to immediately announce the date of election for the Provincial Assembly of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa so as to ensure that the election is held not later than ninety days of dissolution of the Assembly.

The writ stated that under Article 105 (3)(1)(a) of the Constitution, consequent to the dissolution of assembly by the Governor, he must appoint a date for the holding of general election, not later than ninety days from such dissolution, Such constitutional obligation has been expressly denied by the respondent Governor and that too on the ground that the decision regarding holding of election has to be made by Intelligence agencies and other agencies in the light of report of establishment; such assertion of the respondent Governor is in conflict with the provision of the Constitution and clearly transpire intent of mala-fide conceived notion of the Governor in the colorful exercise of his authority.

In terms of Article 224(2) of the Constitution, the period ninety days start from 18-01-2023 and as such the poll day could not be taken beyond 17-04-2023, likewise, for completion of all activities cited in Election program as mentioned in Section 57(2) of the Election Act, 2017; minimum 54 days are to be required; that being the situation when the respondent Governor was requested by the Election Commission to appoint the date of poll between 15th April 2023 to 17th April 2023, the only act to be performed by him was to fix a date of the election as the

Constitutional Obligation, the petition added.

In the sovereign Pakistan, where sovereignty belongs to ALLAH alone and the people exercised such authority as a secrecy trust, the state must exercise its power and authority through the chosen representative of the people, whereas the respondent Governor in order to deny the principles of democracy and social justice is unwilling to appoint the day of poll on the ground that the leadership of petitioner had denied shaking hands with the opposition leader and now embarrassing himself demanding election from previous opposition leader transpire that by taking the advantage of his position in order to make political scoring he can go to any extend in violation of the constitutional provisions and election laws ignoring Article 5 of the Constitution which demands loyalty to state, Constitution and the Law, now whereas it is the fundamental right of the people of the province to be represented through their chosen representative to uphold the sovereignty of State, Constitution of Pakistan and Principles of social justice. Moreover, the Governor is under oath having sworn the commitment of upholding the Constitution, as such it would be in accordance with law and the Constitution that the respondent may be required to fix date polling. The Respondent cannot exercise his Constitutional powers according to his whims.

The Respondent is tasked with a critical Constitutional task. This failure to perform the same is completely unjustifiable under the Constitution and is frustrating the whole Constitutional scheme of elections. The Respondent is depriving the petitioner (PTI) of its fundamental right guaranteed under Article 17 of the Constitution, which, according to the law declared by the August Supreme Court includes the right of a political party to contest and participate in elections. Unless the date of the election is announced, the exercise of this right will be frustrated.

The date of election for the Provincial Assembly cannot be left open because not only would it be in violation of the Constitution and amount to its subversion but it would also be against the basic principles of democracy and contrary to the fundamental rights of the people of Pakistan.

The date of election is to be announced by the respondents immediately or if so deemed fit and necessary by appropriate directions of PHC to the President of Pakistan/ Election Commission of Pakistan, as the case may be. That there is no other adequate alternate remedy available to the petitioner to challenge the unconstitutional omission of the respondents; but, this writ petition.

Blinken criticises settlements but stresses US support for Israel

WEST BANK (Agencies): In rare — albeit implicit — criticism of Israel, United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken has called out Israeli policies, including settlement expansion and home demolitions, as detrimental to the two-state solution. Still, at a news conference at the end of his trip to Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories on Tuesday, Blinken reassessed Washington's "ironclad" commitment to Israel.

"The United States is committed to working toward our enduring goal of ensuring that Palestinians and Israelis enjoy equal measures of freedom, security, opportunity, justice and dignity," Blinken said, stressing the need for preserving the "vision" of the two-state solution. "The United States will continue to oppose anything that puts that goal further from reach, including but not limited to settlement expansion and the legalisation of illegal outposts, moves towards annexation of the West Bank, disruption to the historic status quo on Jerusalem's holy sites, demolitions and evictions and incitement and acquiescence to violence."

Rights advocates have long urged Washington to press Israel to end its abuses against Palestinians. The US provides at least \$3.8bn in military aid to Israel each year while pushing to

block international efforts to denounce Israeli violations, including at the United Nations. Successive US administrations, including that of President Joe Biden, have maintained unconditional support for Israel as they rhetorically back the two-state solution — a prospect that many experts say is no longer realistic because of Israel's settlement policies.

"I reaffirmed to Israel and its people the United States' ironclad commitment to Israel's security. The rising tide of violence has resulted in the loss of many innocent lives on both sides," Blinken said on Tuesday. Blinken met with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in occupied Ramallah earlier in the day. Last week, Israeli forces killed 10 Palestinians in the West Bank, including nine in the Jenin refugee camp. A day later, a Palestinian gunman fatally shot seven Israelis in occupied East Jerusalem.

Abbas's office released a statement via the Palestinian news agency Wafa, blaming Israel for the recent crisis and accusing it of stifling the two-state solution and violating international law. "This comes at a time when Israel continues — without any deterrent or accountability — its unilateral operations, including settlements, de facto annexation, settler terrorism," the Palestinian

president said. Abbas also decried that Israel was "violating the historic status quo and breaching the Al-Aqsa Mosque" and "withholding [Palestinian] funds, along with policies of ethnic cleansing and apartheid". Tensions between Israelis and Palestinians spiked earlier this month after an ultranationalist minister in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government, Itamar Ben-Gvir, visited the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in a move condemned by Palestinian and Arab leaders as a "provocation". On Tuesday, Abbas implicitly hit out at US opposition to a Palestinian diplomatic push to seek accountability for Israeli abuses. "The continued opposition to the efforts of the Palestinian people to defend their existence and their legitimate rights in international forums and courts, and to provide international protection for our people, is a policy that encourages the Israeli occupier to commit more crimes and violates international law," Abbas said.

In his news conference, Blinken said Washington's immediate priority is "restoring calm" and defusing tensions between Israelis and Palestinians before pushing towards a long-term settlement. Blinken added that he asked members of his team to stay in the region to help with that aim.

Court to hear arguments in Fawad's bail plea today

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): A District and Sessions court has said that it would hear the arguments of all the parties on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry's post-arrest bail plea on Wednesday (today).

Additional District and Sessions Judge Faizan Haider Gillani heard Fawad's post-arrest bail plea in the session case filed against him on the complaint of ECP Secretary Omar Hameed. The PTI leader was arrested from his Lahore residence on January 25, and is facing sedition charges for publicly "threatening" the members of the electoral body in a media talk. The case against the former federal minister was registered against him at the Kohsar Police Station.

The PTI leader is currently in Adiala Jail on judicial remand. Earlier, the court had turned down the ECP's request for the adjournment of the hearing till February 2. Amid the hearing, the ECP's lawyer Saad Hassan requested the court to grant him time till Thursday to prepare arguments on the bail plea and sought copies of the application. He said: "I want to appear in court after reading the bail plea's copy."

However, Fawad's lawyer Babar Awan objected that Hassan did not need to prepare as he had given arguments on the matter earlier. "I had given arguments on the matter of physical remand and not on the bail plea," Saad clarified. Awan suggested: "Prosecution should give arguments today while the ECP can give the arguments tomorrow." However, the court disregarded Awan's suggestion and remarked: "No, [the court] will hear everyone's arguments on the bail plea together." After this, the court adjourned the hearing till Wednesday at 2:15 pm.

Pakistan, Russia agree to boost coop

MOSCOW (Agencies) Pakistan and Russia have agreed to further enhance mutually beneficial cooperation in areas of trade, energy, education, culture, security and counter-terrorism. The understanding was reached during delegation level talks between Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov in Moscow.

The discussions covered the entire range of bilateral relations with a special focus on trade and economic relations, energy cooperation as well as regional and global issues of mutual interest. The two sides also agreed on the importance of regular high-level exchanges for mutual benefit of both countries and their peoples. In their discussion on regional situation, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari apprised the Russian side on Pakistan's efforts for a peaceful and stable Afghanistan.

He also briefed the Russian delegation on Pakistan's perspective on stability and security in South Asia and gross human rights violations in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

Tanda Dam tragedy: Death toll rises to 51

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Bodies of 51 students and teachers recovered while five students have been retrieved alive from the Tanda Dam lake in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Kohat district, as Pakistan Army troops Tuesday continued rescue and relief operation.

Military personnel — including army engineers and Special Service Group's divers — along with Rescue 1122 and civil administration, have been working day and night for the last 72 hours, according to the Inter-Services Public Relations.

The rescued students have been shifted to District Hospital Kohat, while the search for one missing individual is ongoing, the military's media wing stated. The children and teachers drowned when their overloaded boat capsized in the lake, police said, after divers spent three days dragging bodies from freezing waters.

The boys aged between seven and 14 were all students of a madrassah and

had been taken for a day trip to the scenic popular weekend tourist destination on Sunday. "The water of the dam was freezing due to cold weather that impeded the rescue mission. But today the divers were able to dive deep to recover the remaining bodies," said Khateer Ahmad, a senior official with Rescue 1122.

The bodies of a teacher and one skipper were also pulled from the water, he added, bringing the death toll to 51. Muhammad Umar, who sells tea at a picnic site overlooking the lake, said dozens of parents and relatives had gathered over the past few days.

"Every time a body was recovered from the scene, they would jump onto the diver to see if it was their son and every time we would hear them screaming in pain and anguish," he told AFP over the phone on Tuesday. "I have not witnessed such scenes in my life, it's something that can't be explained in words."

Tanda Dam lake is about five kilometres (3 miles) away from the madrassah — an Islamic school that

offers free religious education — in Kohat. "The boat was overloaded; its capacity was around 20 to 25 persons," police spokesperson Fazal Naem told AFP.

He added that five people were rescued including four students and one teacher. "I got stuck under the boat," 11-year-old survivor Muhammad Mustafa told AFP from his hospital bed on Sunday. "My shawl and sweater weighed me down, so I took them off." "The water was extremely cold and my body went numb. I thought I was going to pass out when a man on an inflatable tube saved me." Drownings are common in Pakistan, when aged and overloaded vessels lose their stability and pitch passengers into the water.

On the same day, at least 41 people were confirmed dead after their bus crashed into a ravine in southwestern Balochistan province. In July last year, at least 18 women drowned after an overloaded boat carrying about 100 members of the same family capsized during a marriage procession between two villages.

ECP restores Shujaat as PML-Q President

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday restored Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain as the President of Pakistan Muslim League - Quaid (PML-Q).

ECP announced its verdict in a petition filed by the Shujaat Hussain, amid an ongoing tussle with his cousin Parvez Elahi over party leadership. The commission declared the dismissal of Chaudhry Shujaat, being contradictory to the party's constitution.

A five-member bench of the ECP, headed by Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja, in its reserved verdict rejected the PML-Q Central Working Committee's decision to remove Shujaat Hussain from the party presidency. The petition was filed by the former premier in July last amid an ongoing tussle with his cousin Pervaiz Elahi over

the party leadership.

Accepting Shujaat Hussain's plea against his removal, the ECP also declared the PML-Q intra-party elections as illegal. The PML-Q got divided into two groups over the issue of joining hands with the PTI and PML-N. Pervaiz Elahi and his son Moonis Elahi joined hands with Imran Khan while Chaudhry Shujat, his son Ch Salik and former Federal minister in the PTI government supported the PML-N.

The election body also declared PMLQ's issued election schedule null and void. Earlier on January 26, the general council meeting of PML-Q's splinter group decided to remove Shujaat as party president. Following the removal, the party council appointed Wajahat Hussain as the new president. However, ECP's decision in favor of Chaudhry Shujaat has

given a major blow to Wajahat Hussain and Elahi.

Fascist mindset trying to remove Shujaat as PML-Q President defeated: Marriyum: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Tuesday the fascist mindset that planned to remove Chaudhry Shujaat as the PML-Q President was defeated.

In a tweet, she congratulated PML-Q President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain and said the order of the Election Commission of Pakistan was a message that the decisions would be made in the light of the Constitution and the law, not in darkness. The fascism of burning, demolishing, killing, picking up and throwing away was not imposed in the country now, she said. Now everything will be done according to the constitution and law.

SC returns pleas against Naqvi's appointment as CM

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Supreme Court of Pakistan has returned the petitions seeking court's directions to declare the appointment of Mohsin Raza Naqvi as the Caretaker Chief Minister of the Punjab and two members of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), being made without lawful authority.

The SC Registrar Office raised objection that the Chief Minister of the Punjab province cannot be impleaded as party under Article 248 of the Constitution.

The Election Commission of Pakistan on January 22 appointed Naqvi as caretaker chief minister for a 90-day interim period. His name was agreed upon in an ECP meeting chaired by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikander Sultan Raja and attended by four members of the commission, besides the ECP secretary and spe-

cial secretary and ECP director general, law.

The constitutional petitions were filed last week, under Article 184(3) of the Constitution, to set aside the appointment of Mohsin Raza Naqvi as the Caretaker Chief Minister of the Punjab, Babar Hassan Bharwana, Justice (ret'd) Ikramullah Khan, as the Members ECP, and Raja Riaz Ahmed as Leader of Opposition in the National Assembly.

However, the Registrar office on Tuesday raised objection that the petitioners have not pointed out as to what questions of public importance and the Fundamental Rights are involved in the instant matter to directly invoke the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court under Article 184(3). It added that the ingredients for invoking extra ordinary jurisdiction of this Court under Article 184(3) of the

Constitution have not been satisfied. Notice issued to the respondent is not properly drawn as it is neither mentioned therein that for what purpose this constitution petition has been filed before the apex court nor copy of petition has been provided to the respondent.

The office said that the petitioners have not approached any other appropriate forum available under the law for the same relief and has also not provided any justification for not doing so. It further said that no proof/resolution is provided by Asad Umer that he is the General Secretary of the PTI and filing the petition on behalf of the party. Misconceiving multifarious prayers have been made in one constitution petition, and scandalous language has been used in his petition. The petitioner has arrayed some unnecessary parties.