

PTI workers clash with cops

LAHORE (INP): Clashes erupted outside Zaman Park between PTI workers and police party during the removal of security barriers, barbwire and tents. PTI workers holding sticks in their hands faced off with the police party during the removal of security barriers outside Imran Khan's residence. The Lahore police reached Zaman Park and started removing security barriers from PTI chief Imran Khan's residence.

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Ghulam Ali meets Alvi
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: KP Governor Haji Ghulam Ali called on President Dr Arif Alvi and discussed issues related to holding elections for provincial assembly. During the meeting, the President and KP governor discussed matters related to elections in the province and country's political situation. The meeting came as the SC of Pakistan was hearing a suo moto notice – taken by CJP.

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PM for no power cuts during Sehar, Iftar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday directed for minimum power load management during the summer season, and zero power cuts during Sehar and Iftar in the holy month of Ramadan.

The prime minister while expressing his displeasure over the construction of 500kv Thar-Matiari power transmission, directed for ensuring departmental proceedings against the negligent officials. He also questioned the delay in the completion of the power transmission in the stipulated period of time.

The prime minister was chairing a meeting to review the demand and supply of power during the summer season, and the work on different power sector projects, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The meeting was briefed over expected power demand, and supply and load management during the upcoming summer season. The meeting was also apprised of the progress on the government's 10,000 megawatts solarization project.

The meeting was attended by Federal Ministers Ishaq Dar, Khawaja Asif, Khurram Dastagir, Marriyum Aurangzeb, Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Syed Murtaza Mahmood, Ahsan ur Rehman Mazari, PM's Advisers Ahad Khan Cheema, Ministers of State Dr Musadik Malik, Muhammad Hashim Notezai and PM's Special Assistants Jehanzaib Khan, Syed Fahad Hussain and other relevant authorities. The meeting was told that the government was taking steps on priority basis for the solarization of the official buildings and its implementation would be ensured in the targeted period.

The prime minister directed for expediting the process of solarization and also asked for the reconstitution of the NTDC board. A proposed policy for the preparation of the indigenous solar panels would be presented before the cabinet in its next meeting while the policy for the manufacturing of the electric bikes at the local level was also in the final stages for which consultations with all the stakeholders had been completed.

For the conservation of gas, under the prime minister's directive, the

process for installation of conical baffles in the geysers had been completed one month ahead of the set period of time. The manufacturing of the power-consuming fans and incandescent bulbs would be completely banned after June 30 this year and relevant production units had been informed of the decision.

The meeting was further informed about the cabinet's energy conservation plan of January 3. The prime minister directed all the provinces to strictly implement the plan and take stringent actions against the elements violating the policy measures. The prime minister also stressed upon running an organized campaign in media over the conservation of energy, besides inclusion of the subject in the educational syllabus of educational institutions.

The meeting was apprised of the progress on the solarization of agriculture tube wells. Besides, holding of consultation with the stakeholders, recently a national awareness seminar had also been arranged at the national level, it was informed.

Shehbaz launches mobile schools to promote child literacy: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday terming children the 'future builders of the nation' said the government would provide maximum educational facilities to them.

Addressing the launch of mobile schools under the project 'School on wheels', he said the step would increase the literacy rate in the country, particularly in the rural areas. In the first phase, the mobile schools consisting of eight buses will provide primary-level education to the children of Islamabad and adjoining areas. The buses have been equipped with computers, desks, whiteboards, and LCDs, to create an effective teaching and learning environment. Shehbaz Sharif said the government would increase the number of buses and expand the project to the rest of the country and Azad Kashmir.

He expressed satisfaction that the project would mainstream the children in rural areas who faced the unavailability of modern educational facilities. Also, he said, the mobile library would promote a reading culture among the children. He said education was a vital factor to make a

society developed and cultured.

The prime minister on the occasion interacted with the schoolchildren and encouraged them to take interest in learning. Earlier, the prime minister launched the countrywide Spring plantation campaign by planting a sapling. He urged civil society and the general public to participate in the plantation drive to save future generations. He pointed out that cities were transforming into concrete jungles and the deteriorating environment needed urgent rectification through the plantation of trees.

ADB renews resolve to work with Pakistan on economic challenges: A delegation of Executive Directors of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) of Japan, China and South Korea called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here Tuesday and renewed ADB's resolve to continue working closely with Pakistan in addressing its economic challenges.

The prime minister lauded ADB's longstanding association with Pakistan and for being a reliable partner in the socioeconomic development of Pakistan. He appreciated ADB's generous support in the wake of the 2022 floods. This includes the emergency relief grant, Post Disaster Needs Assessment, and pledges made during the Climate Resilience Conference in Geneva.

The prime minister appreciated ADB's financing across key economic sectors of Pakistan, particularly transport, energy, climate change, and social sector. He expressed the hope that ADB's would continue its strong partnership with Pakistan in addressing the country's macroeconomic challenges. The participants were apprised that the 9th review under the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme is progressing well with staff-level agreement expected in the next few days. The prime minister underlined that Pakistan is committed to complete the reforms agreed in the programme. The ADB's executive directors expressed their deep satisfaction with the government's efforts in addressing the huge challenges of the devastation caused by the recent floods. The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Sardar Ayaz Sadiq and relevant senior officials.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Executive Directors of Asian Development Bank called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Judicial Complex attackers to be brought to book: Sana

F.P. Report

SAHIWAL: Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah condemned an attack on the Judicial Complex Islamabad by the activists of Imran Khan's party on Tuesday and said that the attackers and perpetrators would be brought to book and strict action would be taken against them.

Addressing a press conference, he said that almost 300 to 400 'goons' of a political party attacked the Judicial Complex Islamabad during the appearance of PTI chief Imran Khan in a banking court. He said that the activists ransacked the Judicial Complex parts and harmed the sanctity of judiciary. He vowed that the sanctity of judiciary would be ensured and cases would be registered against the attackers.

He said the whole nation was observing the situation and was expressing its concerns as to how to deal with the group creating chaos in the country. A court had issued arrest warrants for Imran Khan in Tosha Khana case for not appearing in the court, he added.

2 SC judges question shuffling of benches

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The crisis in the Supreme Court (SC) has deepened as Justice Qazi Faez Isa and Justice Yahya Afridi refused to hear cases on account of the sudden change in the composition of their benches.

Justice Afridi was heading the bench today but Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial changed the roster and included Justice Afridi in Justice Isa's bench.

According to Tuesday's roster, Justice Sayeed Mazahar Ali Akbar Naqvi, who is junior to Justice Afridi, is now heading the bench along with Justice Hasan Azhar Rizvi, who was sitting with Justice Isa on Monday. Justice Isa and Justice Afridi said in their written order that if benches are changed arbitrarily and without reason, it would create doubts in the minds of litigants and the public.

The two SC judges demanded transparency from the registrar, questioning the procedure for appointing cases in the apex court. The two judges also took notice of the matter and summoned the SC registrar along with all records of cases. In his remarks, Justice Isa said: "I am a judge of the Supreme Court. I have also been the Chief Justice of Balochistan High Court for five years".

"We want transparency," he stated and questioned how could there be transparency if the registrar transfers cases from one bench to another. "It seems that a registrar is more powerful than a judge like me," remarked Justice Isa. He added that he is not able to hear the cases that are still pending from 2010 because cases are fixed for hearing by the registrar.

"Can I call and tell the registrar to put such and such case in such a bench?" Justice Isa questioned. In response, the registrar said "cases are set for hearing only with the approval of the Chief Justice of Pakistan". Justice Yahya Afridi also questioned why the bench was changed when Justice Rizvi was part of it and asked again about the procedure for fixing cases.

Election date suo moto SC to announce reserved verdict today

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Supreme Court of Pakistan has reserved its verdict in its suo moto notice on delay in holding of elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

A five-member bench of the apex court headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Umar Ata Bandial and comprised Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Muneeb Akhtar, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail and Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar conducted hearing of the suo moto notice and the petitions of the Speakers of the Punjab and the KP assemblies and the Islamabad High Court Bar Association and reserved the decision which would be announced on Wednesday (today).

During the hearing, Salman Akram Raja, representing the President, told that regarding the election date for the KP Assembly the President should have not announced the date, adding that but he could give date for the elections of the Punjab assembly as the Governor was not giving date. Justice Mazhar inquired that whether the President has withdrawn the notification with respect to the date for KP Assembly's elections. Salman said he would do so.

Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail asked that is the President order with regard to the Punjab Assembly not in violation of the Lahore High Court judgment, which still holds the field as no one has challenged. The LHC single bench had ordered the ECP to give date for elections after holding consultation with the Punjab Governor. Salman replied that as the governor was not announcing the date therefore the President gave the date. Time is essence and time is running out, he said and added that 90 days' time-frame needed to be taken seriously.

Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP)'s representative Sajee Sheryar Swati informed the bench that the President for the general elections of 2013 and 2018 gave dates on the advice of the Prime Minister. He said they have dis-

cussed the matter with the Punjab Governor but he said as he has not dissolved the assembly therefore can't give date.

Advocate General Punjab Shan Gul contended that the President does not have power to announce date for the elections of Punjab Assembly, adding that Section 57(1) of the Election Act, 2917 runs contrary to the Article 112 (2) of the constitution. He informed that the PTI government before the dissolution of the provincial assembly created new four Divisions and six Districts. The judgment of the LHC reversed the PTI government's decision, adding now the delimitation have to take place in these Divisions and the Districts.

All the counsels of the political parties said that they are ready for the elections and what that the constitutional requirement should be met, but the country is facing the financial crisis and there is also security issue, while the Census would be published in April. They also said that the tenure of National Assembly and the Provincial Assemblies of Sindh and Balochistan will end in October, so why not wait for some more months.

In view of their submission Justice Mansoor suggested that why not the PTI and PDM show flexibility and decide about the elections amicably. The judge therefore had asked the counsels to seek instruction from their leadership. However, Fawad Chaudhry, former information minister of PTI, said if once the dates for elections is extended then it will become tradition. The chief justice then heard the counsel and reserved the judgment.

Earlier, PPPP counsel Farooq H Naek contended that the President has to act on the advice of the Prime Minister, therefore the President order to give dates is nullity in the eyes of the constitution. The President before deciding about the date should have wrote letter to the Prime Minister, but he invoked the discretion under Article 48 without the PM advice.

US appreciates Saudi Arabia help to Ukraine

Jalil Afridi

WASHINGTON DC: United States National Security Council Spokesperson, John Kirby welcomed the assistance pledged by Saudi Arabia to the war-torn Ukraine. John Kirby made these remarks at the White House press briefing room today.

Saudi Arabia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, led a delegation to Kyiv for a meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy last weekend. During his visit the Saudi Prince pledged 400 Million US Dollars assistance which will cover the humanitarian and energy needs of the people of Ukraine.

The agreement will

result in the delivery of generators and badly needed energy products and supplies, Kirby said. These deliveries will begin arriving next week, he said. Kirby acknowledged that Saudi US ties have had highs and lows but in general these ties have been of strategic nature and have been established since last eight decades. Kirby also acknowledged that more than seventy thousand US citizens are stationed in Saudi Arabia which clearly shows the strength of these relations between the two countries.

Kirby also appreciated Saudi Arabia for allowing the Israeli airlines to use the Kingdom's airspace since last one year and he hoped that soon other countries in the region will also allow

Israel to integrate in the region. John Kirby appreciated the peace efforts between Israel and Palestine and hoped that the vision of President Biden regarding two nations theory will become a reality soon.

Regarding China, John Kirby said that President Biden is interested in cooperation rather than conflict with China and he hoped that measures should be taken so that Corona like conflicts do not arise again between two countries. Kirby appreciated the recent opening of military communication between the two countries and hoped that these military lines of communication are always open to better understand each other's point of view.

Marriyum blasts Imran for lame excuses

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Tuesday castigated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan for his lame excuses for not appearing in courts.

In a statement, the minister said that the courts continue asking about Imran's whereabouts but he continued to evade. Marriyum said that the "foreign agent" was appealing to the banking court for granting bail. In the Tosha Khana case, charges are to be framed against him, yet he refused to appear.

She said if Imran Khan fails to appear in courts, he should be arrested so that his desire to fill the jail will also be fulfilled. She said, "If

Nawaz Sharif could appear in court with his daughter on daily basis, why Imran Khan could not appear with Bushra and Farah Gogi?" She said Imran Khan should realise that in his difficult time, Bushra Bibi and Farah Gogi left him alone to face court cases.

She said that "watch thief and foreign agent" should answer why Tosha Khana gifts were stolen and why did he sell the watch with an image of the Holy Kaaba. Marriyum asked Imran to appear in court and tell why did Bushra Bibi sell Tosha Khana's diamond necklaces. He should also tell the court why foreign agents used charity money in politics, she said.

The minister said that Khan should also answer

why they used their employees' private accounts for money laundering. He should also answer why Shaukat Khanum Hospital charity money was invested in the private housing society. "Why did Imran take millions of dollars from the Wootton cricket club and why that charity money was invested in politics?" She asked Imran to tell the nation why foreign funding was used against the country.

Meanwhile, Marriyum Aurangzeb on Tuesday said that abusing and threatening judges, attacking courts and vandalism at Judicial Complex by PTI activists was the manifestation that "foreign funded Toshakhana thief" Imran Khan could not face courts to answer allegations.

Dar announces 5-rupee cut in petrol price

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Ishaq Dar on Tuesday announced a reduction in the price of petrol by Rs5 per litre. Addressing a video message, he said the new price of petrol was now Rs267 per litre from Rs272.

He added that the price of high-speed diesel would remain unchanged at Rs280 per litre. "Kerosene oil's current price of Rs202.73 is being brought to Rs187.73 after a reduction of 15 rupees. Light-diesel, which is at Rs196.68, is being brought to Rs184.68 after a reduction of 12 rupees," the finance minister said.

He said the prices would apply from midnight tonight. Responding to the news, PML-N Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz said: "Thank you Dar Sahib! Good news for people." The government is in a race against time to implement tax measures and reach an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as the country's reserves have depleted to around \$3 billion, which experts believe is enough for only 16 or 17 days of imports.

Army martyrs laid to rest

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: The Pakistan Army's martyrs Sepoy Afzal Khan Shaheed and Sepoy Imran Ullah Shaheed, who sacrificed their lives in North Waziristan gunfight, were laid to rest on Tuesday after the Namaz-e-Janaza (funeral prayers) offered at Badargah in Mardan and Sarai Sar in Bajaur, respectively.

Both soldiers embraced martyrdom while fighting valiantly during an exchange of fire with terrorists in Spinwam, North Waziristan district. The Shaheeds (martyrs) were laid to rest with full military honors, whereas senior serving and retired officers, soldiers, relatives, and a large number of people attended the funerals.



ISLAMABAD: Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali called on President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

IHC grants interim bail to Imran Khan

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has granted interim bail to former prime minister Imran Khan in an attempted murder case filed by Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PML-N) leader Mohsin Shah Nawaz Ranjha.

A single bench of IHC comprising Chief Justice of IHC Justice Aamer Farooq conducted hearing of Khan's petition and granted bail to the PTI chief till March 9 against surety bonds worth of Rs100,000.

The case of "attempted murder" was registered at the Secretariat police station in the federal capital against him on the complaint of PML-N leader Mohsin Ranjha who claimed that he was attacked by the PTI protesters when he was visiting the office of the ECP on 21.10.2022. The PTI Chairman approached the IHC seeking bail in this case. He stated in his petition that his opponent political forces who are at the helm of affairs of the Federal Government, has falsely implicated him in a series of frivolous / bogus criminal cases registered at numerous forums by misusing state machinery and exercising colorable powers. He added that the instant FIR No. 463 / 22 dated 21.10.2022 is also a product of conspiracy and malafide intent of the political rivals / prosecution to tarnish the

Court issues arrest warrants for PTI Chief

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): A sessions court in Islamabad has issued non-bailable arrest warrants against former premier and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan over non-appearance in the Toshakhana (gift repository) case.

The PTI chairman was to be indicted in the Toshakhana case after his indictment was deferred twice. His lawyer had requested the court for an exemption from appearance today and the court went into recess. However, when the court resumed the hearing, Additional Sessions Judge Zafar Iqbal issued the arrest warrants over non-appearance and adjourned the hearing till March 7. During hearing of the Toshakhana reference, Imran's lawyers requested Additional Sessions Judge Zaffar Iqbal to postpone the hearing by another five days. However, the ECP lawyer contested the request saying "it is of no concern to the court where Imran is coming from" as he questioned that if the PTI chief could appear in other courts, why not this one? Imran's lawyer argued that "I am unable to present Imran Khan before the court" but "if he manages to get out of the judicial complex in time, then we will appear before the court".

petitioner's reputation.

He adopted the stance that being aggrieved with the false implication in this bogus case the petitioner approached the District and Sessions Court, Islamabad at the first instance for the grant of pre-arrest bail under section 498 Cr.PC 1898 but the case of the petitioner was adjourned due to his inability to travel that resulted from multiple firearm injuries. "It is important to mention that there exist real life threats to the life of Petitioner as he has been repeatedly con-

veyed / informed by different credible and reliable sources including different state agencies that his life is under constant threat," maintained the PTI Chairman. He mentioned that threat to the petitioner's life is evident from the previous assassination attempt on his life during the 'Haquezi Azadi March' when a planned orchestrated attack was launched. He added, "Petitioner miraculously survived the assassination attempt however sustained multiple firearm wounds on leg.



CM lays foundation stone of Rs 3.10 bln Akbar Chowk underpass, flyover project

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi on Tuesday laid the foundation stone of Rs 3.10 billion Akbar Chowk underpass and flyover project and directed to complete it within 90 days.

The project, spanning a remarkable 700 meters for the flyover and 540 meters for the underpass, was designed to accommodate two lanes of traffic each day, serving the needs of commuters from Faisal Town, Johar Town, Kot Lakhpat, and other localities. The DG LDA provided a comprehensive briefing to the CM, detailing the project's key features and benefits. It is worth noting that transparent tendering process had yielded notable cost savings, amounting to crores of rupees.

During a media interaction, the CM said that an agreement had been finalized with the PCB regarding the procurement of lighting equipment. In order to curtail significant expenses in future, the decision was made to refrain from renting the lights. He highlighted that a colossal sum of Rs 600 million was expended on renting lights last year alone, while this year, the cost

amounted to Rs 500 million.

Mohsin Naqvi stated that elections would take place whenever they were ordered, and he made it clear that he did not engage in any vindictive acts. "We anticipated that there would be numerous arrests, resulting in the transfer of some detainees to jails in other cities". However, he emphasized that he would not allow any Lahore projects to be stalled because he was a proud citizen of Lahore.

He also instructed that Akbar Chowk project be completed in 90 days rather than the originally scheduled four months. The project design was inherited from the previous government and was not modified; it had only been launched, and they would try to finish it as soon as possible. He also recognized that, after the Akbar Chowk project, remodelling of the next Chowk was necessary to maintain traffic flow.

The CM maintained that expenditures on the proposed horse and cattle show were too high, and there were no sponsors to shoulder the expenses. He noted that the cost of Rs 900 million was far too high, especially since there were no sponsors to help offset

the expenses.

On the other hand, Jashan-e-Baharan event was able to take place thanks to the support of sponsors, and the government did not have to allocate any funds towards it, he added.

He stressed the importance of prioritizing the completion of ongoing projects and added that projects that could be finished quickly would receive special attention. For example, the CBD Kalma Chowk remodelling project was scheduled to be completed by March 23, and assistance would also be provided to ensure the timely completion of cantonment underpass near Quaid-e-Azam Interchange. However, traffic issues persist due to encroachments, and Commissioner Lahore was actively working to address this problem, he stated and reminded the Lahore Development Authority of its responsibility to ensure that private housing schemes were equipped with the necessary facilities.

Provincial Ministers- SM Tanveer, Ibrahim Hasan Murad, Azfar Ali Nasir, secretary information, commissioner and CCPO Lahore, and others were also present.

Wassan demands 70pc salary increase in low grade employees

KARACHI (NNI): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Senior Leader and Advisor to CM for agriculture Manzoor Hussain Wassan demanded 70% salary increase of small grade government employees and wages of laborers.

Manzoor Wassan demanded that the lower scale grade government employees and laborers are very worried about the inflation in the country, the salaries of the small grade government employees should be increased by 60 to 70 percent, and the wages of the workers should also be increased.

The senior leader of PPP Manzoor Wassan, while making a new prediction, told that the next month of March is very important, Imran Khan will be disqualified in March and old cases will also be opened. Manzoor Wassan further said in his statement on Tuesday that Imran Khan will be disqualified and will go to jail. When Imran Khan is disqualified and goes to jail, then his close aides will separate from him. Imran Khan is afraid of going to jail.

11 killed, 1,196 injured in 1,155 accidents in Punjab

LAHORE (APP): At least 11 people were killed while 1,196 injured in 1,155 road traffic accidents in Punjab during last 24 hours.

Out of the total injured, 645 people were seriously injured who were shifted to different hospitals, whereas, 551 minor injured victims were treated at the incident site by rescue medical teams, said a spokesman for Rescue 1122 here on Tuesday. The analysis showed that 625 drivers, 44 underage drivers, 185 pedestrians, and 397 passengers were among the victims of these road traffic crashes.

Engineer Amir Muqam visits Buner, Swabi, Mardan and Nowshera

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Prime Minister, Engineer Amir Muqam, made a visit to the four districts of Buner, Swabi, Mardan and Nowshera. Party officials, workers and aspiring candidates of the provincial and national assemblies were also accompanying the advisor.

APM Engr. Amir Muqam said that workers should initiate preparations for the general elections and speed up public communication movement. He

announced his determination to fully participate during the public contact campaign of Maryam Nawaz and her visits to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Engineer Amir Muqam said that the deteriorated economic situation of the country and inflation is a gift from Imran Khan and the latter has done nothing but speaking lies and stealing during his reign, for which he must be held accountable. The adviser further added that the party workers and office bearers should focus on the party's organizational structure at the grass root level.

NDMA dispatches 1000-tonne relief cargo through PNS NASR to Syria, Turkiye



ISLAMABAD (APP): As part of continuous relief assistance on Prime Minister's instruction to the people of countries affected by the deadly earthquake, the National Disaster Management (NDMA) has dispatched the first shipment through Naval Ship NASR from KTP West Wharf Karachi.

Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Faisal Subzwari, Turkish Consul General Jamal Sangu and Commander Pakistan Fleet Rear Admiral Faisal Abbasi graced the departure ceremony of the ship, a news release said.

This consignment contains large family-sized winterized tents & blankets as per the current need of quake affectees in Türkiye whereas generators, dry rations, medicines and clothing for the victims in Syria. The ship carrying 1,000 tonnes of assistance goods for the two countries has departed today and would reach the destination within 14 days. Federal Minister Faisal Subzwari expressed his sincere condolences for the loss of precious lives due to the earthquake in both countries and assured him of every possible help from the government and the people of Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf in a group photo with members of Pakistan-Hungary Parliamentary Friendship Group at Parliament House.



KARACHI: Minister for Information Transport and Mass Transit sharjeel Inam Memon chaired meeting regarding People's Bus Service.

Pink Bus Service to starts it's operations on 2 new routes in Karachi today

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Transport Department government of Sindh has announced the launch People's Pink Bus service on two new routes of Karachi from March 1.

The fleet of pink buses on existing Model Colony - Tower Route will also be increased from Wednesday.

This announcement was made in a meeting chaired by Minister for Information Transport and Mass Transit sharjeel Inam Memon regarding People's Bus Service.

Secretary Transport Abdul Haleem Sheikh, Managing Director Sindh Mass Transit Authority Zubair Chana, Project Dirextor NRTC Sohaib Shafiq, Operations Manager Abdul Shakoor and others attended the meeting.

Talking in meeting, the Provincial Minister for Information, Transport and Mass Transit Sharjeel Inam Memon said that two new routes of pink bus service between power Chowrangi and Indus Hospital and Numaish Chowrangi to



Sea View will be started from 1st March. While more buses would be inducted in the fleet of existing route of Model Colony -Tower, he added. The provincial minister said that Pink Bus Service Route -2 starts from Power Chowrangi North Karachi via Nagan Chowrangi, Shafiq Mor, Gulshan Chowrangi, Johar Mor, COD, Drig Road, Sharah -e- Faisal, Shah

Faisal Colony, Singer Chowrangi, Korangi No. 5 and terminates at Indus hospital. He added that Pink Bus Service will also start its operations on Route No. 10, which covers Numaish Chowrangi, MA Jinnah Road, Zeb-un-Nisa Street, Metropole, Teen Talwar, Do Talwar, Abdullah Shah Ghazi, Dolman Mall, McDonald Tower and Clock Tower. Sharjeel Inam Memon

directed Sindh Mass Transit Authority and NRTC to complete the survey on more new routes of People's Bus Service in Karachi.

He said that operations of the People's Bus Service up to Hawks Bay Road should also be examined. The minister also directed to start more new routes of People's Electric Bus Service in Karachi as soon as possible.

Pakistani constitution protects minorities: Mufti Abdul Shakoor

KARACHI (APP): Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Mufti Abdul Shakoor on Tuesday said that the constitution of Pakistan guarantees equal rights and proportional representation in elected institutions to minority communities for ensuring the protection of their rights.

The minister was addressing the Interfaith Harmony Conference titled "Interfaith Harmony and Contemporary Obligations" organised by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony here at a local hotel in Karachi.

Sindh minister for minority affairs Gian Chand Essarani, MNA James Iqbal, Chairman of National Minority Commission, Chela Ram Kevlani and a number of religious leaders and scholars belonging to Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Sikh, Bahai and Parsi communities also spoke at the conference.

Mufti Abdul Shakoor, delivering the keynote address, said that Islam teaches tolerance and equality and there was no compulsion in Islam and neither constitution nor the law of Pakistan allows any compulsion over minority communities in the country.

He said the government was determined to ensure the rights and protection of minority communities accord-

ing to the law of the land and taking every possible step for resolving their issues. He also noted that minority communities living in Pakistan were safe and contented. Certain problems exist in every society but we as a nation have to face those problems together, he said adding that some elements try to misuse religious cards to achieve their personal interests or for political gains but such elements should not only be condemned but also identified and brought to justice.

"Islam teaches tolerance and equality while extremism is the approach of a few self-serving people," Mufti Abdul Shakoor opined and said that the entire nation has to stand united against the extremist approaches as those elements were harming the peaceful perception of the country. The minister stressed the need to organising interfaith harmony conferences at college and university and district levels and urged that we should try to live our lives according to the teachings of Hazrat Muhammad s.a.w and follow the spirit of Meesaq-e-Madinah to promote tolerance and religious harmony in the society.

He said that amount of financial assistance for minorities was being disbursed directly to their bank accounts so that transparency could

be maintained in the process.

Sindh minister of minority affairs Giyan Chand Essarani said that Sindh has taken lead in legislation on minority affairs, implementation of the reserved quota of 5% in public sector jobs was ensured and they had considerable representation in the provincial assembly as well in cabinet. He said that there was unprecedented interfaith harmony in Pakistan and there was no coercion or intimidation over them while across the border in India, minority communities were unsafe and under oppression.

MNA James Iqbal said that all religions prohibit vice and their followers should follow the religious teachings in letter and spirit. Moulana Ahmed Ali Marwat, Bishop Humfry Sarfraz Peters, Additional Advocate General Sindh Kalpana Devi, Mufti Abu Bakar Muhiuddin, Khurshid Kotwari, Mufti Yousuf Qasuri, Dr. Syed Javed Ikram Bukhari, Dr. Chela Ram Chhabria, Allama Athar Hussain Mashahadi, Bishop Fredrick John, Khan Ahsan Imam, Sardar Ramesh Singh also spoke at the occasion. They said that followers of different faiths and religions were living in harmony in Pakistan and such events would help further promote inter-faith harmony in the country.

More than 350 female students join a two-day training camp

KARACHI (PPI): In collaboration with Pakistan Red Crescent-Sindh and Sindh Boy Scouts Association (SBSA), Al-Abid Educational Society organized the second annual two-day field training camp for female students at Gulistan Scouts Ground in Karachi on February 27 and 28, 2023. Over 350 female students from across Karachi took part. The theme was "Sitara se Agay Jahan Or bhi Hai."

According to a press release issued after the camp's closing ceremony on Tuesday, February 28, the camp's main purpose was to give confidence and encouragement to the female students to live in difficult conditions, such as in any emergency or disaster, and transform them from delicate to strong. All female students were

placed into four companies named Fatima Jinnah Company, Rana Liaquat Ali Company, Bilquis Edhi Company, and Rutfaou Company to pay tribute to these iconic women.

Chairperson Pakistan Red Crescent-Sindh Mrs. Farzana Naek was the Chief Guest at the closing ceremony. She appreciated the management of Al-Abid Educational Society for organizing the camp for female students. "I salute the parents of these students who allowed their children and encouraged them to participate in this camp," said Chairperson Farzana. She said that the Red Crescent conducted training sessions for the participants on camp management and rules, first aid, emergency response, climate change, and fire safety. In addition, a 24-hour first aid

post was also set up to deal with any emergency. Abid Pervaiz, President Al-Abid Educational Society, thanked all the partners who helped make the camp successful. He also expressed his gratitude to the Chairperson of Pakistan Red Crescent-Sindh and other guests for attending the closing ceremony. He further said that two-day training enhanced female students' confidence and prepared them for emergency situations by providing them with first aid and scouting.

Talking to the audience, Syed Haider Ali, Chairman of the Sindh Private Schools and Colleges Association (ASPSCA), praised the organizers and said that the ASPSCA always encouraged schools and colleges to organize these events, especially for female students.



IGP pays surprise visit to Mathani Police Station

PESHAWAR (APP): The Inspector General of Police (IGP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Akhtar Hayat Khan visited police station Mattani, situated in the outskirts of Peshawar on Tuesday. Chief Capital Police Peshawar also accompanied the IGP on this occasion.

The police chief checked various registers of the police station as well as reviewed the registration of the cases. The IGP also

went round various sections of the police station and checked police lookout, sanitation of the police station, CCTV camera and adopted security measures.

On the occasion, a practical demonstration of direct supervision of the monitoring system of the cameras was also shown to the police chief.

The IGP also met with the jawans deputed in the police station and briefed himself from their con-

fronting problems and difficulties in line of duty.

The police jawans were pleasantly surprised to find IGP amongst themselves and re-affirmed their commitment to perform duty as per attached expectations of the general public.

The IGP also awarded the jawans on diligently performing their duty.

The IGP also went on the roof top of the police station and personally reviewed the adopted secu-

rity measures on different sides to avert any possible attack of the miscreants.

The IGP also issued necessary instructions to the concerned police high ups in light of his detailed visit to the police station.

It may be recalled that several attacks were made on the Mattani police station in the recent past which were successfully repulsed by the valiant police jawans of the police force.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Caretaker Minister for Relief Taj Muhammad Afridi meeting Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Azam Khan.

WSSP cadre employees get annual increment

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar (WSSP) Board of Directors (BoDs) has approved the annual increment for the company's employees.

A total of 1,831 company cadre employees will benefit from the annual

increment, which amounts to 8% of and will cost the company an additional Rs45 million annually.

It is worth mentioning that 2,400 TMA employees, who are deputed in WSSP, were already given the annual increment according to the government's budget announcement.

After the board's

approval and necessary action by management, the company's employees will receive the increment in their February salaries.

The Chief Executive Officer WSSP Dr. Hassan Nasir said that the company's employees are being provided with all entitlements as per the government policies and

company's rules and regulations.

He emphasized that the employees' rights are being safeguarded and despite financial difficulties, the board has approved the increment.

He hoped that employees would continue to work hard to provide clean and quality services to the city.

Asfandiyar calls to end use of 'angry mobs'

PESHAWAR (APP): Awami National Party President Asfandiyar Wali Khan on Tuesday expressed his concern regarding the increasing trend of accused individuals appearing in court with "angry mobs".

The practice by the accused was tantamount to get the decision of their choice, he said in a statement issued here.

He also noted that this behavior sent a negative message and undermines the dignity of the judicial system.

The ANP president called for an end to the new trend of using 'angry mobs' as a shield in the courts.

Power shutdown notice issued

PESHAWAR (APP): PESCO on Tuesday issued power shut down notice due to maintenance work.

Power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Mardan Grid Station on 2nd and 4th March from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM, resultantly consumers of 11 KV Jan Abad, Pakistan Chowk, Canal Road, Charsadda Road, New Manga, Saleem Khan, Gujar Ghari, Town, Muslim Abad, New Saleem Khan, Green Area feeders will face inconvenience.

Power supply will remain suspended from 220 KV Mardan Grid Station on 2nd and 4th March from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM, resultantly consumers of 11 KV Basha Khan MES College, Benazir Children Hospital, Muhabat Abad, Bank Road, Muslim Abad, Nisatta Road, Sheikh Maltoon, Ahmad Abad, Misri Abad, Rural 1, PRC, Bagh Iram, New Taru and Eid Gha feeders will face inconvenience.

Banks urged to promote economic activities

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR : Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Muhammad Ishaq called upon the commercial banks to focus on promotion of economic, trade activities and industrialisation in merged tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Ishaq while talking to Regional Head of the National Bank of Pakistan, Fakhkar Zaman and Chief Manager NBP Saif ul Geer Khan Afridi during a meeting held here at the chamber's house on Tuesday said role of banking sector is vital in boosting up trade and economic activities as well as industrialisation in new industrial estates in merged tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He called for proactive measures by commercial banks for provision of all facilities to the business community and availability of loans on easy terms and conditions to promote small and medium and large scale business and industries in the province.

The SCCI vice president Ejaz Khan Afridi and

Secretary General of the chamber Sajjad Aziz also present during the meeting.

Ishaq apprised the government is taking measures for promotion of economic, trade and industrial activities in merged districts of KP. He, however, stressed that commercial banks should provide facilities to investors under one-window operation in tribal and settled areas of the province.

The chamber president emphasized the need for pragmatic steps for putting on modern lines to operations, administration, besides bringing behavior/attitude improvement of staff of the commercial banks to restore trust of consumers/clients and improve the image of the bank as well. Ishaq informed that as result of vigorous efforts of a leading businessman from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Senator Mohsin Aziz, the Senate of Pakistan passed State Bank of Pakistan (Amendment) Bill 2021, saying that legislation would rectify unjustified and inequitable credit lending that has been the long-standing demand of the smaller provinces.

Before passage of the

bill the loan disbursement by commercial banks against deposits from KP and Balochistan was 1.35% only, which after the passage of bill will increase to about 5%. This will help in more trade and industrialisation in both the provinces, SCCI chief told the meeting. He asked the NBP to focus on corporate and Islamic banking and be proactive to upgrade the bank on modern lines. He furthermore demanded that NBP should provide all facilities to consumers, especially commercial clients at optimal level.

Fakhkar Zaman, NBP regional head said the bank is taking measures for upgrading its standards and providing facilities to consumers as per their needs, saying that the bank is gaining rapid progress through these initiatives.

The regional head informed training sessions conducted for consumers under the National Financial Education Programme. He assured that NBP services will be available all the time for arranging financial awareness sessions, seminars and training workshops.



PESHAWAR: Pakistan Flour Mills Association Central Chairman Asim Raza giving shield to PFMA-KP Chairman Haji Iqbal during Pakistan Flour Mills Association Central Executive Committee Meeting.

16 milkmen held during crackdown on adulterators

PESHAWAR (APP): The District administration Peshawar arrested 16 milkmen during a crackdown on adulterators from various localities here on Tuesday. The administration has also discarded 20 litres of adulterated milk.

On the directives of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Peshawar, Shah Fahad, the officers of district administration carried out raids on milkmen shops in Cantonment and interior city.

Accompanied by the officials of the Livestock Department, the officers conducted the analysis of milk through modern milk testing laboratory, which confirmed the mixing of additional water in their product.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Peshawar has directed the officers of district administration for the inspection of the shops of milkmen and stern action after confirming adulteration in their product.

Large quantities of drugs seized

PESHAWAR (APP): In a series of three successful operations, Peshawar's Excise Department has seized a total of 12 kilograms of hashish and 2110 grams of ice, resulting in the arrest of three accused individuals.

The first operation, which took place at the Wilayat Interchange Misri Banda Road, resulted in the recovery of 12 kilograms of hashish and an arrest.

The second operation, conducted on a tip-off at Jamil Chowk ring road towards the motorway, led to the recovery of 510 grams of high-quality ice and the arrest of two suspects. The third operation, which took place at GT Road Haji Camp Ada stop, resulted in the arrest of Ashfaq Ahmed, who was found in possession of 1600 grams of high-quality ice.

All three cases have been registered in their respective police stations for further investigation.

The Excise Department has been praised for its swift actions in cracking down on drug smugglers, contributing to a safer environment for the public.

DG Health visited Hamza Foundation

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Director General (DG) Health Services Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Dr. Shaukat Ali said that public awareness is key for controlling thalassemia and added that establishment of comprehensive strategy is need of the hour with the consultation of all stakeholders in this regard.

This he said during his visit to Hamza Thalassemia Welfare Hospital along with Additional DG Dr. Siraj Khan while the founder Ijaz Ali Khan and

Medical Director Dr. Tariq briefed regarding facilities in the center.

DG Health Services also visited various section of the foundation and appreciated the administration for provision of facilities to patients of genetic diseases. The welfare hospital was established in 2006 while provided healthcare to thousands of patients free of cost while 1447 children are still registered with Hamza Foundation for thalassemia treatment facilities.

DG Dr. Shaukat Ali said that health department has

also launched campaign for eradication of thalassemia and other genetic diseases while argued Hamza Foundation to establish liaison with the department. DG assured that he would favor provision of financial grant to Hamza foundation at departmental status.

However, Additional DG Dr. Siraj Khan have opinion that public representative along with civil society activists must play their role for public awareness to eradicate genetic diseases from the region especially thalassemia.

RTO Peshawar seizes cigarettes

PESHAWAR (APP): Regional Tax Office (RTO) Peshawar seized 23 million sticks of cigarettes and huge quantities of tobacco worth Rs one million during 13 raids conducted in the last eight months involving Rs 504 million federal excise duty and sales tax.

According to the performance report of RTO Peshawar submitted to FBR, the office conducted 13 raids in which almost 23 million sticks of cigarettes, involving Federal Excise Duty of more than Rs 47 million and sales tax of Rs 13 million were seized.

Similarly, large quantities of tobacco worth one million were also seized involving Rs 444 million in Federal Excise Duty.

The report said that RTO Peshawar while successfully implementing the track and trace system of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) in various tobacco units of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, seized illegal

shipments of tobacco and related products.

It said that strict actions were also taken against tax evaders while establishing various checkpoints and mobile squads to keep an eye on goods being supplied from tax-exempt erstwhile tribal areas to taxable areas under section 40D of the Sales Tax Act, 1990.

The law prohibits business entities of non-tariff areas from selling items to taxable areas without charging the required Sales Tax and FED under the garb of tax exemptions.

It said that RTO Peshawar impounded 82 vehicles which were carrying different goods, including foam mattresses, paper and paperboard materials, plastic, steel, pipes, and cement, adding that 69 vehicles were later released after payment of approximately Rs 12 million sales tax, while 13 vehicles' owners failed to submit taxes and remained in custody.

WHO's Dr. Palitha visits LRT

PESHAWAR (APP): The representative of World Health Organization for Pakistan, Dr. Palitha Mahipala Tuesday visited trauma centre at Lady Reading Hospital (LRH) and praised efficient management of patients by staff.

During his visit, Dr. Mahipala appreciated dedication of hospital staff for their efficient handling of patients injured in police line bomb blast.

The purpose of the visit was to discuss ways through which WHO can provide support medical healthcare and trauma care management in the hospital.

Dr. Mahipala announced that WHO would introduce diploma course for nurses in trauma care and collaborate with the hospital in field of research.

Dr. Junaid Sarfaraz Khan, Dean and Chief Executive of Lady Reading Hospital expressed gratitude to WHO and Dr. Mahipala for their support.

Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan increased

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's export of goods and services to Afghanistan witnessed an increase of 10.58 percent during the first seven months of the current fiscal year (2022-23) as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of last year, SBP reported.

The overall exports to

Afghanistan were recorded at US \$285.177 million during July-January (2022-23) against exports of US \$257.888 million during July-January (2021-22), showing growth of 10.58 percent, SBP data revealed.

On a year-to-year basis, the exports to Afghanistan also increased 93.26 percent from US \$17.384 million in

January 2022, against the exports of US \$33.598 million in January 2023.

Meanwhile, on a month-on-month basis, the exports to Afghanistan however decreased by 12.24 percent during January 2023 as compared to the exports of US \$38.297 million in December 2022, the SBP data revealed.

Jail Bahro Tahrik fails as PTI stalwarts concentrate more on social media posts rather arrest

PESHAWAR (APP): Despite tall claims to fill the country's jails, neither the PTI leadership nor its workers presented voluntary arrest in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa especially in Peshawar, making the Jail Bahro Tahrik merely a joke of the day.

Even the previous chief minister Mahmood Khan, KP PTI's President Pervez Khattak, former speaker Asad Qaiser, ex Governor Shah Farman and dozens of PTI former ministers and lawmakers including Taimur Salim Jhagra, Kamran Bangash and Syed Ishtiaq Umar did not offer their voluntary arrest to meet the PTI's Chairman Imran Khan's call for Jail Bahro Tahrik.

"Those, who claimed to sacrifice their lives for Imran Khan were seen afraid of even reaching close to the prisons' vehicles despite several

announcement by police to give peaceful voluntary arrest rather making agitation," Ikhtair Wali Khan, PMLN KP spokesman and former member provincial assembly told APP on Tuesday.

He said the police was calling PTI leaders and workers through megaphone on roads and streets of Peshawar, Swat, Dir, Dera Ismail Khan, Mardan and other cities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to facilitate them in their Jail Bahro Tahrik but none of them come forward for voluntarily arrest rather kept themselves busy in taking selfies with police vehicles for social media posts.

He said that PTI's circus company had made hectic attempts to convince and bring out the workers for Jail Bahro Tahrik in these cities but failed miserably because the people of KP knew about their poor per-

formance and hallow slogans during the last 10 years rule in the province.

Ikhtair Wali said Imran's loyalists were chanting tall slogans for Jail Bahro Tahrik, while the families of arrested workers filed petition for their recovery within 24 hours.

He said the immature policies and u-turn of Imran Khan had pushed the country into political and economic crisis, adding it was beyond his understanding that first PTI lawmakers had resigned from the national assembly and later dissolved two provincial assemblies and now they were demanding re-election in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab provinces.

He said Imran Khan in order to please his dissident workers and leaders, who were unmoved after premature dissolution of KP and Punjab assemblies, has launched Jail Bahro

Tahrik to get people's attention but disappointed after the flopped show.

He said Imran Khan had left economic landmines for the coalition government after knowing that his days were numbered, adding the government was left with no viable option but to renegotiate the agreement signed by Imran Khan with the IMF.

He said that the federal government has given Rs417 billion to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in National Finance Commission Award (NFC) during the past 13 years including 10 years rule of PTI and questioned whether this huge amount was used by the PTI's incompetent rulers.

Wali alleged the PTI government has misused these huge funds allocated for the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to enhance its counter-terrorism capabilities of its

organizations and today everyone was asking about its usage in the wake of the police line's mosque bombing.

Former provincial minister and Awami National Party leader, Wajid Ali Khan has termed the announcement of Jail Bahro Tahrik just a political stunt of Imran Khan after PTI apparently had nothing left to convince its displeased political workers and leaders in the wake of immature political decisions of Imran Khan regarding dissolution of KP assembly where PTI was enjoying two third majority.

Talking to APP, he said Pakistanis knew that PTI had completely failed to serve the nation during its four-year rule in the centre and 10-year long government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where the government helicopter was

used by Imran Khan like a 'rickshaw' for personal political gains.

He said PTI workers and leaders only gathered for photo sessions and videos for posting on social media under the Jail Bahro Tahrik. The veteran politician criticized Imran Khan for enjoying all facilities at home after obtaining bail before arrest and pursuing his workers to give arrest for his so-called movement.

He said in the past Jail Bahro Movement was launched to build pressure on the government but except for movements against the dictatorship, no such movement bore concrete results rather aggravated the political and economic uncertainty in Pakistan.

Recalling the 1981 and 1986 Jail Bahro Movements, he said that various political parties under the platform of the

Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD) had staged it against President Ziaul Haq's regime that failed to achieve its main objectives, however managed to provide support for democracy.

He said that one such movement was also launched by Muthahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) led by its late President Qazi Hussain Ahmed against the Shaukat Aziz government in 2004 that failed to draw people's support.

Wajid Khan recalled the Jail Bahro Movement launched by the mainstream political parties and lawyers against the emergency imposed by former President Pervez Musharraf said that it achieved its objectives in the form of restoration of sacked judges, end of house arrest of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto Shaheed, the release of detained

political workers and later resignation by the dictator.

Except BRT project constructed on very exorbitant rates, he said PTI failed to launch any mega project in the last ten years in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where the billion tree project was taken over by the NAB, which exposed Imran Khan's tall anti corruption slogans.

He said huge taxpayers' money was wasted by the PTI's incompetent rulers as evidence of poor planning and ill selection of plantation sites under the billion trees afforestation project, which were washed away by last year's devastating flood in northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The ANP leader said political tolerance was the need of the hour to take the country out of economic and political crisis and make Pakistan economically stronger.



In brief

Nawaz to return soon: Muqam F.P. Report

BUNER: The premier's aide Engineer Amir Muqam has reclaimed that former PM Mian Mohammad Nawaz Sharif would come back Pakistan soon and would lead the party in campaigning for coming general elections in the country, on Tuesday. The Aide termed Imran Khan Jail Bhara Tehrek (prison going movement) badly failed and named it Jeeb Baro Tehrek (pocket soaring movement). Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) president Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was addressing party district leaders and media talks at Rega after attending offering death condolence with party leader Amir Abdullah of Karapa young son who was died in road accident. The Aide assured that Katkalla grid station would be made functional soon and offices of NADRA and PESCO would be regularized besides flour crisis would be overcome by adopting justified distribution system. PM Aide assured steps towards developmental schemes and Buner Express Way from Motorway. Prior to that the party district president Haji Salar Khan general secretary Haji Shah Bakht Rawan D. R. Sultanul Mulk, Dr. Hazrat Rehman, Haji Sadiqullah, Syed Nasar Abass, Ex MPA Gorsaran Lal and many others highlighted various issues especially opposition party PPTI former members KPK and National assembly hold in PESCO NDRA and others departments and demanded empowerment of leaguers to serve public so as to gain voters sympathies.

Culprit arrested F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: The culprit allegedly involved in killing of Assistant Sub Inspector (ASI) and constable arrested from the Nisatta area of district Charsadda, on Tuesday. According to police, the team reached the Spin Korona area in the jurisdiction of Tarlandi area on July 29, 2021, to investigate the complaint lodged by a woman. During patrolling, the police team was attacked by two accused identified as Zarak and Tahir Ullah. As a result, ASI Siraj Khan died on the spot while constable Ikram Ullah sustained injuries and later succumbed in a hospital. Police arrested accused Zarak on the spot while Tahir Ullah managed to flee from the scene. DPO Charsadda Mohammad Arif took strict notice of the incident and directed relevant officials to the early arrest of the escaped Tahirullah who was arrested from the jurisdiction of Nisatta police station.

Minister visits PTC Hangu F.P. Report

HANGU: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Irrigation, Hamid Khan on Tuesday visited Police Training College (PTC) Hangu and inspected its various sections. Upon arrival, the caretaker minister was received by Commandant PTC, Faseehuddin. During visit, caretaker minister laid foundation stone of mosque in PTC and reviewed pace of development work in the college. The caretaker minister praised performance and training standard of PTC and professionalism of its training staff. He said that the jawans that were being trained in the college have proved their mettle and written a new history of bravery in line of duty.

US Ambassador inaugurates English Woks program

F.P. Report

MARDAN: American Ambassador Donald Blome here on Tuesday inaugurated six-months US government funded English Woks program.

The inaugural ceremony was held in Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan. On the occasion the American ambassador Donald Blome was accompanied by Panfilo Marquez, Consul General Peshawar, Monica Davis, Public Affairs Officer and other relevant officials.

Addressing to participants of the inaugural ceremony, the US ambassador said that he was here to inaugurate a new, six-month US government funded English language program titled "English Works" which would teach English and employment skills to a total 215 students in Mardan and Charsadda districts. "This program boosts English proficiency skills, develops computers literacy skills and builds confidence for the job market. Overall, more than 28000 Pakistani Students have participated in US government sponsored English language programs since 2005, equipping them to be more successful in the modern-day workplace. Learning English opens doors to higher education and career opportunities," he claimed.

He further said that "It gives them (Students) grounding in English language with particular emphasis on the professional use of English language as well as employability skills that gives students the tools to succeed in 21st century economy. It is part of our long association with Education here in KP". Since 2019 US has spent Rs.3 million dollars on English language programs benefiting 3500 students. "We have long history of working in KP on programs across the range for

Education, health, infrastructure and particularly water and roads and about Rs.1.5 billion dollars' worth Projects in KP since last ten years are conducted here", he also claimed. On a questions of US scholarship for KP students Ambassador Bloom said US has one of the largest students exchange for students from Pakistan including Full Bright scholarships"

About the Abdul Wali Khan University, he said that it was one of the top universities in national and international rankings. He said that it was his first visit to Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan. He liked it very much. He said "It is a very beautiful campus. I pay tribute to the faculty and students here, they deserve congratulations on the basis of their outstanding performance."

Earlier, the Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Zahoorul Haq welcomed them and gave a detailed briefing about Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan. He informed the delegation about the recent world ranking. He said that Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan is the only university in Pakistan whose 6 campuses have got the status of a university. This year, 18 thousand applications were received for the BS program in the fall semester.

In which only four thousand male and female students got admission while 25 new programs have also been started. The US ambassador started the spring plantation drive by planting saplings in front of the administration block and visited various parts of the university, including the University Museum, Pakhtunkhwa Economic Policy Research Institute. Also visited the kitchen set up for the training of street children in the tourism department and showed great interest. Before that, he inaugurated the painting exhibition at the Pakhtunkhwa College of Arts.

Girl's school lacks teachers for high classes

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: In the absence of high school, students of government girls middle school no.2, Kam-Shelman Haji Speen Kalley consecutively studying in 8th grade. Kam-Shelman is a remote area of subdivision Landi Kotal and its population is approximately ten thousand people.

Eighteen girls were studied in the middle section while 148 female students enrolled in the primary section of the institutions. The girl students lamented that for the last three years, they were still studying in the eight class as locally high school for girls was not available and because of poverty they could bear

expenses to travel to girl high secondary school, Landi Kotal.

I want to get a higher education, but a shortage of opportunities locally restrained her to materialize her dream, an orphan student of eight grade added. Haji Agha Jan, an elder of Kam-Shelman said that dozens of girls disconnected their studies when they passed their 8th grade exam.

Like girls of other parts of the country, the female students of the area were talented but the lack of facility of higher studies barred them from it, he added. According to the students out of two female teachers, only one attended her duty and two teaching

staff members performed their duties in the middle part of the institution.

Because of a shortage of teachers, they could not attend so far a single period of science subjects, the affected girls remarked. In the primary section all the students were sitting on the bare floor and even a mate was unavailable for them, they added and said under the parent - teacher council fund construction of the room was left incomplete and the money was embezzled. When the district education officer (female) Samina Ghani was contacted on the matter she said that the subordinate staff would be contacted to seek the prevailing situation of the school.



FAISALABAD: A view of overturned loaded truck due to over speed at Jaranwala road.

Traders hold protest against high inflation

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Markaz-e-Tanzeem Tajiran took out a protest demonstration and rally against inflation on Tuesday. The participants carried various placards and banners on which slogans such as reduce petrol prices, disapproved inflation and other slogans were written, on Tuesday.

The rally started from Mardan Chamber to Kachari Chowk where it took the form of a procession which was led by the President Mardan Chamber of Commerce and Provincial General Secretary Markaz-e-Tanzeem Tajiran Zahir Shah. Along with him, General Secretary Waqar Bacha, Chairman Ghulam Sarwar Saraf and others were also present at the protest. Addressing the protesters, Zahir Shah said that inflation in the country is increasing day by day no concrete measure are being taken to control the inflation, but the politicians are busy in dragging. Zahir Shah demanded that

Inflation, unemployment and illegal load-shedding be controlled in the country.

The current government is putting an additional burden on the poor masses by increasing the prices of diesel and petrol by imposing illegal taxes and especially the businessmen. The government should subsidize the prices of flour, ghee, rice, pulses and other daily commodities, Zahir Shah said that the luxurious living style of the rulers has forced the traders to starve.

The rate of inflation is at the highest in the country and reached the neck breaking level while due to the incompetence of the current and former government, the economy of the country is going towards destruction a big storm of inflation has come in the country. The people and especially the business community are worried. Provincial General Secretary of Markaz-e-Tanzeem Tajiran Zahir Shah and others said that the politicians continued to hold sit-ins for their seats, but the sit-in of the business community will be a sit-in for

the country's economy, survival and integrity Zahir Shah has demanded from the current government that the politicians should provide relief to the poor people who are oppressed by inflation, measures should be taken on an emergency basis to eliminate inflation and poverty, illegal taxis, electricity load-shedding, over-billing. Otherwise, they will take to the streets and hold protests across the province and sit-in in Islamabad.

DPO took charge: Newly appointed District Police Officer Najeeb-ur-Rahman took charge of his post on reaching the DPO office, the district police officers warmly welcomed him and the Mardan police team saluted him.

Newly appointed District Police Officer Najeeb-ur-Rehman took over the command of Mardan Police. SP Investigation Sanaullah Khan, circle SDPOs, traffic police and administration officials of DPO office warmly welcomed him and presented bouquets of flowers.



HYDERABAD: Chairman Sindh Tarraqi Passand Party Dr Qadir magsi addressing a press conference against digital census.

WB team visits uplift projects at Khyber F.P. Report

BARA: A senior delegation of the World Bank led by the Country Director Pakistan, Najy Benhassine, visited different sites in Bara tehsil of district Khyber which have been financed under the Pakistan Community Support Project (PCSP), on Tuesday.

Country Director was also accompanied by the World Bank Operations Team, Project Director PCSP and the district administration of Khyber during the visit. While interacting with the local communities, the Country Director said, "the most encouraging aspect of the newly built infrastructure, such as drinking water facilities and farm to market roads, is to see communities benefitting from them collectively."

One of the project sites visited by the World Bank delegation was the solar-powered water supply scheme which has been completed at a cost of PKR 7.25 million by the communities in line with the priority development needs. This sub-project is benefitting 185 households in Yousaf Talab village in tehsil Bara with full community participation, including voluntary land donation and 10% of community share.

It was also shared by the Country Director that the World Bank will continue its support for community-driven development initiatives throughout the province as these projects articulate the development needs and priorities of the communities.

The World Bank delegation also went to Morcho Khwar village in tehsil Bara to visit the farm to market road which has been completed at a cost of PKR 6.83 million. The community shared that it was a mud track before which caused mobility issues for them, especially male and female students, who had to travel more than 1 kilometer for the nearest schools and college.

Govt schools in winter zones re-opening today F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Government schools in winter zones are re-opening for learning after more than two months of winter vacation in parts of Malakand division from Wednesday (today). The in-charge district education officer Lower Dir Wajeeh ud Din has asked parents to send their children well prepared to schools. Talking to local journalists at Timergara here on Tuesday, the DEO said that the internal annual examinations from grade 5th to 8th would start from the second week of March and all schools had been directed to announce the results on March 31st. The public sector schools were closed for winter vacation on Dec 25, 2022.

Meanwhile the Lower Dir additional deputy commissioner (revenue) Tariq Ali Khan chaired a meeting of the district steering committee on education. The district monitoring officer (education) Tariq Jamal briefed the participants about the overall educational situation in the district. The ADC directed the district education officers male and female, to hold meetings with the Pesco authorities for shifting electricity poles and transmission lines from the schools' buildings.

KUST convocation held, 74 gold medal awarded

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali awarded degrees to 221 male and female graduates of Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST) at 13th convocation enrolled in different programs of BS/ MSc, 16 in M. Phil program, and 11 in Ph. D program while 74 gold medals awarded to students with distinction, on Tuesday.

In addition, the governor KP, Haji Ghulam Ali, who was the chief guest of the event, awarded Professor Dr Sardar Khan, Vice Chancellor, University of Kohat and Dr Muhammad Tariq Jan, Registrar, with the best performance awards on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce, Kohat. While addressing the participating male and female graduates of Kohat University of Science and Technology, he said that the young scholars should expedite their efforts for acquiring scientific knowledge and for gaining access to technology, so that as a nation, while facing the current and future challenges, they could play their role in earning a dignified position for Pakistan among the international community.

Addressing the students and scholars, he said that all of them have crossed an important milestone of their lives on the day of convocation and that being equipped with high education and research, it is now their obligation to provide solution to the industrial, agricultural and social challenges faced by Pakistan.

The governor told the graduated students that their parents had put in their diligence and resources in embellishing them with the ornament of education and that now it was their responsibility to become a graceful and useful member of the society for the realization of their parents' dreams. The governor



nor KP said that Kohat University of Science and Technology has earned a conspicuous identity in research and high education on the national and international level and that now it is reckoned amongst the most prestigious universities of the globe.

The Chancellor lauded the progress that Kohat University has made in the fields of research and administration and in this connection appreciated the efforts of the Vice Chancellor Dr Sardar Khan and his team. While addressing the students and scholars participating in the convocation, he said that out of the total population of Pakistan, they were the few luckiest ones who had been able to get opportunities of getting higher education and research, owing to which they were stepping into the practical world.

The Vice Chancellor of the university, Professor Dr Sardar Khan in his address to the students said that in present day success, apart from their own hard work, numerous sacrifices of their parents were involved, because they sacrificed today over their children's tomorrow and now it was their obligation to step into the practical world in the capacity of successful individuals for the materialization of their parents' dreams.

Prior to it, the Vice Chancellor briefed the participants of the convocation on the details of the con-

struction projects along with the educational, research, and administrative activities underway inside the university. In his address, he informed the participants about the details of the academic extension, owing to which the number of students has risen overnight from 3800 to 7500, which has in turn, lead to casting positive effects over the financial stability of the university. Alongside, due to effective financial management, the budget of the university is standing at surplus, contrary to the prevailing situation where most of the state universities are confronted with severe financial problems.

The Vice chancellor in his address enlightened the audience about the details of the best financial management award and the best quality award received by the university, in addition to informing them about the progress of Kohat university in the UE Green metric International universities ranking, according to which Kohat university has secured 578th position internationally, 23rd position nationally and 4th position provincially, which is a great honour and is reflective of the quality education and academic management of Kohat university. The event was attended by the parents and family members of the graduating students, social and political personalities, and a huge number of the local gentry.

652 teams constituted for digital census

Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: For the first time Digital Census is starting from today (1st March) on Wednesday across the country including district Hafizabad and District administration and other departments have finalised all arrangements in the district. This was stated by the Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad Umer Farooq Warraich while sharing details of Census here.

DC said that 652 teams were constituted to collect data to visit door to door while population of the district was divided into 1006 blocks whereas 151 circles were setup. He said that two blocks were allocated to every enumerator and every enumerator would count buildings during first fifteen days and he would collect data of people during second phase. He directed the Census teams to arrange all data consisting of facts and any slackness or negligence would not be tolerated at all in this regard. DC appealed the citizens to cooperate with Census teams for ensuring collection of transparent data.

Meanwhile, in order to maintain peace for completing census transparently and giving message to anti-social elements that police and other law enforcement agencies are ready to combat any untoward incidents

during the Census as well as creating sense of security among people, a flag march was conducted led by Deputy Commissioner Umer Farooq Warraich. The flag march was started from Jinnah Chowk and concluded at District Complex. Police officers, elite force, Punjab police and official of other uniformed services participated the flag march.

DC inspects performance of schools, health centers: Deputy Commissioner Umar Farooq Warraich visited different schools and health centres to review performance of education and health departments Hafizabad in the district. Chief Executive Officer Education Wazir Ahmad Agha, DEO Mian Abdul Majeed and DDEO Nargis Arif were also accompanied by the DC.

During the visit of government primary school Pindi Wala, DC reviewed cleanliness, lighting in class rooms, and other arrangements of the school and directed the teachers to improve lighting in the class rooms as well as focus on study of students. He also inspected government higher secondary school and girls school and directed the Education Officers to plant maximum saplings in the schools. While visiting RHC Kassoiki, DC warned the staff to improve cleanliness in the centre and no

any negligence would be tolerated in provision of medicines to patients at all. He inspected the medicine store, lab, Operation Theater, outdoor and other departments of the health centre.

Unknown culprits shot killed woman: Unidentified suspects killed a married woman in Tawailay Wali village near Hafizabad and threw her body in Jhang Branch and escaped.

According to the details, Nazia Bibi resident of Kot Nakka was married to Adnan resident of village Sabit Shah. Her body was recovered from the bridge near Jhang Branch, on which the police took possession of the body and shifted it to the hospital for postmortem, while investigations are being conducted.

Meanwhile, a 12-year-old boy died due to a gun allegedly going off in Burianwala village. According to the family, 12-year-old Muhammad Ali was playing with a gun when bullet was suddenly fired, which seriously injured him and he was taken to the trauma centre in critical condition. He succumbed to his injuries. The police took the body into custody and shifted it to the hospital for postmortem, while further investigations are going on.



Philippine leader urges military to focus on China Sea

MANILA (AP): The Philippine president said the main mission of his country's military has changed to ensure the protection of its territory as disputes with China and US-China rivalry intensify. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. stressed the urgency of shifting the military's focus to external defense in a speech before troops. He spoke two weeks after summoning China's ambassador to protest the use of a military-grade laser by the Chinese coast guard that briefly blinded some of the crew of a Philippine patrol vessel in the South China Sea.

The Philippines condemned the Feb. 6 incident in one of the more than 200 diplomatic protests it has filed against Beijing's increasingly aggressive actions in the disputed waterway since last year. China has accused the Philippines of intruding into its territory and said its coast guard used a harmless laser to track the Philippine vessel. China claims the South China Sea virtually in its entirety.

"I'm saying that your mission in the AFP has changed," Marcos told the troops, referring to the Armed Forces of the Philippines. "For many, many years, we were able to maintain that peace and maintain that understanding with all of our neighbors. Now things have begun to change and we must adjust accordingly." He said that the country's boundaries were being put into question, "and there are many things that are happening so the air force has a very big mission to fully secure the Philippines." He also cited "the intensification of the competition between the superpowers."

Marcos did not offer specifics nor mentioned China in his speech in central Cebu province, but underscored that Philippine

foreign policy remains committed to peace. Despite being a relatively small country, "we still have to fight for the rights of every Filipino because the Philippines is a sovereign nation and the Philippines has a functioning government," he said. After decades of combating Muslim and communist insurgencies, the military has begun to focus on defending the country's sea borders. It has launched efforts to modernize in a program that has faced delays and financial constraints.

Many of the weapons and equipment have been aimed to improve its air and sea patrols to guard the archipelago's vast coastline and build a minimal deterrence. Under a 2014 defense pact with the United States, Marcos recently approved a wider US military presence in the Philippines by allowing rotating batches of American forces to stay in four more Philippine military camps. That's a sharp turnaround from his predecessor Rodrigo Duterte, who feared that American military footprint could offend Beijing.

China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei have been locked in an increasingly tense territorial standoff in the South China Sea, where US Navy ships and fighter jets have carried out patrols to promote freedom of movement, challenge Beijing's expansive claims and reassure allies like the Philippines. The disputes have intensified after China turned seven disputed reefs into missile-protected island bases to bolster its claims. The disputed waters have been regarded as a possible Asian flashpoint and a delicate front in the US-China rivalry in the region.

Vietnam parliament to appoint new president

HANOI (Reuters): Vietnam's National Assembly will hold an extraordinary meeting this week, a session that officials and diplomats expect to confirm the appointment of a new president amid a leadership reshuffle prompted by a sweeping crackdown on graft. Multiple officials and diplomats said the new president, a largely ceremonial role, would be Vo Van Thuong, who, at 52, is currently the youngest member of the party's Politburo, the country's highest decision-making body.

His appointment comes amid an anti-corruption campaign, dubbed the "blazing furnace", under which hundreds of officials have been investigated and many top political figures have been dismissed, including two deputy prime ministers. Thuong is seen as being close to Vietnam's most powerful figure, General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong, who is the main architect of the anti-graft campaign. The president in Vietnam is among the top four political figures in the country, together with the party's general secretary, the prime minister and the head of the national assembly.

Parliament will hold an out-of-session meeting this week, according to information posted on the portals of the local governments of the southern provinces of Khanh Hoa and Binh Phuoc. The latter said the extraordinary session would start on Wednesday. Parliament and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is in charge of communications on behalf of the government, did not immediately respond to requests for comment. The next regular session of parliament is scheduled in May.

Tinubu ahead in Nigeria poll results

NAIROBI (BBC): Nigeria's ruling party candidate Bola Tinubu is leading in the presidential election after results were released in 14 of the country's 36 states. Mr Tinubu has won just over 44% of the tallied votes. His main rival Atiku Abubakar has almost 33% of the vote. Labour's Peter Obi has close to 18%, having caused an upset by defeating Mr Tinubu in the biggest city, Lagos.

Mr Abubakar's and Mr Obi's parties walked out of the venue where results are being announced. The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the Labour Party have claimed there is a lack of transparency with the new electronic voter system.

This was the first national election where an electronic device had been used to accredit voters. The Independent National Electoral Commission (Inec) has denied the opposition parties' complaints. Its chairman Mahmood Yakubu said the announcement of results would continue. European Union observers said the electoral body's poor planning and communication undermined trust in the process.

UN chief points to 'massive' rights violations in Ukraine

GENEVA (AP): Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has triggered "the most massive violations of human rights" in the world today, the head of the United Nations said, as the war pushed into its second year with no end in sight and tens of thousands dead. The Russian invasion "has unleashed widespread death, destruction and displacement," UN Secretary-General António Guterres said in a speech to the UN-backed Human Rights Council in Geneva.

After failing to capture Kyiv in the opening weeks of the invasion on Feb. 24 last year and suffering a series of humiliating setbacks during the fall, Russia has stabilized the front and is concentrating its efforts on capturing four provinces that Moscow illegally annexed in September — Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia. Ukraine, meanwhile, hopes to use battle tanks and other new weapons pledged by the West to launch new counteroffensives and reclaim more of the occupied territory. Guterres said "attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure have caused many casualties and terrible suffering."

The intense fighting for territory in eastern Ukraine was in sharp focus at a Ukrainian field hospital treating wounded from the intense battle for the city of Bakhmut, which is devastated. A constant flow of battered and exhausted soldiers came in on stretchers. Anatoliy, the chief of the medical service, said his team treats dozens of soldiers every day and barely has time to eat. "My medics work practically non-stop. Before the full-scale invasion we had 50-60 wounded in a nine-month rotation, and now sometimes we have more (than that) in one day," he told The Associated Press. He provided only one name for security reasons.

Guterres' remarks came as the Ukrainian military said that Russia launched attacks with exploding drones on several regions of the country, killing two people. Meanwhile, Belarusian opposition activists claimed a military air base outside Belarusia's capital that hosts Russian warplanes came under attack by Belarusian guerrillas. BYPOL, an online messaging app channel run by the activists, and several other online resources operated by the Belarusian opposition, said an A-50 early warning and control aircraft was seriously damaged in the attack at the Machulishchy base near Minsk.

The activists provided no evidence to support the claims, which couldn't be independently verified. Belarusian and Russian officials made no comment, but Belarusia's President Alexander Lukashenko urged top military and security officials to tighten discipline. Russia used the territory of its ally Belarus to invade Ukraine a year ago. Belarus continues to host Russian troops, warplanes and other weapons. Guterres, in his



Geneva speech, cited cases of sexual violence, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention and violations of the rights of prisoners of war documented by the UN human rights office.

He decried how the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, now 75 years old, has been "too often misused and abused." "It is exploited for political gain and it is ignored, often, by the very same people," Guterres said. "Some governments chip away at it. Others use a wrecking ball." "This is a moment to stand on the right side of history," he told the council, the UN's top human rights body. Russia withdrew from its seat last year amid a surge in international pressure over the war in Ukraine.

Dozens of high-level envoys at the Geneva meeting — many from Western countries — lashed out at Russia over its conduct of the war. At the simultaneous Conference on Disarmament, another UN-backed body, delegates criticized Putin's decision to suspend Russia's participation in the New START agreement with the United States, the last nuclear arms control agreement between Moscow and Washington. Russia was not represented at the council, and its top envoy to the session wasn't expected to speak until Thursday. Russian officials have shown little sign they may be reconsidering their attack on their neighbor, however.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said: "We aren't seeing any conditions for a peaceful settlement now." Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy head of Russia's Security Council that is chaired by President Vladimir Putin, went a step further, once again raising the specter of nuclear war and a nightmare outcome to Europe's biggest and deadliest conflict since

World War II. He chided the US and its allies for providing Ukraine with military and other support to help push back the Kremlin's forces. Their longer-term aim, he claimed, is to break up Russia. Putin has also framed the war in those terms, saying it's an existential risk to Russia.

In the attacks, Ukraine's General Staff said Kyiv's forces shot down 11 out of 14 Iranian-made Shahed drones. Ukraine's presidential office said that at least two civilians were killed and nine others wounded by Russian attacks over the previous 24 hours. It said intense fighting has continued around Bakhmut, Avdiivka and Vuhledar in the Donetsk region, which have come under relentless Russian shelling.

Ukrainian military analyst Oleh Zhdanov said the Russian offensive aimed at securing control of eastern Ukraine has effectively become bogged down while losing "huge numbers of weapons and ammunition." Zhdanov said the Ukrainian military, in turn, is building up forces for a future counteroffensive in the south while pummeling Russian positions and depots there. "Ukraine has significantly intensified the shelling of Russian positions in the south, destroying roads and depots, which is an important condition for the success of a future counteroffensive," he said.

In other developments, the Russian military claimed its forces struck an electronic intelligence center near Brovary, just east of Kyiv. Russia's Defense Ministry also said that Russian forces struck a special operations center of the Ukrainian armed forces near the western city of Khmelnytskyi. The ministry didn't say when the strikes were launched, and its claim couldn't be independently verified.

Macron says French bases in Africa to be co-run with host nations

PARIS/LIBREVILLE (Reuters): President Emmanuel Macron said that France's military bases in Africa will gradually be co-run with their host nations, after Paris suffered a series of setbacks in its former sphere of influence. In a speech ahead of a trip to four African countries this week, Macron said France's military will become less visible and the number of soldiers reduced, in an effort to defuse tensions in West Africa, where anti-French sentiment is on the rise.

"The bases as they exist now are a heritage from the past," he told reporters at the Elysee palace in Paris two days before flying to Gabon, the first country of a tour that will also take him to nations that were not former French colonies, including Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo. "These bases will not be closed but re-organized," he said, adding that the new bases or "academies" will start to gradually be

"africanised" and ran in conjunction with African and European partners.

The tour comes just over a week after Burkina Faso booted out French troops and ended a military accord that allowed France to fight insurgents in the West African nation, becoming the latest African country to reject Paris' help. France withdrew its forces from Mali last year after the junta there started working with Russian military contractors. Russia's Wagner Group has also deployed in the Central African Republic, prompting fears of a domino effect in Paris at a time Western countries are trying to lobby the global south against Russia over its invasion of Ukraine.

Macron said he was "proud" of France's military record in Mali, and would not allow the country to be made a scapegoat for a worsening of the security situation in the Sahel, where Islamists insurgents have made progress. "France's role is not to fix all

the problems in Africa," he said. Macron also said that African nations would eventually stop turning to the Wagner Group as they would see that it only sows misery.

"It's a group of criminal mercenaries, the life insurance of failing regimes and putschists," he said. Macron has accused Russia of feeding anti-French propaganda in Africa to serve "predatory" ambitions. He said he refused to be drawn into an outdated competition between predatory powers and felt "no nostalgia for FrancAfrique", the murky links between France and its former colonies that sometimes saw Paris support autocratic regimes. "But I don't want to leave an absence or void after that," he said, urging French companies to bid for contracts there and be more respectful of African nations by sending top executives to negotiate them and not lower-ranking managers.

Ukraine's northeastern front could decide new battle lines

KUPIANSK, Ukraine (AP): A tank carrying Ukrainian infantry speeds toward a target position marked with a metal sheet. The soldiers climb down, hurl grenades and unleash a crackle of machine-gun fire. Then they repeat the moves, getting faster with every iteration. It's only a drill. But with the sounds of the real war rumbling just seven kilometers (four miles) away, this daily training underscores the high stakes on Ukraine's northeastern front, where military officials say a much-anticipated Russian offensive has already started, with fighting that could determine the next phase of the conflict.

Time is of the essence here, so speed and cohesion is the goal of the exercises that combine reserve tank and the infantry assault units. "Synchronization will be important to halt Russian offensives toward Ukrainian defensive lines," said Col. Petro Skyba, a battalion commander of the 3rd Separate Tank Iron Brigade.

Grueling artillery battles have stepped up in recent weeks in the vicinity of Kupiansk, a strategic town on the eastern edge of Kharkiv province by the banks of the Oskil River. The Russian attacks are part of an intensifying push to capture the entire industrial heartland known as the Donbas, which includes the

Donetsk and the Luhansk provinces. It would be a badly needed victory for the Kremlin as the war enters its second year. Triumph in Kupiansk could decide future lines of attack for both sides: If Russia succeeds in pushing Ukrainian forces west of the river, it would clear the path for a significant offensive farther south where the administrative borders of Luhansk and Donetsk meet. If the Ukrainian defense holds up, it could reveal Russian vulnerabilities and enable a counteroffensive.

The Associated Press spoke about the fighting with generals, commanders and soldiers from three brigades in the Kupiansk area, as well as civilians in the town affected by the grinding battles. "The enemy is constantly increasing its efforts, but our troops are also increasing their efforts there, making timely replacements and holding the defense," said Brig. Gen. Dmytro Krasnylnykov, commander of the joint group of troops in the Kharkiv region.

Across the towns and villages in the path of the fighting, homes have been razed by constant Russian bombardment, with some residences hit repeatedly. Civilians wait in the cold for food and line up to receive rations of milk and materials to cover shattered windows. "We don't have anything to do with this war, so why do

we pay the price?" asked Oleksandr Luzhan, whose mother's house was struck twice.

On the battlefield, Ukrainian soldiers put a rocket launcher in the fighting position, aiming the weapons in line with coordinates sent by their commanders. They wait for the final order. Seconds turn to minutes. Snow falls silently in thick wet clumps by a shriveled sunflower field. "Fire!" — a salvo of rockets blasts into the sky toward Russian targets, often armored personnel carriers or tanks. To escape any counterattack, the servicemen of the Ukraine army's 14th Brigade pack up and leave, trundling away in the Soviet-era BM-21 "Grad."

Along the northeast front, there are no quick wins, said Vitaly, the operation's gunner, who gave only his first name in line with Ukrainian military protocols. "It's war — someone retreats, someone advances. Every day there is a change of position." Russia ramped up attacks earlier in February after deploying three major divisions to the area. Fighting is focused northeast of Kupiansk, where Kremlin troops have gone on the offensive with marginal territorial gains. Ukrainian fortifications have so far deterred major advances, Ukrainian senior military officials said.

For Russia, the Kupiansk operation serves two aims: Dislodging Ukrainian forces from settlements along the provincial borders would enable the capture of Luhansk province. Pushing back Ukrainian troops west of the Oskil River and locking them there would create a new defensive line and prevent deployments to the critical Svatove-Kreminna line further south, where a separate Russian offensive is underway to capture the Donetsk region by reclaiming abandoned posts in Lyman. Svatove, which was occupied by Moscow last spring, is 60 kilometers (37 miles) southeast of Kupiansk. Ukrainian forces are counting on improving coordination between infantry and tank units to deprive Russia of the opportunity to breach Ukrainian lines. Ukrainian forces still control settlements inside Luhansk near the border with Kharkiv.

Artillery and ammunition shortages are a real concern on this front where the landscape is heavily forested, small villages are separated by vast farmland and Ukrainian soldiers come under nine hours of shelling some days. Long-range weapons would contribute to quicker wins in such an environment, Krasnylnykov said. Serhii, an infantry soldier with the 92nd Brigade who also used only

his first name, said ammunition shortages were derailing his unit's ability to advance and occupy enemy positions. "They can make 40 shots in our direction, and we can fire back twice on target," he said. "They have quantity, but we are more efficient."

The months to come will be critical, he predicted. The Russians clearly "want to cut us off from the Oskil River. They want to make it so that we push back our troops ... and they can occupy the entire territory along the river from Kupiansk to Kreminna." "But we won't allow this," he said. In the debris of a destroyed home where a group of servicemen had been resting was the severed hand of a Ukrainian soldier. Russian reconnaissance drones spotted the soldiers, and on Feb. 17 an S-300 missile split the house in two.

Olena Klymko lives next door. The strike shattered her windows and damaged her roof. Russian bombardment of Kupiansk, a town with a pre-war population of 27,000, has become so frequent that "every time we go to sleep we pray to God we will wake up in the morning," she said. At times the strikes appear to have clear targets where soldiers pass through. Other times, they are indiscriminate. The shelling is even more intense in the suburbs of Kupiansk, closer to Russian lines where access

to supplies is also limited.

Residents from the border village of Vovchansk drive three hours to a makeshift bridge on the Pechenizhske Reservoir leading to Kharkiv. It is the only way they can retrieve supplies, residents said. They rarely leave their homes, fearful of the intense shelling. But like many Ukrainians living in similar danger zones along the 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line, most are unwilling to leave their hometowns for good. In the village of Zelena, dozens of older residents waited under a bus shelter amid heavy snows for a food truck to arrive.

"Today is a quiet day, thank god," said Victoria Bromska, wheeling her food parcel back home. Luzhan picked up wooden boards and other items supplied by a Swiss aid group called Heks/Eper to seal his mother's house. About a quarter of those who seek the group's shelter kits in Kupiansk are coming for a second time. The kits increase indoor temperatures in battered homes. The home targeted in the Feb. 17 attack had belonged to an older woman whose children evacuated her to Kharkiv. Offering Ukrainian servicemen a place to rest is common, Klymko said, despite the risks. "How can we say no? she asked. "They are out there fighting for us."

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Media freedom and despots’ ego

A Federal Court has granted the police a three-day remand of defense analyst, YouTuber, and retired Army General Amjad Shoaib, following his arrest after a magistrate registered a case against him on charges of inciting the public against state institutions. Earlier, the Police lodged an FIR agaisnt the retired general under section 153A and section 505 for the alleged promotion of enmity between different groups and conducting public mischief, while the elderly general was arrested by the police within no time.

Media is generally considered to be the fourth pillar of the state and plays a watchdog role in ensuring transparency and accountability in governance and political affairs in the country. Media analysis, situation appreciation, and criticism highlight the drawbacks of administrative policies, and social and legal issues pertaining to public life. However, the government and opposition usually display animosity over scholarly work, media forecasts, court verdicts, opinion polls, and criticism by civil society, media, and Human Rights Defenders. The current political friction aggrandized the violent sentiments in national politics by squeezing space for non-partisan reporting, constructive criticism, and healthy journalism amid heightened inter-party rivalry in the country.

Historically, Pakistan has always been an unsafe place for journalists and scholars since its inception, while the newsmen had been arrested, punished, and hanged in the past when they criticized the policies and tried to expose the corruption of the rulers. In fact, no individual, no government, institution, as well political group, ever faces the risk of collapse, or physical or reputational harm through criticism from its adversaries including media and civil society if it exists legally and functions on merit, and transparency. Interestingly, the latest technological innovations and digital media have brought the naked truth to the public and threaten the interests of governments, cartels, and political groups while increasing security risks for journalists and truth seekers in the contemporary world. Although successive governments have framed multiple pieces of legislation to support the freedom of the press, and ensure the safety of journalists but those measures remained unimplemented so far. Meanwhile, the rulers aggressively used PECA, PEMRA, and the Police to readress the alleged malfunctioning of the media and reporters.

Unfortunately, media outlets and anchorpersons had always faced high-handedness and repression from the ruling government throughout history because those who championed media freedom and civil liberties in opposition, added to dictatorial laws and harsh regulatory policies when grasped power. Similarly, after advocating media independence for nearly four years, the PDM leaders reinvented the policies of the previous government by harassing and arresting journalists under vague and multipurpose legislation. In fact, the ego of the rulers becomes so delicate that sane words affect like a hammer and a bombshell for it and cost years of imprisonment to intellectuals and scholars.

Undoubtedly, public institutions did not uphold their constitutional obligations and recurrently bulldozed their institutional prestige by acting as puppets of the ruling elite in the past. If an elderly veteran snubbed politicians and bureaucrats for their misdeeds he should not meet such repression from the powerful for his sane advice. As the rule does not last longer and ultimately Ministers have to seek public rating once more. So public leaders must maintain soberness if they intend to avoid remorse for their misconduct in the future.

Sunak must not flinch from a vital fight with the Tory Brextremists

Andrew Rawnsley

THE in-tray of a prime minister is never empty and often overflowing, as Rishi Sunak has discovered since he moved into Number 10. Jumbo issues are circling Downing Street like planes stacking over Heathrow. There is the pressing need to resolve the strikes that have been paralysing essential public services for months.

There's the biggest conflict in Europe since 1945 and complex decisions to make about how the west can best aid the Ukrainians. There's a looming budget that will have to be very skillfully crafted if it is not to go down badly with the public, the media and his party. Yet observers in Whitehall report that, despite all the other urgent and critical matters jostling for his attention, no issue has been devouring as much of the prime minister's time and energy as trying to land a deal that would ease the problems with the Northern Ireland protocol.

We ought to give him a bit of credit for putting in the effort to tackle one of the most baleful consequences of Brexit, one that has destabilised Northern Ireland, disrupted its trade and aggravated its population while creating festering sores in the UK's relationships with both the EU and the US. A success would be a feather in Mr Sunak's cap. Not a tremendously resplendent feather, because he is trying to fix a mess of his own party's making while offering no remedies to other negative impacts of Brexit. Nor will the mooted agreement with the EU solve all the Brexit-generated headaches with the Irish border. That said, smoothing the rough edges of the protocol would give Mr Sunak something he could claim as an important achievement. It might counter the prevailing narrative that he is a rudderless prime minister who can't get anything difficult done and runs for the hills at the

first whiff of trouble from malcontents within his party. Beyond being beneficial for Northern Ireland, settling this issue will bring other prizes. The relationship with the EU will be reset on a more trusting basis. That will open the way to mutually beneficial cooperation in vital areas, such as security and unlocking readmission to the £80bn Horizon scientific collaboration programme. It would also remove a source of significant tensions with Joe Biden's administration.

The outlines of a deal are

tially done. Cabinet ministers were led to expect that they would get sight of a draft agreement last week, only then to be disappointed.

As so often with the sorry saga of Brexit, the obstacle to an agreement is not the EU, but closer to home. Mr Sunak is meeting predictable resistance from Tory Brextremists and the Democratic Unionist party. The DUP has a limited vocabulary that rarely extends beyond "no" and "never". They opposed the

They won less than a third of the seats at the most recent elections for the Northern Ireland assembly, which they have prevented from functioning for more than a year. Given their track record of dire misjudgments and declining popular support, a little humility might be in order. The DUP have a right to a say, but not to a veto. They've been wooed by Mr Sunak because he wants them to agree to the restoration of devolved government and because of their

ations, the very same people who promised that we would live happily ever after in a land of milk and honey while exulting over the rock-hard Brexit produced by Mr Johnson. Talk of the devil. That incorrigible charlatan is doing his utmost to undermine Mr Sunak and incite a revolt against the prime minister's diplomacy. Mr Johnson knows no shame. It was he who created the problem Mr Sunak is trying to fix. It was Mr Johnson who promised that there would be no trade border in the Irish Sea - "over my dead body", he

Sunak and he will use any instrument to do it."

The prime minister shouldn't have any difficulty securing parliamentary approval for a deal. Sir Keir Starmer has promised Labour's support, an offer he repeated at the most recent session of prime minister's questions. This is not because the Labour leader is feeling so altruistic towards Mr Sunak that he wants to help him out of a jam. Sir Keir reckons that reaching out across the aisle makes him look statesmanlike and that will go down well with voters. If Mr Sunak falters in the face of resistance from within the Tory party, Sir Keir will paint him as a craven captive of wreckers and a prime minister so puny that he won't stand up to them even when he has been guaranteed support from the opposition. That wouldn't look good, but Mr Sunak fears that he will also look bad if he has to depend on Labour votes. It is perilous for a prime minister to have to rely on the opposition to overcome a rebellion from within his own ranks. That is why Mr Sunak regards Sir Keir's offer not as a lifeline, but a trap.

You might be tempted to feel a twinge of sympathy for the prime minister. Don't. These dilemmas are consequences of the Brexit that he backed. And they are a legacy of Mr Johnson, who got to Number 10 in the first place with the endorsement of Mr Sunak. You reap what you sow. The interests of both Northern Ireland and the UK as a whole will be best served if the prime minister strikes a sensible deal with the EU, regardless of the intransigents in the DUP and the irreconcilables in his own party. He risks looking weak if he has to rely on Labour support, but he will most definitely look feeble, both at home and abroad, if he flinches in the face of threats from the very people who trapped us in this Brexit nightmare.

The Guardian

The DUP backed Brexit against the wishes of the majority of people in Northern Ireland, they scuppered Theresa May's attempts to resolve the border question and the fools then put their faith in Boris Johnson who concocted the protocol they hate so much. They won less than a third of the seats at the most recent elections for the Northern Ireland assembly, which they have prevented from functioning for more than a year. Given their track record of dire misjudgments and declining popular support, a little humility might be in order. The DUP have a right to a say, but not to a veto. They've been wooed by Mr Sunak because he wants them to agree to the restoration of devolved government and because of their relationship with the Tory right. His time may have been wasted.

known. To defuse an acute grievance about the current state of affairs, the EU has conceded that products travelling between Great Britain and Northern Ireland will go through a "green lane" with minimal paperwork and inspections. Only products destined for the Republic of Ireland, and thus into the EU, will travel through a red lane with customs checks. The UK would accept that the European court of justice has to be the ultimate arbiter of single market laws, but with a mechanism designed to resolve disputes without the need to involve the court. A pragmatic compromise eliminating the worst defects of the operation of the protocol is available. Sources in Brussels say a deal is essen-

Good Friday agreement, which brought a close to decades of sectarian violence, when it was signed 25 years ago. There was a chilling echo of the grim years when gunmen tried to assassinate an off-duty police officer in Omagh in front of his young son. The DUP have set "seven tests" for any deal that arrogantly assumes they should be the sole judge and only jury of what is good for Northern Ireland and the UK. This grandstanding takes some nerve. The DUP backed Brexit against the wishes of the majority of people in Northern Ireland, they scuppered Theresa May's attempts to resolve the border question and the fools then put their faith in Boris Johnson who concocted the protocol they hate so much.

relationship with the Tory right. His time may have been wasted. Many are sceptical that the DUP are keen on resuming power-sharing at Stormont, because it would mean serving in a government with a first minister from Sinn Féin. As for the Brexiteries in the Tory party, the more practical of them are making positive noises, but the ultras are already frothing that Mr Sunak is going to "sell out" the "true principles" of Brexit.

Oh, please. If anyone has betrayed the national interest, it is these Brextremists. Those trying to sabotage an agreement are the very same people who told us that leaving the EU would be a piece of cake and that Britain would hold all the cards in withdrawal negoti-

lied - and then agreed terms that created just that. It was Mr Johnson who claimed he had an "oven-ready" deal at the 2019 election and rammed ratification through parliament, only then to turn round and denounce as diabolical the very agreement that he himself had signed. The ever-opportunistic Mr Johnson is no more interested today in Northern Ireland or the wellbeing of its people than he was when he agreed the protocol in the first place. He is motivated only by trying to pave a path to his return as leader of the Conservative party. George Osborne, the former chancellor who knows better than most how cynically Mr Johnson operates, recently remarked: "He wants to bring down Rishi

A fight for survival: What victory looks like to Putin

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin's state of the nation address on Feb. 21 was eagerly anticipated inside Russia, yet it shed no light on the question that is foremost on the minds of the Russian elite and public: how Putin intends to win this war.

The address had been postponed from last year, prompting speculation that Putin didn't know what to say amid the lack of victories at the front. It's more likely, however, that he was just too immersed in his unsuccessful military campaign to find the time. In the end, the address was a mixture of what Putin considered it necessary to say (the geopolitical part about the "crazy" West), and what he is required to say under the constitution (an update on Russia's socioeconomic situation).

Putin did say that all upcoming elections, including the presidential election in March 2024, would be held as planned, which should put an end to speculation that they might be canceled or postponed. Once again, the president demonstrated a complete lack of concern that the system he has built could be

anything other than strong and stable, despite sanctions and the war. Putin clearly continues to believe that he has broad support among both the public and the elites. The result was a somewhat imbalanced speech. Putin spent half an hour discussing the West's intentions to subjugate Russia, and then another hour talking about day-to-day socioeconomic problems in a tone of optimism, as if nothing in particular was happening.

Given all the buildup about the "crazy" West, what was clearly missing was an outline of measures to be taken in response. It's becoming increasingly difficult for Putin to combine his rhetoric of alarm and escalation regarding the West with his optimism on domestic affairs and his eternal silence on what comes next. In the first part of the address, Putin spoke in more emotional and radical terms than usual about the destructive role of the West, appearing increasingly convinced that it is intent on inflicting a "strategic defeat" on Russia at any cost. A year ago, he expected the West to be more passive in its support for Ukraine. Now the war with

Ukraine is, in Putin's eyes, becoming just a minor episode in the West's global war against Russia: a battle of civilizations aimed essentially at the physical destruction of the Russian world.

Perceived as a threat to Russia's very existence, the West has stopped being a potential interlocutor for the Russian president, and has turned into a strategic aggressor, planning to - in Putin's words - "finish us once and for all." Putin hasn't yet said so outright, but his address implies that Russia and the West are incompatible, so Russia can do nothing but fight to be the last one standing in the battle for survival. The main message that Putin wanted to get across to the West in his speech was that "it is impossible to defeat Russia on the battlefield." He was essentially warning that the intention to defeat Russia will make the war a long one, and will bring about the large-scale destabilization of the entire world, but will never end in victory over Russia.

Having lost any hope of dealing with the "traditional" West, now considered a

military adversary, Putin continues to address the "right West": in Putin's eyes, pragmatic elites focused on the national interest and ordinary people who would like to restore normal relations with Russia. He also appealed to countries that have not sanctioned Russia, presenting the West as a threat to their sovereignty, stability, and economic prosperity. This was an attempt to fan the flames of anti-Western sentiment in the non-Western world, and erode the support of the traditional elites in Western countries by showing that any mission to inflict a "strategic defeat" on Russia will take its toll on the whole world.

Putin waited until the end of his address to drop in the biggest piece of news: that Russia would suspend its participation in the New START nuclear arms reduction treaty with the United States. This was a predictable decision, as Russia had since August denied access to US inspectors and stymied a meeting of the treaty's bilateral consultative commission. Putin is presenting something of

an ultimatum: either the West drops its anti-Russia policy, or the world will face creeping multifarious nuclear escalation. Putin used his speech to say that the Defense Ministry and Rosatom, the state nuclear energy corporation, must be ready to test nuclear weapons in response to any tests undertaken by the United States. Russia could also formally withdraw from the New START, which would be seen as a more radical measure.

It's extremely unlikely that Moscow's goal is really the revision of the New START, just as Putin's deliberate mention of Britain and France as directing their own nuclear arsenals against Russia is anything but a call for those countries to enter into a dialogue with Moscow. More likely, it's an attempt to demonstrate that Moscow is ready to dismantle all of the treaties and formats for dialogue until the West reconsiders its policy with regard to Russia. It's a move to put an end to the previous system of communication with the West, with very little room for unofficial channels. Putin's state of the nation address effectively

suggests that in the growing confrontation with the West, Russia will rely on one sole argument: the nuclear option. In this respect, suspending the New START treaty also sends a warning to non-Western countries of the consequences for the entire world of the West's anti-Russian policies. Moscow is presenting the global community with a choice between Russia or descending into a nuclear disaster.

For Putin, the concept of victory has meaning far beyond the borders of Ukraine: it would mean nothing less than an end to the West's anti-Russian policies. It's true that this vision differs dramatically from the expectations of the Russian elite and public, who would prefer to have a bird in the hand (the Donbas) than two in the bush (an end to the West's anti-Russian policies). The practical reality of the conflict with Ukraine has less and less in common with Putin's stratospheric expectations, and this discrepancy could well become a factor in bringing about political change within Russia itself.

The Moscow Times

Protocol deal will win my vote if it fixes the problems that cause so much frustration

Lord Howard

LAST week's brutal shooting of Detective Chief Inspector John Caldwell was a stark reminder that peace in Northern Ireland is fragile. The province is not a happy place. The power-sharing executive, the chief achievement of the Good Friday Agreement, is not in operation. The agreement is not working. And this is happening at a time when political leadership in the province has never been more necessary.

Hospital waiting lists are at an all-time high, and the legacy of Covid on the economy and public finances remains a formidable challenge. These difficulties have been exacerbated, and to a large extent caused, by the Northern Ireland Protocol. Agreed by Boris Johnson at the end of 2019, it was arguably part of the price that had to be paid to get a Brexit deal.

And it is certainly the case that many of the difficulties it has caused could have been avoided if the European Union had shown a modicum of flexibility in its interpretation. But by leaving Northern Ireland in the EU's single market, though creating some opportunities for business in the province, it has led to many obstacles for others.

The EU's insistence on burdensome checks on goods sent from Great Britain to the province has led to difficulties for more than two-thirds of consumers there because so many retailers on the mainland no longer deliver to the province. And if the protocol were to be fully implemented, all agri-foods moving to Northern Ireland would face full EU third country checks including separate vet signed official certification - despite the fact that well

over half the agri-food movements from Great Britain to Northern Ireland are intended for sale in Northern Ireland and do not enter the EU's single market via the Republic.

There are constitutional issues, too. It is difficult for those of us who voted for Brexit so we could control our own affairs to have to accept, as the protocol provides, that in one part of the United Kingdom the European Union would continue to set rates on VAT and decide the rules governing state aid. These difficulties can't be ignored, and successive governments have recognised the need to fix them. All have accepted that the best, and probably the only, way to fix them would be through an agreement with the EU. The Northern Ireland Protocol Bill, which in theory would give

us the right to change the protocol unilaterally, was only ever intended and justified as a bargaining chip in these negotiations.

And if it were ever used, it would almost certainly have left us vulnerable to challenge from the EU for breaking the agreement and even liable to pay compensation for this breach. If agreement is reached to fix the problems caused by the protocol it would no longer be necessary. But can such an agreement be reached? Previous attempts at a negotiated outcome have failed. Now we are told that agreement is close.

The Prime Minister was right to take up the challenge and try to fix this seemingly intractable problem. As I write, the details of the deal he is close to finalising have yet to be published, but reports indicate that it will include red

and green lanes for customs. Trusted traders sending goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland will not be subject to checks, while goods destined for the Republic will go through the red lane. And Westminster will set VAT rates and state aid rules, not Brussels. If these reports are true, this would go a very long way to easing the practical difficulties that currently exist.

Of course any negotiation necessarily involves compromise, and one possible issue may relate to any continuing role for the European Court of Justice (ECJ). This should certainly be limited to any necessary interpretation of European law, but it should be remembered that the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill itself contains a clause enabling regulations to be made that would provide such a role for the ECJ. It would of course be highly

desirable if the Democratic Unionist Party were to give the agreement its support. But it cannot be given a veto.

The Government of the United Kingdom must govern in the interests of the United Kingdom as a whole, and Members of Parliament at Westminster must reach their decisions on the same basis. If the agreement contains the provisions I have summarised, it will ease the problems causing so much frustration in Northern Ireland, remove one of the main obstacles to an improved relationship with the EU and help to make Brexit the success we all want it to be. Like the Prime Minister, I voted and campaigned for Brexit and am a Unionist. An agreement with these provisions will certainly have my support - and deserves the support of all Conservatives.

The Telegraph

Is this the new Restoration? Sunak and Starmer hope so

EIGHT long years ago, British politics began its passage into a new era of disruption and upheaval. The Scottish independence referendum of 2014 had already highlighted the weaknesses of politics-as-usual, but everything turned on the 2015 general election, in which David Cameron secured the win that set Britain on the path to Brexit, and Nicola Sturgeon's SNP took 40 of Scotland's Westminster seats from Labour. Confirming that we had arrived somewhere new, Nigel Farage and the UK Independence party managed to get nearly 4 million votes.

By the year's end, the legislation for the 2016 referendum on Britain's membership of the EU had received royal assent, and Jeremy Corbyn was the leader of the opposition. The ensuing years would see our drawn-out departure from Europe, Labour's revival at the election of 2017 and its rout only two years later, pro- and anti-Brexit protests, an insatiable Conservative party spitting out four prime ministers, and the rising sense that the United Kingdom itself would perhaps not survive.

But now look, Sturgeon is about to quit as first minister, and the cause of Scottish independence has reached an impasse. Corbyn has been barred from even standing as a Labour candidate. Farage maintains a mischievous political presence, but now that Brexit is falling into disgrace, the discrepancy between his bark and bite is surely at an all-time high. Ten days ago, the Economist ran an article heralding Britain's "great moderation": of late, it said, "the image of Britain as a land of phlegmatic common sense has taken a beating", but all these recent changes point to the return of pragmatism, calm and "a more rational form of politics". As one era gives way to another, and we are readied for the coronation of Charles III, it may not be a coincidence that a comparable period of history seems to be back in fashion.

Over the past 18 months, a handful of acclaimed new books have been published about the 17th century, the 11 volatile years England spent as a republic, and how ferment and ideological conflict led on to the restoration of the monarchy.

In Clare Jackson's Devil-Land, Anna Keay's The Restless Republic and the just-published The Blazing World by the Oxford historian Jonathan Healey, clear lines can be drawn from the present to the past: 400 years is perhaps not that long, and amid stories of a country seen by Europeans as a byword for "rebellion, religious extremism and regime change", you can make out enduring national traits and recurring themes. Whereas the 21st century is the age of social media, politics back then was shaken up by the spread of pamphlets and "newsbooks". Then, as now, conspiracy theories and misinformation abounded. Huge questions surrounded England's relationships with Scotland and Ireland, and there were moral conflicts and what would now be considered culture wars. Moreover, just as support for Brexit and Scottish independence was rooted in many people's impatience with established authority and strong sense of neglect, so was the appeal of the factions and sects that made the mid-17th century such a well-spring of ideas and revolt.

But then came the death of Oliver Cromwell, a collective sigh of exhaustion and exasperation, and the arrival on the throne of Charles II. As Healey's book puts it, the restoration of the monarchy was greeted as deliverance from a "world of confusions" and "unheard-of governments". The king's return was also a reminder of the English mistrust of ideologies and zealots, and the fact that protracted political conflict tended to leave most people weary and perplexed. A kind of latter-day restorationism now dominates both

main Westminster parties. Rishi Sunak and Jeremy Hunt clearly want voters to forget the misrule of Boris Johnson and the ideological contortions of Liz Truss, and think of his leadership in terms of the fiscally stringent Conservatism that secured Cameron his majority back in 2015.

The sales pitch is a technocratic quietening of Tory unrest, exemplified by the attempted resolution of the Northern Ireland protocol, which at one point was set to involve the King. But clearly, Conservative passions are still boiling away, as proved by the weekend's warnings from Johnson and his allies that a deal with the EU could trigger - appropriately enough - "civil war". Sunak presents himself as the technocratic full-stop after all those years of Tory unrest, with the resolution of the Northern Ireland protocol clearly envisaged as the final act of the Brexit drama.

At the top of the Labour party, a nostalgic orthodoxy runs even deeper. As his speech last week outlining five "national missions" reminded us, Keir Starmer does not use a particularly moral vocabulary, or offer much of an expansive vision. Beyond his creditable plans for a greener economy, everything blurs into a familiar mixture of toughness on crime and talk of "opportunity", and his somewhat improbable quest for the "highest sustained growth in the G7". His chosen form of politics is undeniably reminiscent of New Labour, but a later vintage than 1997: back then, Tony Blair was prone to biblical homilies about our shared duties to one another, whereas Starmer seems keener on the kind of bland formulations that came later. ("Britain forward not back" was the title of Labour's 2005 manifesto.)

When senior Conservative and Labour figures recently met for a two-day "private discussion" about the failings of Brexit and how to put things right - a restoration-ish

move if ever there was one - the latter included the veteran New Labour courtier Peter Mandelson, now once again an influential presence in Labour circles. His old masters Gordon Brown and Blair are once again regular guests on radio and TV programmes, and in newspaper comment sections. The newly confirmed candidate for East Lothian, the seat that tops Labour's list of targets in Scotland, is Douglas Alexander, who served in the cabinet under Blair and Brown, and was one of the latter's closest confidants; in nearby Midlothian, the party's chosen hopeful is Kirsty McNeill, a former Brown adviser. That fallen Blairite prince David Miliband says that his possible return to Labour politics "has not been decided yet", but other faces from the past are definitely back: the high-rolling New Labour donor Lord Sainsbury, for example, has just announced his return with an extraordinary £2m boost to party funds.

History suggests that restoration, stability and continuity have their uses, and that most people understandably prefer them to disruption and noise. In Healey's view, by the end of the 17th century, the English republic's febrile years were only a memory, and "a new world had arisen". The picture he paints suggests a pre-industrial version of levelling up: "Even labourers were earning more, and famine was now a thing of the past ... Towns were reborn as social hubs, rebuilt in brick and boasting coffee houses, theatres and concert halls. Trade was now the mainstay of economic life in a thriving market economy." Here, though, is the problem. As I read those words, my thoughts kept returning to a present dominated by strikes, shortages, hunger and news of a country in an even worse state than it was back in 2015. In that context, whether historical comparisons ring true or not, the return of politics-as-usual prompts a huge question: weren't its failures what triggered all that chaos and ferment in the first place?



Keir was right to exile Corbyn

Sonia Sodha

THE Labour party lists the Equality Act as one of the major achievements of its last spell in government. Passed in 2010, it provides everyone with robust legal protections against discrimination based on sex, disability, age, race, religion, sexual orientation and gender reassignment. But just a decade later, the Labour party was itself found to have breached its own landmark law, when the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) declared that it had acted unlawfully in discriminating against Jewish members. Its lead investigator said that, as leader of the party during the period in question, Jeremy Corbyn was "ultimately accountable and responsible for what happened".

Corbyn has never apologised for the role he played in the institutional antisemitism that characterised the party under his leadership, including interference in the complaints process by his own staff, presiding over a culture in which members including Ken Livingstone partook in the unlawful harassment of Jewish members, and a lack of

over - he still maintains he was targeted because of his position on Palestine - means Starmer's decision must first and foremost be evaluated on principled grounds. It was the only morally correct course of action, and - like his earlier decision to exclude Corbyn from Labour's benches in the Commons - it is to Starmer's credit that he has taken it.

But it also comes with significant political boons for Starmer. It creates a stark contrast with Rishi Sunak: a leader of integrity, set against a prime minister who appointed two cabinet ministers who have already had to resign because of alleged bullying and alleged financial impropriety, with another departure potentially on the horizon. And it sends a clear signal to voters that the Labour party is no longer home to Corbyn, whose deep unpopularity in 2019 was a significant factor in Boris Johnson's resounding victory and Labour's worst defeat since 1935. That unpopularity was partly a product of Labour's issues with anti-semitism, and partly of Corbyn's cranky foreign policy positions, which he

that's on them - and democracy is achieved through the prism of privileging members' role in charting the party's course, even if that makes it less electable.

Starmer's edict on Corbyn is just the latest signal that he is firmly in the former camp. His duty is to voters, not to indulge Labour party members supporting a man who presided over unlawful discrimination to be their MP. But Corbyn and his backers have framed this as an "attack on democracy". The controversy follows criticisms that Starmer has acted in an anti-democratic fashion by changing the party rulebook to give MPs more say in picking the leader and making it harder for members to deselect their local MP, and for influencing local selections of parliamentary candidates.

The truth is that these are simply signs of a party that is serious about winning the kind of democratic legitimacy that matters much more than internal rulebooks. In an age when members are unrepresentative of a party's wider electoral base, there is a trade-off between internal democracy and the ability of a political party to respond to voters.

Starmer is right to stop Corbyn standing for Labour at the next election

THE shame of the Labour party - the Labour party! - being put into special measures by the Equality and Human Rights Commission for racism shocked most members to the core in 2020. To be released from that disgrace now is hardly a moment for celebration, after the EHRC's original finding that Labour acted unlawfully in failing to rein in antisemitism under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership.

His refusal to accept the overall findings set Corbyn on an inevitable path out of the parliamentary Labour party. He maintains "The scale of the problem was dramatically overstated for political reasons by our opponents inside and outside the party, as well as by much of the media." But a party can't be a little bit racist: the damning findings had to be swallowed whole.

Keir Starmer's confirmation today that Corbyn cannot stand as a Labour candidate at the next general election is hardly surprising. Cleansing the party of anti-semitism is deeply personal for Starmer, as his wife is Jewish and they keep Jewish festivals. But Corbyn's obstinacy was convenient, too, his expulsion an opportunity to demonstrate Starmer's mission to get a grip on the party. Rishi Sunak's feeble jibes at Starmer for serving in Corbyn's cabinet bounce off him now. Of course, as Starmer said yesterday today, it's a job not quite done: when the Labour MP Kim Johnson got up at PMQs to

call the Israeli government fascist, she had to apologise to the house promptly, under threat from the chief whip.

Taking over the leadership during the Covid crisis, Starmer devoted his time to fixing the party internally as he slowly made progress with voters. Asked his mission, he declared it was "winning". It has paid off handsomely as he soars in the polls. I am told that many reports from local meetings speak of the Corbynite influence fading, with some of his supporters leaving altogether or changing their mind as the party inches towards power. Starmer has been lucky in the total implosion of the Tories and lucky again with the resignation of Nicola Sturgeon: polling for all her likely successors is unimpressive, aiding Labour's chances in Scotland. No opposition leader has ever scored as low in Ipsos's polling as Corbyn's -60 personal approval rating, with Michael Foot at -56, and Iain Duncan Smith and William Hague tied at -37. Corbyn benefited from his opponents' disastrous campaign in 2017, though his personal rating trailed far behind both Theresa May's and his own party's popularity - Labour won 40% of votes to the Tories' 42.4%. Yet there are those who still see him as a saviour rather than a drag anchor: as the one who brought flocks of enthusiastic new members into the party, and prompted delighted chants of

"Oh, Jeremy Corbyn" at Glastonbury. He was betrayed by rightwingers in the party and brought down in 2019 by those who should have backed him, they say.

The Guardian is often their chief villain. Whenever I write criticism of the government I am guaranteed Twitter and thread responses claiming that if only I, my colleagues and the paper had backed him, we wouldn't be suffering this Tory era. A brief check in the archive would show that the only thing wrong with this analysis is that I, other columnists and the Guardian's leader all urged voters to back Corbyn's Labour party. How could we not, after a decade of brutal austerity, and given Boris Johnson's unfitnes for power? I backed just about every individual item in Labour's 2019 manifesto: it was nothing like Michael Foot's "longest suicide note in history", which pledged to leave both the EU and Nato. Its obstacle was its implausible costings, with extra billions added during the campaign. But Labour's worst problem was Corbyn himself, as voters feared his perceived lack of patriotism (prompted by, for example, his failure to sing the national anthem at a remembrance event) and told focus groups and pollsters they felt he was "not concerned about their issues" or "people like them". Most voters never joined that misleading Glastonbury chorus.

My own greatest anger with Corbyn him was over his refusal to campaign seriously against Brexit in the referendum. "Where is he?" I asked his advisers a couple of months before the vote. "He thinks the local elections more important," was the unforgivable reply, when in truth he was a lexiter - a Bennite Brexiter. But because our monstrous election system offers only a binary choice, of course progressives of every hue had to back Labour against a nightmarish, sociopathic Tory leader. I never doubted that Corbyn would be a preferable prime minister to Johnson - the lowest of bars - but in 2019 he led Labour to its worst result since 1935. Now, Corbyn's remaining believers cling to that last resort of all failed ideologues, the same refrain as the failing Brexiters': we were betrayed.

Corbyn seems likely to stand as an independent for Islington North, where Labour has an array of good would-be candidates. Groups within Labour such as Momentum may face a quandary, as they would automatically be expelled from the party if they campaigned for him against Labour. But in the present golden polling climate, it hardly matters who wins that one seat. What matters is that Labour has expunged the shame of the EHRC's special measures. What matters, too, is that in its haste to escape the failure of Corbynism, Labour doesn't overreach and purge anyone with anything original or interesting to say.

Corbyn's failure to accept responsibility and show any contrition for the antisemitism he presided over - he still maintains he was targeted because of his position on Palestine - means Starmer's decision must first and foremost be evaluated on principled grounds. It was the only morally correct course of action, and - like his earlier decision to exclude Corbyn from Labour's benches in the Commons - it is to Starmer's credit that he has taken it. But it also comes with significant political boons for Starmer. It creates a stark contrast with Rishi Sunak: a leader of integrity, set against a prime minister who appointed two cabinet ministers who have already had to resign because of alleged bullying and alleged financial impropriety, with another departure potentially on the horizon. And it sends a clear signal to voters that the Labour party is no longer home to Corbyn, whose deep unpopularity in 2019 was a significant factor in Boris Johnson's resounding victory and Labour's worst defeat since 1935.

There is a path to Scottish independence

AN independent Scotland has not been hindered by Nicola Sturgeon's departure; it could well be advanced by it. Her eight years as first minister have been remarkable, but failed to bring statehood closer to reality. The question is whether her intransigence postponed it. Sturgeon made a strategic error after her predecessor Alex Salmond lost the 2014 independence referendum. She assumed her charisma could swiftly erode the 55% turnout for continued union with England and secure a victorious rerun of the poll. Despite her electoral successes, she never seriously dented that majority. All Sturgeon could do was plunge an ever more visceral anti-Englishness into courtroom battles with London that she was never likely to win.

Salmond had in 2014 foolishly rejected David Cameron's offer of a second referendum option for so-called "devo max", a radically enhanced Scottish autonomy. This would certainly have passed, with polls indicating 66% support among Scottish voters. While devo max was a constitutional can of worms, it could not have been wished away. It should have begun a drastic restructuring of the Scottish economy away from dependence on - and therefore control from - London. At very least it would have put serious autonomy within the realm of plausibility.

The question now is how far could a new SNP leader take such a move towards greater autonomy forward, possibly aided by sensible and open-minded leaders of the Labour and Tory parties. To Sturgeon, the issue bordered on the theological. As with Salmond, it was freedom or bust, independence or serfdom. They wanted their own currency, their own debt, a hard border with England, membership of the EU and no UK weapons on Scottish soil. This was fantasy enough but at no point did it engage in the elephant in the independence room - economics.

Gazing across the Irish Sea, we can all study Ireland's experience since independence a century ago, when under British rule it was among the poorest nations in Europe. Depending on definition, it is today one of the most prosperous. But it took Dublin 50 years of austerity and pain - including a meagre welfare state - to get there. Not until the 1980s did it achieve such key indicators of growth as a net inflow of investment, population and talent, and "Celtic tiger" status. There is no tartan tiger. Sturgeon's leadership enabled the Scots to have their cake and eat it. Her fierce nationalism gave voters emotional satisfaction. She ran hospitals, schools, trains, law and order, while Covid gave Scotland a degree of administrative discretion. Limited scope to raise top income

Simon Jenkins

taxes allowed a generous family support package and free student tuition. But this did not deliver the Scottish people conspicuously better services, and it depended heavily on an annual subsidy from London.

Scotland's budget deficit in 2020-21 of 22% of GDP was among the largest of any nation in the western world, though surging oil and gas revenues have recently cut it back. Similarly sized Denmark runs a surplus of 4%. The annual UK government grant to Scotland announced last October was a record £41bn. This is money a Scottish treasury would have to find on its own, which is why Scotland's standard of living needs union into the foreseeable future. As Ireland shows, there is a path out of dependency, but it is neither easy nor swift. Federal constitutions in Spain, Switzerland and Germany indicate that the key to autonomy lies in fiscal freedom, in the capacity to grow, earn and spend, independent of policies ordained by a central government. The Basques and the Swiss cantons enjoy fiscal discretions unthinkable to the British Treasury - but the key lies in fiscal self-sufficiency. Advocates of independence persistently fail to confront this.

There is no reason why Scotland cannot approach the prosperity of Ireland or Scandinavia. Decades of

reliance on the most centralist political economy in Europe - that of the UK - have crippled Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Devo max might aim to embrace some of Ireland's libertarian taxes along with Norway's links to the EU's single market. It might conceivably join with Northern Ireland in its revitalised Brexit protocol, ingeniously returning to the EU's trading regime and yet free to trade with England. A digital border would be complicated, as Ireland is showing, but it would honour the clear vote of a majority of Scots against Brexit.

The concept of devo max - so-called "full fiscal autonomy" or "radical federalism" - is now debated by many on the fringes of the independence debate, in Wales as well as Scotland. The effort is to move forward from political confrontation. Federalism covers a spectrum of options but its purpose is to offer Scotland a freer hand to raise and spend public money, while offering London relief from a heavy burden in Scotland. It would be what Ireland was denied by England in the 19th century, true home rule under the crown. Had it been granted, the old United Kingdom might still be one. As for Sturgeon's successor, such an outcome could deliver a new Scotland mercifully at peace with London. Or it could prepare a path to full independence if that were, in my view sadly, to be Scotland's eventual choice.

support for Jewish MPs like Luciana Berger and Margaret Hodge, who faced the most appalling abuse. He instead accused the EHRC of "dramatically overstating" the extent of antisemitism in the party "for political reasons". That led to his suspension from the party and, while Labour's NEC reinstated him as a member three weeks later, Keir Starmer refused to readmit him to the parliamentary party, and he sits as an independent MP to this day.

Last week, Starmer announced that Corbyn would not be allowed to stand as a Labour MP at the next election. Speaking after the EHRC lifted Labour out of special measures as a result of its progress in expelling its antisemitic members and proscribing antisemitic organisations, he was unequivocal that "the Labour party has changed" and that Corbyn was not welcome.

Corbyn's failure to accept responsibility and show any contrition for the antisemitism he presided

espouses to this day; just a couple of weeks ago he was reiterating his belief that the west should not be arming Ukraine because it could pave the way for the territorial invasion of Russia, an offensively absurd sentiment.

It also positions Starmer in the right place in relation to an existential debate that has long raged within Labour's ranks about what political parties are actually for. "We've got our party back," former Labour leader Neil Kinnock declared in a 2010 speech at his party's annual conference just after Ed Miliband was elected leader; a statement that immediately raises the question - who does a party belong to, anyway? Its activist base, or its voters?

The key objective of Labour's moderates has always been to attract enough support in order to win power to achieve change in government. Democracy is first and foremost about winning votes. For Labour's left flank, those votes are not to be achieved at the expense of sacrificing their principles - if voters reject them,

It is fundamentally undemocratic to give the small, unrepresentative sliver of voters that constitutes the Labour party membership too much power to impose a leader that neither the party's MPs, nor the country at large, think is decent and competent, or to impose an idiosyncratic choice of individual as a likely local MP on tens of thousands of voters. Liz Truss's success in winning the votes of Conservative members in her party's contest sharply illustrates how this extends beyond Labour: giving party memberships too much power gums up parliamentary democracy.

There are fair critiques to be made of Starmer, including that his domestic agenda lacks the vision needed to solidify Labour's existing poll lead into the big majority he will require to really change the country for the better. But he is certainly not the anti-democrat that the left of his party claim him to be. Far from it: he has shown he understands that democracy is ultimately about voters, not members.

Important Notice

The Frontier Post will not be responsible for the comments in the articles and letters. The Frontier Post requests the writers of articles and letters to please make sure that they write their email addresses and mention the names of the cities, towns, districts or tehsil of their residences at the bottom of their articles and letters.



PSX's 100-index loses 273 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Tuesday, losing 273.76 points, a negative change of 0.67 per cent, closing at 40,510.37 points against 40,784.13 points the previous day.

A total of 126,319,112 shares were traded during the day as compared to 158,084,396 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs.5.648 billion against Rs.5.718 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 334 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 82 of

them recorded gains and 234 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 18 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 18,527,406 shares at Rs.1.29 per share; Oil and Gas Dev. with 5,333,028 shares at Rs.82.62 per share, and TPL Properties with 4,479,369 shares at Rs.14.93 per share.

Unilever Foods witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.1,542.50 per share price, closing at Rs.22,500.00, whereas the runner-up was Pak Services with an Rs.130.00 rise in its per share price to Rs.2,095.00.

Rafhan Maize witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.288.00 per share closing at Rs. 8,700.00; followed by Sapphire Tex. with Rs.78.46 decline to close at Rs.1,006.00.

Rupee sheds Rs 1.58 against dollar

The Pakistan rupee depreciated by Rs 1.58 against the dollar in the interbank trading on Tuesday and closed at Rs 261.50 against the previous day's closing of Rs 259.92.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs 263.8 and Rs 266.5

respectively.

The price of Euro increased by Rs 2.93 and closed at Rs 277.22 against the last day's closing of Rs 274.29, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese Yen gained one paisa to close at Rs 1.91, whereas an increase of Rs 4.05 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 314.83 as compared to its last day's closing of Rs 310.78.

The exchange rates of Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal increased by 43 paisa and 40 paisa to close at Rs 71.19 and Rs 69.67 respectively.



BARCELONA: Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication Syed Amin ul Haque addressing GSMA mobile Congress Ministerial Conference.

Paracha assumes charge OICCI president

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Unilever Pakistan Limited, Amir Paracha has taken over as the President of the Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OICCI) for the 2023 term.

This was announced at the 163rd Annual General Meeting of the OICCI held at the Chamber on Tuesday. Chief Executive Officer, Standard Chartered Bank (Pakistan) Limited, Rehan Muhammad Shaikh was elected as the Vice President, says a press released issued here.

The other elected members of the OICCI Managing Committee for 2023 include Syed Anis Ahmed, Abbot Laboratories (Pakistan) Ltd., Ahmed Zahid Zaheed, Chevron Pakistan Lubricants (pvt) Ltd., Umar Ahsan Khan, Dawakance (pvt) Ltd., Kamran Atallah Khan, Dupont Pakistan Operations (pvt) Ltd., Erum Shakir Rahim, Galxosumithkline Pakistan Ltd., Najeab Ahmad, Hitachi Energy Pakistan (pvt) Ltd., Ali Asghar Jamali, Indus Motor Company Ltd., and Waqar Irshad Siddiqui, Shell Pakistan Ltd.

In his message to the members, Amir Paracha said, "Pakistan's multi-fold challenges are evident to all of us and now is the time for leaders across all sectors to unite as a force for good and lead Pakistan back on a path of growth. Foreign investment is the primary gateway with which developing economies like Pakistan can access innovative technology and increased market access resulting in improvement of human capital.

"These factors are critical in enabling Pakistan to achieve a higher growth trajectory, supported by predictable, consistent, and transparent policy frameworks. There are many examples in the region of economies with similar challenges, managing to achieve notable economic growth primarily through promotion of FDI. For strong sustainable socio-economic growth, technology advancements is imperative", he added.

RCCI for bridging

RAWALPINDI (APP): The gap between industry and academia will have to be bridged, and Internships work very well to bond the gap. President Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) Saqib Rafiq, in a statement, said that Pakistani students have more talent and ability than the rest of the world, adding, "If they are guided in the right direction, trained properly and given opportunities to advance, it will be of great benefit."

Saqib said that the Education policy had not been formulated considering the industry's demand in Pakistan.

"Be it development in any field in the world, knowledge economy or science-based development, traditional business or IT sector development, education is fundamental element in all ways to development", he said adding that it was regrettable that only 1.77 per cent of the GDP was spent on the education sector in Pakistan.

Saqib informed that the RCCI would organise a two-day International Education Summit 2023 from March 4 to 5 at a local hotel in Rawalpindi.

Over 70 businessmen signed up for trade team to Ethiopia: Envoy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary for the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to Pakistan Jemal Beker Abdula on Tuesday said so far more than 70 businessmen have signed up for the historic trade delegation flying to Addis Ababa on March 5 for exploring business and investment opportunities.

"We are going to make history as the number of delegates we are expecting may cross the mark of 100 before the deadline for registration which is March 1," said the ambassador while addressing a news briefing here which was entirely focused on the five-day business trip to Ethiopia.

He said a lot of efforts and energy was invested in the initiative as his team worked day in and day out to make the historic delegation a success story. "This historic trade delegation will change the entire landscape of Ethiopia and Pakistan's bilateral relations," he hoped.

Jemal Beker said the bilateral trade between Ethiopia and Pakistan amounted to only \$78 million, but "one thing I can assure you is that with this business delegation, our bilateral trade will get a major boost".

"In this delegation, we have included business people from different sectors of the economy especially those which have trade and investment poten-

tial in Ethiopia," he said, adding Pakistani business community on their first visit to Ethiopia would find a big market for rice, pharmaceutical products, medical equipment, sports items and construction material.

Likewise, Pakistani businesspeople could also import agricultural products such as coffee, tea, pulses, oilseeds and vegetables from Ethiopia which would eventually help it mitigate the growing demand for the edibles.

The ambassador said Ethiopia was the fastest growing economy in the world offering lucrative business, trade and investment opportunities with low cost of production including clean energy and skilled labour.

"We have almost completed the largest Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam with 6,500 MW capacity," he said, adding his country had already been exporting energy to South Sudan, Djibouti and others.

Jemal Beker said the government of Ethiopia was supportive of foreign investors as it has opened up its economy and encouraged the private sector to take lead for the development of the country.

Multiple incentives and one-window services were among the other initiatives to attract Foreign Direct Investment, the envoy added.

"We are heading to

become an icon of Africa under the leadership of Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed," he maintained.

To a query, he said the trade delegation would include subsidized airfares and accommodation, business-to-business and government-to-business meetings as well as grand receptions and cultural nights hosted by the country's leadership.

Meanwhile, the press briefing was followed by celebrations of the 127th Anniversary of Adwa Victory as the day marked Ethiopia's victory over the colonial Italian army at the Battle of Adwa on March 1, 1896.

A cake-cutting ceremony was held at the Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Islamabad which was attended by a large number of media persons, diplomats and officials of the government of Pakistan.

Speaking on the occasion, the ambassador said the heroic people of Ethiopia had registered a big triumph on this day by fighting imperial powers on its land. "We are the only nation in Africa that never colonized in the past and that has only been made sure by our brave people," Adwa is an icon of unity, heroism and perseverance led to defeat of the modern imperial military that became a foundation for African struggle for freedom and liberation.

EFU Life and HABIBMETRO Bank jointly launch new product — to promote Female Financial Inclusion



F.P. Report

KARACHI: EFU Life Assurance Ltd, the leading private life insurance provider in the country further strengthened its partnership with, HABIBMETRO Bank - a leading commercial bank - by launching various key initiatives including the launch of "EFU Ladies Insurance & Investment Plan". This plan is designed for HABIBMETRO Ladies account holders and is a unit-linked protection and savings plan bundled with micro-critical illness cover and a new paperless distribution channel "Telesales".

The signing ceremony was attended by Mr. Ahmed Shah Durrani, Group Executive Retail Bank & Chief Digital Officer and Ms Sarah Irfan, Head - Liabilities & Bancassurance from HABIBMETRO, while Mr

Mohammed Ali Ahmed, Deputy Managing Director, Ms Nilofer Sohail, Head Channel Strategy & Execution of EFU Life attended from EFU along with other senior officials from both organizations.

Speaking on this occasion Mr Mohammed Ali Ahmed mentioned, "In recent years, there has been a growing focus on addressing the unique needs and challenges faced by women, particularly in financial security. In addition to saving and insurance coverage, this plan also provides a cover for female-related critical illnesses.

Additionally, I also congratulate the bank on the launch of the Telesales channel for protection products which will help the bank to reach a wider audience through an entirely paperless model."

Also commenting at the

event, Mr Ahmed Shah Durrani, Group Executive Retail Bank & Chief Digital Officer of HABIBMETRO emphasized the importance of launching financial products and services tailored to the specific needs of women. He said, "Women are the largest underserved group of customers when it comes to insurance and investment products. Despite playing an increasingly influential role as everyday decision makers, their financial needs are not being met sufficiently.

Through this collaboration, HABIBMETRO has moved one step closer towards its goal of serving our female customers and providing them with products that will secure them financially."

EFU Life is one of the leading life insurers in the private sector of Pakistan. Having started operations

in 1992 as the first private sector life insurance company, over a span of 30 years, EFU Life has established itself as a trusted brand name in providing all types of financial planning solutions. The Company markets its business through three main distribution channels - Sales F o r c e , Bancassurance/Bancatakaf ul, and Group Benefits. A comprehensive range of retail products are available targeting low-income persons up to high-net-worth individuals. In addition, tailor made solutions are offered to the corporate sector through group life schemes.

HABIBMETRO Bank was incorporated in Pakistan as a Public Listed Company in 1992. HABIBMETRO is a leading trade finance bank that currently operates with 500+ branches (including 60+ dedicated Islamic branches, 240+ Islamic windows and one offshore banking unit in Karachi Export Processing Zone) in 190+ plus cities across Pakistan. The Bank serves its customers within retail, corporate, commercial and Islamic segments through a dynamic suite of technology-led financial solutions, including round-the-clock banking facilities such as mobile and internet banking as well as a network of 500+ ATMs across the country.

Europe wind installations grow 4 per cent in 2022

ANKARA (APP): Europe's gross 19.1 gigawatts (GW) of new wind power installations last year represented a 4% rise from 2021, according to a WindEurope report on Tuesday.

Wind energy in Europe in 2022 and the outlook for 2023-2027 showed that 16.1 GW of new installations were in the EU-27.

Onshore wind accounted for 87% of new installations at 16.7 GW in Europe plus the UK, while onshore installations in the EU-27 accounted for 92%.

New offshore wind installations in Europe amounted to 2.5 GW last year.

"Europe's wind farms generated 487 terawatt-hours (TWh) of electricity in 2022. This covered 17% of the electricity demand in the EU-27 plus the UK,"

the report highlighted.

According to the report, Europe announced 17 billion (\$17.9 billion) of new investments, covering 12 GW of new capacity that will be built this year and beyond.

This represents less than half the amount invested in 2021.

"The anticipated capacities of the new onshore wind farms built in Europe in 2022 is 30-45% and around 50% for offshore wind," the report

said. The average power rating of new onshore turbines was 4.1 megawatts (MW) and 8 MW for offshore wind.

Germany installed the most wind power capacity in 2022 at 2.7 GW, 88% of which was from onshore wind power.

Sweden and Finland had 2.4 GW of installed wind power capacity each, France had 2.1 GW, and the UK and Spain each had 1.7 GW.

Furthermore, Denmark and Ireland had the highest

proportions of wind energy in their electricity mixes, at 55% and 36%, respectively.

Wind met more than 20% of the electricity demand in five countries: the UK at 28%, Germany at 26%, Portugal at 26%, and Spain and Sweden each at 25%.

Despite the Russian-Ukraine conflict, which rendered 75% of its total installed capacity of 1.8 GW inactive, Ukraine installed 83 MW of new capacity.

Markets mixed as traders fret over looming rate hikes

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian markets were mixed Tuesday after suffering a series of losses over concerns the Federal Reserve will push interest rates higher than expected and for longer than feared as it battles stubborn inflation.

Early gains in some bourses were erased as traders struggled to track advances on Wall Street while keeping a wary eye on several data releases this week that will provide a fresh snapshot of the US economy.

Recent figures showing a robust jobs market and inflation not coming down as quickly as hoped have spooked traders this month as they bet on more Fed rate hikes, wiping out most of January's equities rally.

"It's becoming increasingly clear to the market that the Federal Reserve is not yet finished with rate hikes," Seema Shah, at Principal Asset Management, said.

"Relentless monetary tightening will eventually

weigh on both the economy and earnings -- a headwind that will, inevitably, renew and extend the equity market drawdown."

Tokyo, Shanghai, Sydney, Seoul, Singapore and Wellington were all in the green but Manila, Jakarta, Mumbai and Bangkok slipped.

Hong Kong was also down despite news that the government will drop a long-running mask requirement from Wednesday, removing the last of the Covid rules that have dealt a severe blow to the city's economy.

London, Paris and Frankfurt fell at the open.

Still, some commentators said that with more Fed hikes now priced into valuations, equities could see a period of gains.

"Investors are debating whether January's inflation reflation was just another temporary bump in the road as the economy adjusts to a post-pandemic world," SPI

Asset Management's Stephen Innes said.

"Indeed one look at Brent oil prices struggling to hold on to the \$82 handle doesn't precisely reignite worrisome inflationary fires." On currency markets, the pound held on to most of Monday's gains that came on the back of an agreement between Britain and the European Union on an overhaul of trade rules in Northern Ireland.

Crude prices picked up after losses sparked by concerns over the impact on demand from the Fed's rate hike campaign.

Still, Edward Moya at OANDA said prices had been initially helped by "the halting of a Russian pipeline to Poland, but that was unable to help shake off demand worries".

"Oil seems like it will stay heavy as both tensions between the (United States and China) and recession worries grow."

He added that West Texas Intermediate should be supported around \$70 but could pick up on signs of improving demand.

Court Notice

IN THE COURT OF SHAFQAT QADEER CIVIL JUDGE-XIV, BANNU, Suit No.139/1 institution 06.10.2022 Next date of hearing is 02.03.2023. Title: Dost Muhammad Khan vs Faqir Muhammad Ahmad Khan etc To: 2. Mst: Nasrin Begum widow 3. Faqir Muhammad Asif 4. Faqir Muhammad Kashif Sons of Faqir Muhammad Tahir R/O House No. 456-D Mohallah Abkari Bannu City Bannu, presently abroad. The defendants are informed through this notice to appear in this court on 02.03.2022. After this no excuse would be accepted and ex-parte proceedings shall be initiated against you. Given under my hand and seal of this court.

Oil up over hopes of further demand rebound

ANKARA (APP): Oil prices increased on Tuesday as demand surged ahead of the release of fresh economic data from China, the world's largest oil importer and second largest consumer.

International benchmark Brent crude traded at \$82.59 per barrel at 9.49 a.m. local time (0649 GMT), up 0.67% from the closing price of \$82.04 a barrel in the previous trading session.

At the same time, American benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded at \$76.28 per barrel, a 0.79% increase after the previous session closed at \$75.68 a barrel.

While inflationary concerns in the world's largest oil consumer, the US, continue to weigh on oil prices, investor expecta-

tions of a strong demand rebound in China, the world's largest oil importer, are lifting market sentiment.

On Wednesday, the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for China will be released, providing an indication of how China's economic reopening is progressing.

In an e-mailed note, Australia and New Zealand Banking Group commodity strategist Daniel Hynes said China's mobility data shows a strong recovery in activity, with road congestion up 47% month on month in February.

"Flight schedules remain high after the Chinese New Year holiday," he also said. Investors are also awaiting industrial data on crude oil inventories in the US.

Tokyo shares close higher

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks ended marginally higher on Tuesday, trimming earlier gains as investors struggled to maintain momentum after an advance on Wall Street.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index rose 0.08 percent, or 21.60 points, to 27,445.56, while the broader Topix index added 0.03 percent, or 0.50 points, to 1,993.28. "The Tokyo market rebounded as a sense of safety emerged following overnight gains in the main US indices" after recent losses, IwaiCosmo Securities said.

Wall Street stocks posted a decent relief rally on Monday after last week's grim end as the bond market selloff took a break, with investors watching for US retailers' earnings due this week, analysts said. Investors are also awaiting US ISM economic activity figures for manufacturing and non-manufacturing sectors, they added.



In brief

5,000 policemen to be deployed

RAWALPINDI (APP): The police have finalized foolproof security arrangements for Pakistan Super League PSL cricket matches, to be played from 1 March till 12th March at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium. More than 5,000 officers of Rawalpindi police will perform special duties, whereas 347 traffic police officers have been assigned to maintain the flow of traffic. RPO Syed Khurram Ali and City Police Officer Syed Khalid Mahmood Hamdani on Tuesday gave instructions to the officers to ensure a peaceful and conducive environment for PSL remnant matches, to be played at the said cricket stadium. Moreover, special teams of Elite force and Dolphin force will also perform patrolling duties in the vicinity of the stadium. Along with the effective security of the cricket teams' traffic routes, expert snipers have been deployed on the roofs. Meanwhile, CPO Khalid Mahmood Hamdani directed officers to perform their duties with responsibility and due diligence. In addition, RPO Khurram Ali directed the officers to articulate well with the citizens during the cricket matches.

Le Graet resigns

PARIS (Agencies): French Football Federation president Noel le Graet has resigned following a damning report into the organisation and accusations of sexual harassment. The 81-year-old stood down in January while the French government carried out an audit into the federation. "Considering his conduct towards women, his public comments and the governance failings of the FFF, Mr Le Graet no longer has the necessary legitimacy to run and represent French football," the report concluded when it was published earlier this month. It also said Le Graet, who has always denied any wrongdoing, should not return to his role because his "behavioural excesses are incompatible with the carrying out of his functions". Le Graet, who was in office for 11 years and had a mandate until 2024, has previously faced claims of sexual harassment, which he denies. There were also calls for him to quit over his comments about Zinedine Zidane, who won the World Cup and Euros as a player for France and guided Real Madrid to three successive Champions League titles. Le Graet said he would not take a call from Zidane about becoming France coach before apologising for his "clumsy" remarks. The French government began the audit in October after being made aware of sexual harassment and bullying allegations at the organisation, which the FFF has denied. Announcing his resignation on Tuesday, the FFF said it "recognises the remarkable sporting and economic performance of Noel Le Graet". Referring to the audit, it added: "The FFF nevertheless notes that the report is based less on objective facts than on comments that have sometimes led to exaggerated bad-mouthing of the body." Le Graet took office in 2011, with the men's national team winning the 2018 World Cup and finishing as runners-up at Euro 2016 and the 2022 World Cup. Before he stood down earlier this year, Le Graet extended Didier Deschamps contract as manager of the national side until 2026.

New Zealand edges England by 1 run in test cricket thriller

WELLINGTON (AP): Tim Southee's New Zealand team earned two places in international cricket history with its dramatic, one-run comeback win over England in the second test.

It was only the fourth team after England (in 1894 and 1981) and India (in 2001) to win a test match after being forced to follow-on and only the second after the West Indies to win by a margin of one run.

New Zealand also was part of one of the most tense final days of a test match when at various times both teams had victory in their grasp and even a rare tie seemed possible. At the start of Day 5, a New Zealand win seemed the most unlikely of all possible scenarios: it had lost the series-opening match by 267 runs and been forced to follow-on 226 runs behind in the second test.

New Zealand was depleted: its bowling lineup depended heavily on the new ball pair of Tim Southee and Matt Henry in the absence of Trent Boult and Kyle Jamieson.

Neil Wagner had been demoted from the new ball role he had in the first test but it was the pugnacious bowler who had the foremost role on the last day when he took four wickets and held three catches.

New Zealand now can rest after saving its unbeaten run in test series at home which stretches back to 2017. England will return home to regroup for the Ashes series against Australia in July. But it no longer is heading into that series with almost juggernaut momentum after coming to the end of a six-test

winning streak.

On a day of constant twists and turns Tuesday, Joe Root scored 95 in a partnership of 121 with Ben Stokes (33) which appeared to have secured England's victory and a 2-0 win in the two-match series.

Root and Stokes were out within a run of each other with 56 runs still needed and the match which had been heading England's way tilted back in favor of New Zealand with seven wickets down.

Wicketkeeper Ben Foakes then made 35, facing down the New Zealand attack and shepherding the tailenders to get England within seven runs of victory before his dismissal triggered another twist.

No. 11 James Anderson clubbed a boundary off Wagner which left England two runs from a match and series victory. Then in the last, dramatic moment, Anderson was caught down the leg side by a diving Tom Blundell from the bowling of Wagner.

In a defining comeback for Wagner and his short-pitch bowling, he returned figures of 4-62 and was instrumental in the win.

"It's a special win this and we'll celebrate what is an amazing achievement," Wagner said. "I think it's just the character of the team. We love to fight for one another, find a way and keep on doing the hard yards out there."

The grassy banks of Wellington's Basin Reserve were crowded on a workday Tuesday to see the denouement of an already extraordinary match.

For the second time in the series, Stokes made an

assertive first innings declaration with England 435-9. England then bowled out New Zealand for only 209 to take a 226-run first innings lead. Stokes chose to enforce the follow-on with his attack having bowled 53.2 overs and the second innings became an ordeal as Kane Williamson made 132 and New Zealand batted more than 160 overs to post 483, setting England 258 to win.

England came into the final day at 48-1, still needing 210 runs but with the odds on its side and 103 overs in the day. Under Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum and the so-called Bazball approach to the game, England has won six tests while chasing, notably scoring 378 to beat India at Birmingham last year.

But when New Zealand took four wickets in the first hour, the equilibrium of the match was disturbed. England lost night-watchman Ollie Robinson, Ben Duckett and then Ollie Pope and Harry Brook -- run out without facing a ball -- to slip to 80-5.

Brook's wicket was crucial after he made 186 in the first innings for his fourth century in five tests.

Root and Stokes seemed to have repaired the England innings but Wagner's double blow to dismiss them both in consecutive overs was yet another turning point. Foakes' diligent innings ensured a thrilling finish as the upper hand in the match passed moment by moment from one team to the other. Even England's Barmy Army of fans was largely rendered silent as they watched the action in almost breathless tension.

Dale Steyn heaps praise on Shaheen Afridi

LAHORE (Web Desk): South African former pacer Dale Steyn heaped praise on Lahore Qalandars' skipper Shaheen Shah Afridi for his fiery bowling spell in the eighth edition of the Pakistan Super League (PSL).

Taking to Twitter on Tuesday, Mr. Steyn admired the strength of the Qalandars' captain, saying, "Shaheen's wrist is amazing."

"The bend and flick he has is so special, and this is an area where many young fast bowlers could look to find the extra yard of pace they're searching for," added Mr Steyn.

Continuing to admire Shaheen's brilliance with the bowl, Mr Steyn said, "There are a few drills one could try, but if you're over 25, I'm sorry, but it may already be too late. Still worth a try."

Pakistan earn direct qualification to ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2024

F.P. Report

DUBAI: Pakistan women's cricket team has qualified for the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2024 as the International Cricket Council (ICC) announced the automatic qualifiers after the end of the eighth edition of the tournament in Cape Town on Sunday.

Overall, eight teams have earned direct qualification while remaining two spots will be identified through a Global Qualifier. As per the qualification process, the top three teams

from each group earn direct qualification along with the hosts and the highest ranked team outside of the six direct qualifiers from the 10-team tournament.

Australia, New Zealand and South Africa are the teams to earn direct qualification as the top three teams of Group 1 in the league stage while England, India and the West Indies similarly make it from Group 2.

Bangladesh qualified as hosts of the ninth edition of the tournament while Pakistan made it by virtue of being the next highest

ranked team in the MRF Tyres ICC Women's T20I Team Rankings as of 27 February 2023.

The remaining two spots will be identified through a Global Qualifier to be held in early 2024. The dates and venues of this tournament will be announced in due course.

From the teams who played in this year's tournament, Sri Lanka and Ireland are the teams failing to get direct qualification. Sri Lanka are currently ranked eighth in the rankings while Ireland are 10th.



WELLINGTON: Neil Wagner embraces Tom Blundell after the dismissal of James Anderson as New Zealand won the Second Test Match.

Gabin Jabba Snow Sports Festival ends with sweet memories

SWAT (APP): Gabin Jabba Snow Sports Festival has come to an end with all its grandeur and sweet memories, here at hills top.

A large number of local and foreign tourists turned up and enjoyed the three-day festival -- organized by District Administration and the Culture and Tourism Authority Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (CTAKP) -- that ended on Tuesday.

Deputy Commissioner Irfan Wazir was the chief guest at the prize distribution ceremony. Trophies, certificates and cash prizes were awarded to the position holders. DPO Shafiqullah Gandapur, ADC Sohail Khan, ADC Abdul Laif, AC Matta Abdul Qayyum Khan, RSO Kashif Farhan, District Youth Officer Farhad Ali Khan and others were present.

On the last day of the festival, cycling, marathons, tug of war, and weight lifting contests were held.

In the cycling event, Abu Zar won first position, followed by Bilal and Talha at second and third respectively. In the marathon, Swat Runners got the first, Swat Road Liners the second and Khawaja Khela Club third position. In the tug-of-war, Swat Green won the first position by defeating Swat Red by three to zero.

On the occasion of 'Shahid Maling Group', Shahid Ali Khan performed the magic of his art. In the festival, famous Pashto singers Heshmat Sahar, Imran Khan, Shahzad Khyal, Wasal Khyal, Shaukat Mehmood, Zubair Nawaz graced the event with their performances.

The most beautiful and challenging five-kilometer cycling race was organized in the festival, which started from Loka and ended at Gabin Jabba top. A total of 40 cyclists participated in the race. Three different categories, senior, junior and mountain bike category were included.

The festival included a playground for tourists and their children, magic show, handicraft stalls, tourist information desk, and folk dances.

The youth participated in the festival in large numbers. Last year also this festival was organized in a perfect manner and this year too, the Gabin Jabba Sports Festival attracted both local and foreign tourists, as well as families and children.



AUSTIN: Alison Riske-Amritraj returns a shot against Katie Volynets at the ATX Open in Austin, Texas, Volynets won 6-3, 3-6, 6-0.

Judo Championship begins at SAU

HYDERABAD (PPI) The first Girls Judo Championship has started under the auspices of Sindh Agriculture University, Tandojam. The championship was inaugurated by the vice chancellors of five universities of Sindh and it is in full swing, according to a statement on Tuesday.

All Pakistan Inter-University Girls Judo Championship started at the SAU sports complex, which was inaugurated by Sindh Agriculture University Vice Chancellor Dr. Fateh Marri, Quaid Awam University of Engineering University & Technology Nawabshah Vice Chancellor Dr. Saleem Raza Samo, Government College University Hyderabad Vice Chancellor Dr. Tayyaba Zareef, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences Vice Chancellor Dr. Farooq Mateen and Vice Chancellor of Begum Nusrat Bhutto, Women University Sukkur Dr. Tehmina Mangar.

120 girls players from 16 Universities of the country along with the host Sindh Agriculture University Tandojam are participating in the championship, the players from Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University Peshawar, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, the University of Management and Science Technology Lahore, Lahore Garrison University Lahore, University of Lucki Marwat, University of Veterinary Sciences Lahore, Punjab

Lahore, University of Veterinary Sciences Lahore, Superior University Lahore, Khawaja Farid Nawaz University, Rahim Yar Khan, Islamia University Bahawalpur, Lahore College for Women University Lahore, Mehran University Jamsoro, Karachi University, Sir Syed University Karachi and the University of Lahore are competing for the title of champion 2022-23.

Deans of various faculties Dr. Altaf Ali Siyal, Dr. Ghayasuddin Shah Rashidi, Registrar Ghulam Mohiuddin Qureshi, Hostel Provost Khadim Hussain Wagan, Shaukat Hussain Sangi, Mohammad Umar Dasti, sports officers, teachers and students of various universities of Pakistan participated.

On the first day, in the 40 kg category, Rida Ashraf of Punjab University won the medal by defeating Umma Habiba of Lahore College for Women University, Rida Ashraf of Lahore College for Women won the second position in the same category and she got the silver medal by getting the position while Azra of Khawaja Farid Nawaz University Rahim Yar Khan won the bronze medal and got the third position.

In the 44Kg weight category, Kainat of Garrison University, Lahore won the gold medal by defeating Jawaria Shakeel of Punjab University, Lahore, Saira of University of Management Sciences, Lahore took the

third position and won the brown medal.

In the 48Kg category, Mehroz Gul of Garrison University, Lahore won the gold medal by securing the first position, while Aqsa Khalid of Punjab University secured the silver medal by securing the second position. In the open category, Monisha Ali of Lahore Garrison University won the gold medal by securing the first position, while Noor Saba of Punjab University secured the silver medal by securing the second position. Fatima of Veterinary University Lahore won the third position and bronze medal, while the competition between the teams continued.

While addressing the opening ceremony, Vice Chancellor of Sindh Agriculture University, Dr. Fateh Marri said that the women of Sindh have become 'not a fragile gender, but an iron gender', who can now change the traditions. He said that the university will provide them more opportunities for healthy activities, and the number of girls in the university is increasing rapidly, to whom Sindh Agricultural University will provide more sports opportunities.

Dr. Salim Raza Samo, Vice Chancellor of Quaid Awam University of Engineering and Technology Nawabshah said that through these kinds of activities, students of the country's universities will be aware of each other in academic and social fields.

Messi wins Best Fifa men's player award

PARIS (Agencies): Argentina and Paris St-Germain forward Lionel Messi has been named men's player of the year at the 2022 Best Fifa Awards.

The 35-year-old beat French forwards Kylian Mbappe and Karim Benzema to the prize.

Messi captained Argentina to World Cup glory in Qatar, and scored 27 goals in 49 games for club and country in 2021-22.

Barcelona's Alexia Putellas was named women's player of the year.

Messi, who won the award for a second time, said: "It's amazing. It's been a tremendous year and it's an honour for me to be here and win this award. Without my team-mates I wouldn't be here."

"I achieved the dream I had been hoping for so long. Very few people can achieve that and I have been lucky to do so."

At the ceremony in Paris, Lionel Scaloni, who led Argentina to their third World Cup title, was named men's coach of the year.

Scaloni beat Pep Guardiola - who guided Manchester City to a sixth Premier League title - and Real Madrid's Champions League-winning boss Carlo Ancelotti to the honour.

England manager Sarina Wiegman was named women's coach of the year after leading the Lionesses to European Championship glory on home soil last year, the team's first major trophy. Aston Villa and Argentina's Emiliano Martinez was recognised as the best men's goalkeeper, while England's Mary Earps won the women's award.

Martinez, 30, helped his country win the World Cup, saving four penal-



ties along the way including in the shootout victory against France in the final. Collecting his award, Martinez said: "They always ask me who my idols are or who I watched when I was a kid... watching my mum clean buildings for eight or nine hours and watching my dad work. They are my idols."

Earps, who plays for Manchester United in the Women's Super League, started all six of England's games at Euro 2022 as they won the competition. She said: "For anyone who has been in a dark place, just know there is light at the end of the tunnel, so keep going. You can achieve anything that you set your mind to."

Amputee footballer Marcin Oleksy, of Polish side Warta Poznan, won the FIFA Puskas award for the best goal of the year. He sent a stunning overhead volley against Stal Rzeszow flying into the back of the net with the help of his crutches.

Recipient of the fair play award

was Luka Lochoshvili, who held the tongue of his opponent, Georg Teigl, to save his life after the midfielder had fallen unconscious.

Fifpro men's world XI: Thibaut Courtois; Achraf Hakimi, Virgil van Dijk, Joao Cancelo; Kevin De Bruyne, Luka Modric, Casemiro; Lionel Messi, Erling Haaland, Karim Benzema, Kylian Mbappe.

Full list of winners:

The Best men's player: Lionel Messi
The Best women's player: Alexia Putellas
The Best men's goalkeeper: Emiliano Martinez
The Best women's goalkeeper: Mary Earps
The Best men's coach: Lionel Scaloni
The Best women's coach: Sarina Wiegman
The Best Puskas award: Marcin Oleksy
The Best fan award: Argentina fans
The Best fair play award: Luka Lochoshvili.



In brief

IRSA releases 103,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 103,800 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 56,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1459.20 feet and was 61.20 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow in the dam was recorded as 14,900 cusecs while outflow as 50,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1111.55 feet, 61.55 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 18,100 cusecs and 30,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 58,300, 41,200, 31,100 and 7,200 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 13,300 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 2,800 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

Rain-wind likely in country: PMD

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast rain-wind/thunderstorms for various parts of the country during the next 24 hours. According to the synoptic situation, a westerly wave was affecting the western and upper parts of the country and may persist over the upper parts till March 02. Cloudy weather is expected in most parts of the country during the period. While, rain-wind/thunderstorms with snowfall over the hills are likely in upper/central Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, Kashmir, upper/central Punjab and Potohar region. Hailstorms and heavy falls are expected at a few places during the forecast period. During the last 24 hours, dry weather prevailed over most parts of the country, while cloudy in the upper parts. However, rain-wind/thunderstorms occurred in upper/central Punjab, upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Kashmir.

3 members of criminal gang held

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad capital police Sangjani police team arrested three wanted members of street criminal gang and recovered snatched motorbikes, mobile phones and weapons with ammunition used in crime from their possession, a Police Public Relation Officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police had started a crackdown against criminal elements in order to save the precious lives and property of citizens. According to the details, a Sangjani police team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending three wanted members of a snatcher gang involved in numerous snatching activities. The accused were identified as Amjad Khan, Habib Ullah, and Waheed Gul. Police team also recovered three motorbikes, four mobile phones and weapons with ammunition from their possession. Cases have been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway. During the preliminary interrogation, the accused confessed to being involved in numerous bike lifting incidents at expressway and various areas of the city. CPO/ DIG Operations Islamabad Syed Shehzad Nadeem Bukhari appreciated the performance of the police team and further directed the police teams to intensify efforts against the criminals involved in criminal activities.



ISLAMABAD: Member National Assembly Cahudhry Zulfiqar Bhinder calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Parliamentary diplomacy pivotal for enhancing mutual ties: NA Speaker

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaz Ashraf on Tuesday said that it was an era of Parliaments and people to people contacts and enhancing parliamentary diplomacy was key to further strengthen ties among nations. He expressed these views while chairing a meeting of Pak-Hungary Friendship group here at Parliament House where Hungarian Ambassador Béla Fazekas was also present in the meeting, a news release said.

He said that both Pakistan and Hungary enjoyed cordial relations which could be further strengthened by enhancing parliament to parliament contacts.

Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaz Ashraf stated that Pakistan deeply values its ties with Hungary both bilaterally and in European Union. He

said that Pakistan appreciates Hungary's support to Pakistan at multilateral forums. He said that establishment of Parliamentary friendship group between the parliaments of the two countries was an important development. He also appreciated the initiative of Hungarian Government to provide largest number of higher educational scholarship to Pakistani youth. He stressed on Pakistani youth to fully utilize this opportunity.

While welcoming participants, Convener of the PFG Mehnaz Akber Aziz, apprised about pivotal role played by the PFG to promote bilateral and parliamentary relations. She also shared that efforts were underway to create Air link and expand cooperation in socio-economic sector between both countries.

Hungarian Ambassador to Pakistan H.E Mr. Béla Fazekas said that both

Hungary and Pakistan share long history of friendly ties. He also said that the recent visit of Pakistan Foreign Minister Mr. Bilawal Bhutto to Hungary is an historic event as he has been first Pakistani Foreign Minister who visited Hungary during last forty years. He also expressed his hope that Hungary would continue to support Pakistani youth for provision of international standard education. He said that Hungary is also enriched in Islamic culture and monuments.

Members National Assembly Makhdoom Syed Sami Ul Hassan Gillani, Syed Javed Hasnain, Ms. Naz Baloch, Mr. Naveed Aamir Jeeva, Ms. Javeria Zafar Aheer, Dr. Shazia Sobia Aslam, Ms. Shamim Ara were also present in the meeting of Pak-Hungarian PFG.

Two flour smugglers netted with 420 bags

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Food Department Rawalpindi and district police on Tuesday caught two vehicles with 420 fine wheat flour bags and 20 tons refined wheat flour (maida) while the accused were sent behind the bars.

According to a district administration spokesman, the food Department Rawalpindi and Potohar Division Police conducted raids in Naseerabad area and rounded up Bakhtrawan on recovery of 20 tons maida and Abdullah with 420 fine flour bags. He informed that the authorities conducted 34 raids during last eight days and recovered 11,753 wheat, flour and fine flour bags.

He said that the authorities of the food department along with Potohar Division Police were conducting raids in their respective jurisdiction and netting the wheat and flour smugglers.

He said that the arrested accused were trying to smuggle wheat flour from Rawalpindi division.

The Food Department Rawalpindi and district police on the directives of the authorities concerned were strictly monitoring all the exit points of Rawalpindi district to foil wheat and flour smuggling bids, he added.

Farewell ceremony held in honour of outgoing official

ISLAMABAD (NNI): A farewell ceremony was held in honour of Head Constable Muhammad Parvaiz at Root Headquarters Security Division, a police public relations officer said.

He said that, SP VVIP Security Muhammad Riaz Bosal graced the ceremony as chief guest. While other senior police officials were also present on the occasion. The ceremony was held in recognition of the services of the retiring Head Constable. Speaking at the occasion, the chief guest said that retirement is part of the service as the one who joins the service has to retire one day. He asked the serving police officials to do their best to earn respect for the department. He was of the view that public service only could earn a good name for the officials and the department.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Department of Archaeology and Museums (DOAM), Korea Cultural Heritage Foundation (KCHF) and Cultural Heritage Administration will inaugurate the Gandhara Cultural Heritage Research Centre here on March 2 (Thursday).

The centre will be opened at the Department of Archaeology and Museums, Sir Syed Memorial Building. The inaugural will cover the introduction of the Gandhara Cultural Heritage Research Centre Project by Mr BAEK Kyunghwan, Deputy Director General, Korea Cultural Heritage Foundation while SUH Sang Pyo, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea in Islamabad, Fareena Mazhar, Secretary, National Heritage and Culture Division, CHOI Eungchon, Administrator, Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea, and Engr Amir Muqam will speak on the subject.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change, Senator Sherry Rehman on Tuesday said the federal government has initiated the nationwide tree plantation campaign with an ambitious target of over 240 million saplings for this year's Spring season.

In a series of tweets, the federal minister said the federal government has started the tree plantation campaign with a target of saplings to be planted across the country.

Sherry Rehman said it was the duty of every citizen and concerned authorities to increase forest area and protect the forests.

"We have sent SOPs (standard operating procedures) to all provinces and federal territories to prevent forest fires", she added. The purpose of these SOPs was to take

preventive measures against forest fire incidents as forest infernos occurred every year due to hot and dry weather, the minister added.

Last year, there were fire incidents in Margalla, Swat and many other places besides Chilghoza forests in Balochistan, Sherry Rehman said.

The minister underlined that forests were the asset and environmental capital, so these measures were indispensable to prevent fire incidents.

In order to prevent fire incidents in Margalla, directions have been given to mobilise the control room and helpline, she added. The minister said that strict legal action would be taken against the people involved in fire incidents and the forest mafia.

BISP to address vulnerability, empower women; Shazia Marri

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Ms. Shazia Marri Tuesday said that the government of Pakistan through BISP is striving to address the vulnerability of women by empowering them through income support to the poorest of the poor families.

This she said in a meeting with Dr. Luay Shabaneh, representative of the United Nations Fund for Population-UNFPA held here.

Secretary Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Mr. Ghufuran Memon and Secretary BISP Mr. Yusuf Khan also attended the meeting.

Ms. Marri while briefing the UNFPA Representative on BISP's initiatives said that this income support programme was started in 2008 and it is now extending an annual Rs. 28000/- financial support on Rs. 7000/- quarterly installments basis to around nine million families.

She said that the government has decided to increase this amount of income sup-

port by 25%, that is, now quarterly installment will be Rs. 9000.

Dr. Luay Shabaneh appreciated Ms. Shazia Marri for her commitment towards marginalized and underprivileged segments of the society, especially women through providing them a comprehensive social protection net.

He acknowledged that the vision and interests of BISP are closely associated with UNFPA and hoped to build a strategic partnership under the leadership of Chairperson BISP. He highlighted many goals of UNFPA which include ending preventable maternal deaths, ending the unmet needs for family planning and ending gender-based violence and harmful practices. He highlighted efforts of gender equality and said that UNFPA would be happy to work with BISP to achieve these goals. At the end of the meeting, Chairperson BISP and UNFPA representative agreed to find ways work together towards achieving the shared objective of poverty alleviation and extending to fabric of social safety.

Sanjrani expresses appreciation for Kazakhstan's continued support to Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Kazakhstan Yezhan Kistafin on Tuesday called on Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani to enhance the existing cordial relations between the two countries and explore further areas of mutual interest.

The Senate chairman stressed the importance of strengthening economic, cultural, and educational ties between the two nations. He expressed

appreciation for Kazakhstan's continued support to Pakistan besides highlighting the significant progress made by Pakistan in different areas. The ambassador acknowledged Pakistan's pivotal role in the region and commended the country's efforts towards regional peace and stability.

He further expressed his willingness to deepen the existing relationship and work towards enhancing bilateral trade and investment, cultural and educational exchanges, and other areas of mutual interest.

He said both Pakistan and Kazakhstan were committed to enhancing their partnership and exploring new avenues of cooperation to benefit their peoples.

During the meeting, discussion was held on the opportunities for cooperation in various fields, including trade, energy, agriculture, tourism, and transportation.

IGP Islamabad visits Judicial Complex various duty points

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Inspector General of Police Islamabad Dr Akbar Nasir Khan visited Judicial Complex various duty points and met with the officials of Islamabad capital police who were performing duties in order to maintain the law and order situation in the federal capital, a police public relations officer said.

He said that the IGP Islamabad has directed the police officials to be highly alert and ready all the time to deal with any emerging law and order situation.

"Will shall take every possible necessary measure to protect the lives and property of citizens as well as private and commercial property and ready to thwart adventurism from the anti-social ele-

ments" IGP Islamabad said while addressing the police officials.

He further said that all the officials who are performing duties are putting their best efforts to maintain the law and order situation in the capital. "Islamabad Capital Police will never allow anyone to disturb the peaceful environment of the city and will take all necessary steps to protect the lives and property of the citizens", he vowed. All the officers have been directed to stay vigilant in their own respective areas and brief the personnel to deal with any law and order situation and check all the duties by themselves. "All personnel posted on duty should be sent with proper kits" he further directed.

ANF seize 909 kg of drugs worth \$ 257.456m internationally

ISLAMABAD (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) seized 909,008 kg of drugs worth US\$ 257.456 million internationally, arrested 27 drug peddlers including 3 foreigners, and impounded 8 vehicles while conducting 19 counter-narcotics operations throughout the country.

The seized drugs comprised 215,208 kg heroin, 262,723 kg hashish, 27 kg opium, 203,302 kg Methamphetamine (Ice), 200 kg morphine and 0.775 Kg Xanax Tabs (3875 x Tablets).

ANF in KPK recovered 87,118 Kg of Drugs in 4 operations while arresting 4 persons involved in drug smuggling and impounded 2 vehicles. The seized drugs comprised 0.595 Kg of Heroin, 68,523 Kg of Hashish and 18 Kg of

Opium. The force in Sindh recovered 200 Kg of Methamphetamine (Ice) drugs in an operation while arresting 6 persons including 3 foreigners involved in drug smuggling. ANF North recovered 138,795 Kg of drugs in 7 operations, arrested 11 persons in drug smuggling and impounded 4 vehicles.

The seized drugs comprised 2,093 Kg of Heroin, 125,400 Kg of Hashish, 8,400 Kg of Opium and 2,902 Kg of Methamphetamine (Ice).

All cases have been registered at respective ANF Police Stations under CNS Act 1997 (Amended 2022) and further investigations are under process.



ISLAMABAD: CDA workers busy painting roof of the weekly bazaar at H-9 in Federal Capital.

800 new teachers hired

LOGAR (Agencies): Local education officials of Logar say that in the last 5 months of the year, 800 new teachers have been hired for the department. A spokesperson for Logar Education Department, Shahpoor Arab said that among these teachers 666 are male and 134 are female who, after passing the competitive exam, was officially hired. Based on the Ministry of Education plan, the process of hiring four hundred more teachers will begin, he added.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Shabaan 08, 1444 — Wednesday, March 01, 2023

Mohajer visits Nangarhar

KABUL (Agencies): Deputy Minister of Publications, Mohajer Farahi, to assess the problems and challenges of the media in the eastern zone. The deputy Minister of publications on his visits to the province, attended an open discussion with journalists and media associates that were held in Jalalabad. During a meeting, several officials and journalists raised their problems, mainly in the access to information sector, and called on the Ministry to address their problems.

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

Afghanistan no longer celebrates armed forces day

KABUL (Khaama Press): February 28 marks Armed Forces Day, which is not being celebrated for the past two consecutive years in Afghanistan under the Taliban regime.

Afghanistan's former president Ashraf Ghani issued a decree in 2017, and named February 28, as Armed Forces Day, aimed at supporting the country's national security forces – which was approved by the then cabinet members.

In 2003, the National Army of Afghanistan for the first time after years of turmoil and political conflict was established with the support of the United States and NATO member states.

The formation of the Afghan army in a relatively shorter time span in terms of the number of soldiers,

employees, weapons and military equipment was well developed. The number of Afghan soldiers reached 352,000 in 2013, which was equal to that of the Pakistani army then.

The countries which had close cooperation with the Afghan army in terms of training and logistic services included the United States, France, Turkiye, Switzerland, Tajikistan, England, China, Italy, India, Russia, Nepal, Spain, Pakistan, and Poland. Nearly 1000 army personnel used to gain military training in different countries annually.

As per the existing reports, over the past two decades (2001-2021), more than 66,000 soldiers were killed in the fight against terrorist groups and militants throughout Afghanistan.

Eventually, in 2021, Afghanistan's 350,000 armed forces equipped with sophisticated weapons and military equipment disintegrated, and the Islamic Emirate entered Kabul after 20 years of fighting with Afghan forces.

Over the past years, February 28, known as Armed Forces Day was celebrated with enthusiasm, in which the people of Afghanistan and government organizations would appreciate the achievements of the Afghan armed forces.

With the re-emergence of the Taliban regime, this day is no longer celebrated in Afghanistan, however, ordinary people still commemorate the day by posting Afghan soldiers' pictures on their social media accounts.

Afghanistan introduced new diplomats to Turkey

KABUL (Agencies): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Tuesday announced that Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan introduced new diplomats to the country's consulate general in Turkey's Istanbul city.

Besides keeping friendly relations with Turkey, the consulate general would be also providing required services to Afghan citizens, the source said.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is striving to provide consular services to the expatriates with full responsibility and transparency based to diplomatic missions.

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan termed ties with Turkey important, thousands of Afghan living in that country, adding that the Afghan government strives to provide all needed services for them.

Demining program needs \$18.3 million

KABUL (Khaama Press): According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Afghanistan has one of the highest levels of explosive ordnance contamination globally.

The statement tweeted said that in 2023, some \$18.3 million is needed for survey, explosive ordnance disposal, and landmine clearance. It also said that decades of war in Afghanistan had created severe challenges to removing the explosive and land mines in the country.

Moreover, The statement also said the fund would support assisting 1.4 million blast survivors.

According to the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), since 1989, about 38,328 Afghan civilians have been killed or injured by landmines, and explosive remnants of War (ERW), out of which 77 per cent of the casualties were children.

OCHA began a demining program in Afghanistan in 2002, intending to remove all mines and unexploded ordnance by 2010. However, the efforts were abandoned due to reduced aid and multiple programs suspensions.

Poppy farms eradicated

KABUL (Agencies): Local officials of Laghman and Farah provinces said that 12 acres of poppy farms have been eradicated in the provinces. Laghman Counter-Narcotics Department chief, Qari Idriss told Bakhtar News Agency that the counter-narcotics officers eradicated 10 acres of poppy farms in Dawlat Shah district of the province.

Elsewhere, Farah Counter-Narcotics Department chief, Mawlawi Roh Al Amin told Bakhtar News Agency that the counter-narcotics officers eradicated two acres of poppy farms in Khaki Safed district of the province.

Taliban forces kill top IS commanders in Kabul

KABUL (VoA): Afghanistan's Taliban said their security forces killed two key Islamic State commanders in an overnight counterterrorism raid against their hideout in the capital, Kabul.

The announcement came hours before the United States said in a new report that up to 3,000 IS fighters were operating in the South Asian nation and conducting terrorist activities.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said in a late-night statement that "the intelligence and operations chief of Daesh" in Afghanistan was also among those killed in the operation late Sunday. He identified the slain terror leader as Qari Fateh.

Daesh, or Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K), is an Afghan affiliate of Islamic State and a key Taliban adversary.

Mujahid said Fateh had masterminded recent attacks against diplomatic missions, mosques and other targets in Kabul.

"The criminal was served justice last night for his brutal actions at the hands of IEA [Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan] special forces during a complex operation in the Kher Khana residential area [in Kabul]," he noted, using the official title for the Taliban government.

IS-K did not immediately comment on the Taliban's claims of killing its top leader.



Mujahid also confirmed in his statement Monday that a Taliban counterterrorism operation earlier this month had killed the IS-K chief for the Indian subcontinent, Ijaz Amin Ahangar, along with his two commanders.

He added, without elaborating, that "a number of Daesh members, including foreigners" were also detained in recent days.

IS-K last week confirmed the death of Ahangar, also known as Abu Usman Al-Kashmiri, saying in a statement he was killed in a clash with the Taliban on February 14 but did not mention the exact location.

The Taliban have periodically carried out operations against IS-K since returning to power in Kabul in August 2021 as US-led foreign troops withdrew from

the country.

For its part, the terrorist group has routinely launched high-profile attacks targeting civilians, Taliban members and foreign diplomatic missions in the country. The United States describes IS-K as a "dangerous" affiliate of Islamic State and remains skeptical about the effectiveness of Taliban counterterrorism efforts.

The US State Department issued the 2021 country reports on terrorism on Monday, noting that IS and other regionally focused terror groups maintained "an active presence" and conducted terrorist activities in Afghanistan.

"ISIS-K remained a resilient enemy with roughly 2,000 to 3,000 fighters in the country, although precise estimates are hard to determine," the report said. "Although the Taliban com-

mitted to preventing terrorist groups from using Afghanistan to stage attacks against the United States or others, the extent of its ability and willingness to prevent AQ [al-Qaida] and ISIS-K from mounting external operations remained unclear," it added.

The international community has not yet recognized the Taliban as the legitimate rulers of Afghanistan, urging them to respect human rights, lift education and work bans on women, cut ties with terrorist groups, and govern the country through a politically inclusive government.

The Taliban defend their governance, saying it is in line with local culture and Islamic law. They have also dismissed the reported presence of thousands of IS-K fighters in Afghanistan as baseless.

Entrance military exam held in Kabul



KABUL (Agencies): Thousands take an entrance exam for the Police Academy and National Defense University in Kabul on Tuesday.

The deputy of the National Examinations Department Sheikh Rahimullah Haqqani, said that the Islamic Emirate is pledge forming a professional army in the country.

The security forces, obliged on maintaining security and fighting crimes, add-

ing that the exam process must be hold in a transparent manner, he said.

The head of the National Defense University, Mawlawi Abdul Qaum Elyas said: among the candidate those who pass the exam with good score will be recruited to the National Defense University.

The head of the police academy, Major Hazrat Mohammad Mahmood, said that 2,200 volunteers

have participated in the police academy exam, and from the number only 200 will be recruited in this academy after passing the exam successfully.

The candidates are all schools graduates from Kabul and other provinces of the country, he said.

One the candidates Nazeer Mohammad said, that he is confident on the transparency of the exam and hoped to pass the exam successfully.

5 projects to implement in Maidan Wardak



MAIDAN WARDAK (Agencies): Local officials of Maidan Wardak province said that work on five development projects worth five million Afghani has

been started in the province. These projects will be implemented in Qalacha, Mira Jankhile, Khadar-khile, and Qala-e-Nazir areas of Jalrez district of

the province.

The projects are financially supported by the World Bank and it will provide job opportunities to 262 people in the province.

China's investment extraction industry sparks hopes for recovery

KABUL (Khaama Press): Despite many odds, the Afghan Taliban interim government signed its first major foreign investment project with a Chinese firm last month, a 25-year-long multimillion-dollar contract to extract oil from Amu river oil field.

Many experts believe that although Chinese companies have not been very honest in executing deals, the project will create jobs and bring income for the local people, which is a positive move in many ways.

The interim regime of Afghanistan signed a contract with Xinjiang Central Asia Petroleum and Gas

Company, a subsidiary of the state-owned China National Petroleum Company to extract oil from the Amu Darya basin on January 6.

There will be an initial \$150 million investment in the initial stage of the project in Afghanistan and \$450 over the next three years, a Taliban spokesperson said on Twitter.

Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid said the daily rate of oil extraction will be from 1,000 to 20,000 tonnes, 20 percent of which will Taliban's share, and the deal will later be extended to 75 percent.

"Considering the dire economic situation in the

country, and the way ordinary people are struggling, this project can be a source of revenue that provides economic relief to some extent," Abdul Jalil Jumrany, an industry expert and the former director general of the Afghan Petroleum Authority at the Ministry of Mining and Petroleum said.

According to economic experts, the signing of such projects is of paramount importance for the ruling regime, because such projects not only bring revenue to the government but also encourage potential investors to consider investing in Afghanistan in the future as well.

The initial deal brings optimism to the people of Afghanistan, however, it is believed that China is yet to see through any of its investment in the country's mining sector. The previous Afghan government had called off a deal with a Chinese company on account of corruption.

Under the previous government, in 2011, the exploration and production sharing deal was struck between China's CNPC and an Afghan company called Watan Group for the "Kashkari block", one of the three blocks now part of the recent Amu Darya tender.

Afghan missions in Tehran, Istanbul handed over to Kabul

KABUL (TOLONews): The Afghan embassy in Tehran was officially turned over to diplomats of the Islamic Emirate. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, seven diplomats, including Charge d'affaires Fazl Mohammad Haqqani, were dispatched to Tehran on Monday to avoid delays in the delivery of embassy services.

"The leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided to send a team of seven experienced diplomats to the Afghan embassy in Tehran in order to not stop delivering services to our compatriots living in Iran," said Zai Ahmad Takal, deputy of the Foreign Ministry.

Iran's foreign ministry in a statement considers the handing over of the Afghan embassy in this country to be an internal issue of Afghanistan and said that Iran's foreign ministry is not involved in this issue.

"Iran monitors the situation according to the political developments and regional policies and on this premise has preferred to establish diplomatic relations with the Islamic Emirate," said Sayed Muqadam Amin, a political analyst.

Following the handing over the Afghan embassy in Tehran to the current government, Zakir Jalali, an official at the Foreign Ministry, confirmed to

TOLONews that the Afghan consulate in Istanbul was also officially handed over to the representative of the Islamic Emirate.

Jalali added that Gulmat Khan Zadran has been appointed as the new consul of Afghanistan in Istanbul.

Political analysts said handing over the Afghan consulate in Istanbul as well as the Afghan embassy in Tehran to the current government of Afghanistan as a significant development for the Islamic Emirate in terms of diplomacy.

"Iran aims to engage Afghanistan more. This engagement will slow down if the Taliban ambas-

sador or envoy is not accepted in the Afghan embassy," said Najib Rahman Shamal, a political analyst.

"Giving the Taliban charge of embassies and diplomatic missions undoubtedly puts the Taliban in a superior position," said Sayed Jawad Sajadi, another political analyst.

Even though over one and a half years have passed since the Islamic Emirate came to power, the current government has not been recognized by any country, but the embassies of Afghanistan in Russia, China, Pakistan and Iran have been entrusted to the diplomats of the Islamic Emirate.

HERAT (Agencies): Youths plus many institutions have organized an art exhibition to express their sympathy to the victims of the earthquake in Turkey and Syria.

The representative of Tika's office Arafat Dinez in Herat and many other local officials of the province, attended the exhibition.

The head Information and Culture of Herat, Naeem-ul Haq Haqqani expressed his condolences to the victims of the earthquake in turkey and syria, on the opening of the exhibition.

The representative of the Tika office in Herat thanked the citizens of Herat for sharing their sympathy and expressed hope that these who suffered find



speedy recovery. 48 works of artist have been displayed in this exhibition.

Almost, three weeks earlier, over 50,000 people have lost their lives and

thousands more were injured in an earthquake tragedy in Turkey and Syria.

President for joint efforts to prevent mental health disorders

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday called for joint efforts by stakeholders including the federal and provincial governments, the community and health professionals to work for the prevention and treatment of mental health disorders.

He said that it was a matter of serious concern that 24 percent of the country's population was suffering from mental health-related issues, whereas only 500 to 600 mental health professionals were available in the country to cater to the needs of this population. He emphasized the need for increasing the number of mental health professionals, besides strengthening the capacity of general health professionals by training them to address the challenge of rising mental health disorders.

The president expressed these views while chairing a meeting on mental health through the video link. President of Pakistani American Psychiatric Association of North

America (PAPANA), Dr Muhammad Zeeshan, representatives of the National Commission of Human Rights, World Health Organization, Pakistan Psychological Association, Pakistan Psychiatric Society, Taskeen Health Initiative, and Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination attended the meeting.

Professor and Chair of Psychiatry at Weill Cornell Medical College, Prof Dr M Waqar Azeem, Professor of Psychiatry and Program Director at the University of Nevada, Dr Mujeeb Shahd, Executive Vice Chair and Professor of Psychiatry at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Prof Dr Asim Shah, Director Muslim Mental Health Consortium, Prof Dr Farah Abbasi, Child Fellowship Director at the Harvard Medical School, Dr Zheala Qayyum, and Program Director Residency and Addiction Fellowship at the University of Missouri School of Medicine, Dr Nauman Ashraf, attended the meeting virtually. The participants gave various suggestions to

cope with the challenge of mental issues.

The meeting emphasized the need for raising awareness about the diseases, educating people about mental health, eliminating the stigma attached to it, and providing quality counseling and treatment to mental health patients. The participants also called for capacity-building and training of health professionals in Pakistan, adding that a central coordinating mechanism among various stakeholders was also essential to avoid duplication of efforts.

The meeting also underscored the need for developing a national autism plan. Prof Dr Rizwan Taj from PIMS informed the meeting that the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination had established an autism center at PIMS, adding that it would be a role model for provinces and other hospitals to follow. The president appreciated the role of overseas Pakistani medical professionals, especially PAPANA, for supporting the initiative on mental health.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman PTI Imran Khan escorting by security officials after hearing at Islamabad High Court.

Nepra okays Rs1.71 per unit hike in KE power tariff

KARACHI (PPI): The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) has approved Rs1.71 per unit hike in the power tariff for K-Electric consumers on account of fuel charge adjustment (FCA) for January, according to a report on Tuesday.

K-Electric had requested the NEPRA to hike the power tariff by Rs2.69 per unit for the FCA for January. The power regulator conducted the hearing on the request of the Karachi's power utility for the FCA and quarterly adjustment and reserved its decision. The NEPRA will release detailed decision on the matter later. The KE spokesperson earlier said that the company has requested NEPRA to hike the power tariff by Rs2.69 per unit for January FCA.

The power company also requested the October-December quarterly adjustment. The spokesperson said that the company requested to reduce the power rates by Rs7.366 per unit. It added that the quarterly adjustment will not be taken into effect due to the uniform tariff policy. The spokesperson said that the final decision will be made by the energy ministry, the government and the NEPRA.

The NEPRA had earlier heard a petition of power companies approved 50 paisa per unit hike in electricity tariff. The power companies had filed petition for recovery of 17 billion rupees on account of adjustment in second quarter of the current year. After conclusion of the hearing the NEPRA announced to release a detailed judgment after review of the figures. The electric power regulator, in the end approved per unit 50 paisa per unit hike in the electricity tariff.

PTI leaders abstain appearing ECP proceedings

ISLAMABAD (INP): Not even a single leader from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was appeared in the hearing of contempt of commission proceedings against former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan and other party leaders Asad Umar and Chaudhary Fawad Hussain.

Four-member bench of the ECP is headed by Member ECP Sindh Nisar Ahmed Durrani and comprising Member ECP Balochistan Shah Muhammad Jatoi, Member ECP Punjab Babar Hassan Bharwana and Member ECP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (ret'd) Ikramullah Khan heard the case against Imran Khan, Asad Umar and Fawad Chaudhry.

At the very outset of the proceedings, ECP member from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (Retd) Ikramullah remarked that there was no one present from the PTI side, neither the lawyer nor any leader. He remarked that if there was no one present from the PTI side for the case hearing why the members should not issue an order for contempt of the ECP?

Imran Khan and two members of the PTI Fawad Chaudhry and Asad Umar were served with notices in August and September last year for allegedly using "intemperate" language against the CEC and the ECP. The commission had asked them to appear in person or through their lawyers before the commission and explain their position.

LG Councils suspension

PHC suspends ECP notification

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) divisional bench comprised of Justice Rooh-ul-Amin and Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim suspended Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) notification for suspension of Local Government (LG) bodies in wake of by-polls for National Assembly and general election for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab Assembly while ordered Attorney General and Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to assist the court tomorrow in this regard (on Thursday).

During hearing Babar Khan Yousafzai, Nauman Kakakhel and Malik Shahbaz Advocates argue the case before PHC on behalf of LG chairmen Himayat Ullah Mayar and Ishaq Khattak while ECP along with Provincial Election Commissioner Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were made respondents in the case.

The petition stated Article 140A (2) of the Constitution cast a duty upon the Election Commission to hold elections of local bodies in terms of Art.140A (1) read Election Act 2017 and Rules made there under, while the Election process has been cited in the Local Councils (Conduct of Election) Rules 2021 which has been made under section 112 of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local

Government Act 2013, however, no political system is considered complete and democratic if it does not have a system of Local Government.

Election Commission of Pakistan under Article 218(3) of the Constitution of Pakistan 1973 has constitutional duty to organize and conduct elections but without paralyzing the rights of the people to representation at local levels. That it has not been a strong and a cogent reason that free and fair election of a provincial assembly could not be held without suspending Local Governments however, by this logic, the Federal Government should also be suspended, as it too can use the powers and resources at its disposal to influence the outcome of the Provincial Assembly's elections if free and fair Local Government Elections can be held in the presence of provincial governments, why is it not possible the other way around?, the petition argued.

The writ added that there no justification for disrupting and paralyzing the elected institutions without clear and specific legal grounds, while the suspension of local governments would have a disruptive effect on the functioning of elected councils, development planning, and the delivery of services while on the other hand people would extremely suffering

by the suspension, stopped Local Government Functionaries from signing and attesting necessary documents. That suspension of local governments at this time of the year when the budget is prepared and annual planning for the next year taking place is hugely disruptive, and will affect the functioning of local governments not only during the current and next financial years.

Local bodies were established under Article 140-A of the Constitution, so their suspension amounted to suspension of the constitutional provision. It is beyond the mind that in any democracy around the world, elected institutions at one tier were suspended to ensure free and fair elections for the other, the petition added.

The petitioner requested that on acceptance of this Writ Petition the Impugned Notification dated 03-02-2023 issued by the respondents may kindly be set aside. The petitioner may be allowed to put forward any other argument/document at the time of hearing of this writ petition.

The divisional of PHC comprising of Justice Rooh-ul-Amin Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim suspended notification for suspension of LG bodies and ordered Attorney General, Advocate General and ECP to assist court on next hearing fixed on Thursday.

LHC directs shifting of PTI leaders from death cells

BAWALPUR (Agencies): The Lahore High Court (LHC) Bahawalpur bench, while issuing orders to shift Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leaders Senator Azam Swati and Muhammad Khan Madni from death cells, has sought record of their arrests and detention in far-off jails.

In addition, a division bench has also been constituted for the hearing of their cases. Justice Anwarul Haq Panno heard the joint petitions filed by PTI lawyers Saqib Tariq Chaudhry, Sheikh Mazhar Akbar, Sikandar Hayat and Raza Hussain Lodhi. Both leaders were produced in the court in handcuffs.

Saqib Tariq, counsel for Azam Swati, in his arguments said both PTI leaders had been lodged in death cells while as per the law only under-trial prisoners could be shifted to far-off jails. At this the court asked the additional advocate general whether the detained leaders were charged under 302 of Pakistan Penal Code and why they were handcuffed and under which rules they were shifted to far-off jails.

The judge also questioned the AAG whether these leaders were facing trial. The law office said an application on behalf of PTI's Ijaz Chaudhry have already been submitted to

the court. On court's question, assistant superintendent jail said the political leaders were lodged in the death cell. At this, the court expressing its displeasure ordered to take them out of death cells and lodge them in accordance with their category.

On the occasion, Azam Swati submitted that he was a senior lawyer but he was being denied his basic rights. The court formed a division bench to hear the case and adjourned hearing. Azam Swati and Muhammad Khan Madni have complained of ill-treatment and inadequate facilities during their confinement in jails.

Govt planning to arrest Imran before polls: Fawad

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior vice president Fawad Chaudhry has asserted that the PML-N-led government was planning to arrest party chairman Imran Khan before holding general elections. The former information minister made these remarks while talking to journalists outside the Supreme Court (SC) of Pakistan following the proceedings of suo motu notice regarding delay in announcement of date for holding elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior vice president Fawad Chaudhry lauded the apex court for taking suo motu notice of delay in the announcement of polls, saying judiciary's intervention was the way to resolve the matter following the refusal of the governors to announce date. Terming the

Supreme Court the 'saviour of the Constitution', the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader said that their primary job was to protect the Constitution and asked the ruling Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) leaders' to not make the apex court a part of public debate.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior vice president Fawad Chaudhry further said during the hearing of the suo motu case, the PML-N also employed its "old tactics to divide the Supreme Court". "If elections are delayed beyond 90 days it will shake the foundations of the Constitution," he said, hoping that the court's verdict will be based on Constitution.

Speaking of the proceedings, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior vice president Fawad Chaudhry noted that the bench considered who has the consti-

tutional responsibility for appointing the date for the holding of a general election to a provincial assembly, upon its dissolution. "All the lawyers have maintained that the elections should be held within 90 days", he added. "The judge suggested that the matter should be resolved by consensus", he said, adding that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) also wanted the same. However, he said, the government was planning to arrest Imran Khan before holding elections.

"The government thinks that Nawaz Sharif's convictions should be overturned," he said, asking how can there be a consensus on such demand of the government. "The election will be held as per the constitution and not by consensus", Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior vice president Fawad Chaudhry added.

IHCBA distances from voting date petition

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Islamabad High Court Bar Association (IHCBA) has decided not to follow constitutional petition regarding date of elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

According to the details, IHCBA newly elected president Naveed Malik and secretary Rizwan Shabbir officially announced the decision. Rizwan Shabbir said that the decision was taken in the first executive meeting of the IHCBA. Keeping the association aloof from the previous body's decisions, Rizwan Shabbir said former IHCBA president had filed the constitutional petition in the Supreme Court in his personal capacity.

The meeting held that former IHCBA president filed different cases for his personal political purposes. In connection with the elections of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the Supreme Court, the constitutional petition is also a part of the same, he said. The IHCBA secretary Rizwan said that the meeting evolved a consensus that the constitutional petition filed in the Supreme Court was not approved by the Islamabad High Court Bar Association's body. The IHCBA's meeting expressed its complete indifference to the constitutional petition, he added. In this regard, he said that there is no record found in the office regarding any IHCBA meeting or resolution for filing a such constitutional petition.

The participants of the meeting decided that this constitutional petition will not be pursued in the Supreme Court, the meeting declared. He said that it has been decided in the meeting that the association's platform will not be allowed to be used for any political party. The lawyers continued to criticize during the meeting that the bar forum was being used for political purposes. The Islamabad High Court Bar forum will be used only for the welfare of lawyers, the meeting upheld.

PTI challenges Shehbaz, Maryam's acquittals

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The PTI has filed a petition in Supreme Court challenging the acquittal of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and PML-N Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz in NAB corruption cases.

The petition was filed by PTI Secretary-General Azam Swati. In the petition, the PTI urged the court to declare the acquittal of Shehbaz Sharif in money laundering and Maryam Nawaz in Avenfield case null and void.

Taking to media outside the court, former federal minister Fawad Chaudhry said that PTI moved apex court after NAB failed to challenge acquittal of PML-N leaders in corruption cases. On September 29, the IHC acquitted Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz leader Maryam Nawaz and Captain retired Safdar Awan by nullifying the sentence awarded by an accountability court in the Avenfield reference.

99% water still standing in flood hit areas: Court told

SUKKUR (PPI): A PDMA official told the high court bench on Tuesday that 99 pct water is still standing in flood hit areas. Sindh High Court's Sukkur bench was hearing a petition on rehabilitation of flood victims and drainage of floodwater in Sukkur, Khairpur, Ghotki and Naushehro Feroz districts.

The bench observed that the rehabilitation department was not seen during and after rains and flood. "Where were you earlier," court questioned the rehabilitation in-charge. "Our 26 ambulances have been engaged in relief work in all flood affected areas," he replied. "Where your ambulances are working today, tell the court," Bench further questioned. "All ambulances are working in different areas," he said and submitted report in the court.

"Assistant Commissioners and Mukhtiarkar should check whereabouts of 26 ambulances in areas and submit their reports," court ordered.

"Flood affected people of Sindh are equal to the people of Somalia and Ethiopia," bench remarked. The court asked about drainage of floodwater from affected areas. "Water still standing in most of the affected areas," petitioner replied. A committee constituted by the court submitted its detailed review

report of the affected areas. "The district administrations became active but facing fuel shortage," a lawyer told the court. Deputy Provincial Disaster Management Authority told the court that only one percent work has been performed, while 99 pct has been pending as floodwater standing in affected areas.

SHC moved to stop digital census: A petition was filed in Sindh High Court (SHC) Sukkur bench seeking to stop the digital census in Sindh. The court will hear the case on March 1 (Wednesday).

Pakistan's first-ever digital population and housing census will kick off across the country from Wednesday [March 1]. Briefing the journalists, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) spokesperson Muhammad Sarwar Gondal noted that a portal has already been launched by the bureau so that people can submit their data themselves and don't need to face the botheration of giving data to census teams visiting door-to-door.

He said more than 4 million people have already been registered at the portal and a UTN number will be issued to them after their data is saved and they can give that number to the census team. The spokesperson further said that 121,000 field enumerators have

been deployed for the field operation of census, which will begin on Wednesday. "The process will be completed by April 1 and the data will be released by April 30 which will then be approved by the Council of Common Interests (CCI)," he added.

He added that this will be the evidence-based authentic data as per international standards which will be used for constituency delimitation in next general elections as well as for public policy planning. The spokesperson said the census teams will be monitored by geo-mapping and geo-tagging data of SUPARCO and administration officials of respective provinces, divisions, districts and tehsils where census teams are carrying out enumeration, will be given access to the dashboard of that specific area.

Elucidating this, he said Chief Secretaries of provinces will have access across the province, similarly, Commissioners will have access to Divisions, Deputy Commissioners to districts and Assistant Commissioners to tehsils.

The spokesperson said to avoid any hacking or failure of online system we have separated the process from the internet and have converted it into our own intranet server. He said we have already done a security audit of the dashboards.

LHC seeks assistance in petition against Maryam

LAHORE (Agencies): The Lahore High Court's (LHC) Justice Shujaat Ali Khan has sought the assistance of a petitioner's lawyer by March 1 on how a case containing contemptuous remarks against Supreme Court judges could be heard in the LHC.

Justice Shujaat heard the plea seeking contempt proceedings against Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz over allegedly making contemptuous remarks six times during her speech at a convention at Sargodha.

As proceedings commenced, the petitioner's lawyer advocate Rana Shahid shed light on the contemptuous remarks made by Maryam Nawaz. He argued that others such as Joe Biden and Bill Clinton did not use such language, which means "this practice does not exist in civilised societies". However, most Pakistani leaders hurl blame at judges and commit contemptuous remarks.

When asked under which article the petition was filed, the counsel told the court that it was filed under Article 204, adding that any person who commits contempt could be charged with six months imprisonment and imposed a fine of up to Rs100,000. Further, Justice Shujaat asked against whom the contempt was committed. Directing the lawyer to read sub-clause 2 of Article 187, the judge asked how this case falls under the LHC's jurisdiction.

"This matter contains the contemptuous remarks about the judges of the superior court," the judge

noted, questioning how the high court could hear this matter. Advocate Rana Shahid responded that Maryam Nawaz had also committed contempt by scandalising the LHC's judges who were hearing Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan's protective bail.

"Do you have any judgment in your support?" Justice Shujaat asked. The counsel requested the court to adjourn the case, assuring he would return with supporting court judgments. The court adjourned proceedings till March 1. Petitioner Muhammad Shahid in his petition implored the court that on February 23, 2023, Maryam Nawaz delivered a speech that was telecasted on most local television channels.

Former AGP writes to CJP for action over Maryam 'scandalous speech': Former Attorney General of Pakistan Anwar Mansoor Khan has written a letter to Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial, seeking action against Maryam Nawaz for scandalising courts and personalised criticism of judges".

The senior advocate, in his letter, referred to a speech made by the PML-N leader on Feb 23 in Sargodha where she came hard on the former serving judges of the Supreme Court for allegedly conspiring against his father Nawaz Sharif.

The letter starts as, "It is very unusual for me to write such letters but as a very senior counsel/advocate, considering myself a part of the judicial system and administration of justice, I feel it my duty to place before you the fact that

occurred on 23rd of February, 2023 at Sargodha. Our judiciary is our pride and honour, which we are bound to protect, wherefore I am compelled to pen this letter".

Saying he had no grudge nor any personal enmity against Maryam Nawaz, the former AGP said the PML-N leader made Feb 23 speech "with a view to rouse their sentiments against the judges and the Supreme Court purposely, with obvious motivated intent, with a view to criticize and bring the Supreme Court as also individual judges to disrepute, with improper motives and imputing them without authority, proof or document, amounts to scandalizing the court as also the judges through personal criticism".

He said the criticism of judges and courts came at the stage when the suo moto case regarding the elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was being heard by the nine-member bench - now split into five-member bench. He said the two judges, Justice Ijazul Ahsan and Justice Sayyad Mazahar Akbar Naqvi, who were a part the bench, were criticised by Maryam.

He said the "purposive act of Maryam, shows a clear intent, which amounts to or has the effect of obstructing the administration of justice. Such actions on part of any public figure, is in fact an attack on the judiciary and its independence". He also talked about leaked audiotapes of judges, saying these were spread without authenticity, adding that making allegations without credible proof warranted an action.