

Amjad Islam passes away
F.P. Report

LAHORE: Veteran poet and drama writer Amjad Islam Amjad passed away at the age of 78 in Lahore on Friday. The literary icon of Pakistan died off a heart attack, according to his family. Amjad Islam Amjad is also the recipient of Sitara-e-Imtiaz and is the author of more than 40 books in a career spanning 50 years. He has received many awards in life.



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Imran's bail extended

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): A local court in Islamabad has extended the bail of former prime minister and PTI Chairman Imran Khan till Feb 27 in a case related to his party's protest against the ECP verdict in Toshakhana reference. At the outset of the hearing, Imran's lawyer filed an application seeking his client's exemption from court appearance on medical grounds.

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LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif talking to media persons on the occasion of seeing off a plane carrying relief goods for the earthquake victims of Turkiye.

PTI did nothing for welfare of people

PTI's 4-year rule at Centre, 10-year in KP leaves behind a trail of plunder and destruction: Marriyum

F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Friday said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) during its four years of rule at the Centre and 10 years in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa did nothing for the welfare of the common man rather than leaving behind a trail of plunder and destruction.

The incumbent government would eventually revive the economy by focusing on national development and prosperity with the ultimate objective of self-reliance, she said addressing a press conference. Flanked by Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javed Abbasi, the minister said the Imran Khan-led regime had signed the agreement with the International Monetary Fund on tough conditions and then itself violated its provisions, and the present government had no option but to renegotiate for the revival of the economy.

She said Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Quaid Nawaz Sharif as prime minister had successfully negotiated the IMF programme in 2014, and during its implementation, not a single rupee increase in the prices of daily-use commodities and utilities was witnessed. Resultantly, no burden was passed on to the common people. The minister said PML-N's Senior Vice President and Chief Organizer Maryam Nawaz had launched a campaign to reorganize the party by holding conventions and meeting with workers across the country.

For organizing the party in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Maryam Nawaz was now in Hazara Division. She had addressed a workers' convention on Thursday and today met members of the party's women and social media wings in Abbottabad, she added. She said the PML-N Quaid had

great love and affection for the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly of the Hazara Division. He had always taken care of the KP people, as evident by the facility of health cards which was launched from Abbottabad in 2014.

She said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had recently inaugurated the Hazara Electric Company and it was a continuity of the legacy of Nawaz Sharif, who had given the gift of a motorway to the people of Hazara. Marriyum said the PML-N government had the vision to provide facilities like metro-bus, Daanish Schools, Orange Train, modern hospitals, information technology centers and universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa like those of Punjab, but the last PTI government did nothing in that regard.

She regretted that the PTI government during the last ten years had not added a new single room in the KP hospitals and schools. The minister said during her last visit to the Abbottabad Press Club, she was impressed with the facilities being provided to its members, which should be emulated across the country.

She invited the newly-elected members of the press club for oath-taking in the Federal Capital and assured the provision of laptops and equipment for digital studio. Marriyum recalled the difficulties faced by journalists during the four years of PTI government and said the Ministry of Information was working on the rules for the implementation of the bill for the safety and security of journalists.

The bill would be sent to the Federal Cabinet next week for its approval, she said. All the stakeholders would be taken on board for the protection and security of journalists, the minister added. She also announced the inclusion of the president of Abbottabad Press Club in the committee.

Two Army officers martyred in Kohlu



F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: As many as two soldiers of Pakistan Army embraced martyrdom on Friday after an improvised explosive device (IED) went off during a sanitisation operation conducted on credible intelligence, to deny terrorists any liberty of action in Kohlu area of Balochistan. The Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) in a news release added that during the ensuing sanitisation of the area, the IED exploded close to the leading party. The martyred soldiers were identified as Major Jawad and Captain Sagheer who embraced Shahadat (martyrdom) and laid their lives in defence of the motherland against an externally perpetrated threat.

The sanitisation operation was continued in the area to apprehend perpetrators and enemies of peace. It added that such cowardly acts by inimical elements could not sabotage the hard earned peace and prosperity in Balochistan. "The security forces are determined to neutralize their nefarious designs even at the cost of blood and lives," the ISPR said.

Moldovan gov't quits

CHISINAU (Agencies): Moldova's pro-Western government has resigned after a turbulent 18 months in power marked by economic turmoil and the spillover effects of Russia's war in neighbouring Ukraine.

In the latest tensions with Moscow over the war, the government said shortly before Prime Minister Natalia Gavrilita announced her resignation that a Russian missile had violated Moldovan airspace, and summoned Russia's ambassador to protest. President Maia Sandu accepted Gavrilita's decision on Friday and nominated her defence adviser Dorin Recean to be prime minister. She gave no sign of abandoning her pro-Western policies that include seeking European Union accession.

"Thank you so much for your enormous sacrifice and efforts to lead the country in a time of so many crises," Sandu wrote on Facebook. "In spite of unprecedented challenges, the country was governed responsibly, with a lot of attention and dedicated work. We have stability, peace and development — where others wanted war and bankruptcy."

Sandu said she wants to focus on revamping key areas such as Moldova's economy and the justice sector. "I know that we need unity and a lot of work to get through the difficult period we are facing," she said.

The Frontier Post

PM asks for implementation of decisions of Apex Committee

F.P. Report

LAHORE / ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said on Friday that Pakistan would provide all possible assistance to Turkiye in the wake of the devastating earthquake that left thousands killed and injured and urged people to donate to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund.

Talking to the media here at Lahore airport, the prime minister handed over 100 tonnes of relief goods including food, medicines, and winterized tents for the people of Turkiye. Shehbaz Sharif said the people of Pakistan stand in solidarity with their brethren in distress and would do everything to help them rebuild their lives.

He recalled how Turkiye had established an air bridge with Pakistan after the horrific 2005 earthquake that killed around 80,000 people in Azad Kashmir. The prime minister was earlier briefed about the collection and dispatch of the relief goods from Pakistan to Turkiye and Syria. He was informed that the NDMA was coordinating and rushing relief goods from various cities of Pakistan to the quake-affected areas.

"We would leave no stone unturned to help the Turkish brethren... we have never seen such catastrophe in a century and can feel the pain and loss of the people of Turkiye," the prime minister said and likened the people of Turkiye and Pakistan as "two hearts and one soul." He recalled that the wife of President Erdogan even donated her precious necklace to help the people of Pakistan who lost their homes and livelihood after the 2005 earthquake.

He said his government had decided to turn the ongoing rescue and relief efforts for Turkiye into a nationwide support campaign. In this regard, he said, the support of the business community, religious scholars, and

educational institutions would also be sought. The prime minister said an air bridge has already been set up to transport relief goods to Turkiye and the trucks of the National Logistic Cell will carry 100 tonnes of relief goods to Turkey via Iran.

A PIA 777 aircraft earlier in the day carried relief goods to Turkiye from Lahore, while 30 tonnes would be airlifted from Islamabad today. Another batch of 40 tonnes of relief goods will be sent from Lahore on Saturday. The prime minister made an impassioned appeal to the people, the business community, and philanthropic organisations to gear up their efforts and send winterized tents, blankets, food, and clothing for those who lost everything in the 7.8 magnitude earthquake.

He asked the people to send their donations to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund for the earthquake in Turkiye. He said it was bitter cold in the earthquake-affected areas and urgent help was required to save precious lives. He said the search and rescue teams from Pakistan were already in Turkiye and lending their help in trying to rescue people trapped in the rubble. He said that he has also spoken to the chief ministers and requested them to take ownership of the national relief campaign for earthquake-hit people in Turkiye.

He said he has also asked the Minister for Education for a campaign in the schools to collect donations from the students. He also lauded caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi for his quick response in the collection and dispatch of the relief goods. The Turkish Council General appreciated the expression of solidarity between the people and the government of Pakistan and said the two countries were tied together with strong bonds.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister

Shehbaz Sharif also stressed that full implementation of decisions of the Apex Committee should be ensured. He was chairing a meeting here on the overall law and order situation in the country.

During the meeting, the security matters of the four provinces, Islamabad, Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Kashmir were reviewed. While talking to the participants of the meeting, the prime minister said protection of citizens was the top priority of the government and there was no room for lapse. No lapse in security would be tolerated, he added.

The prime minister directed the Interior Minister to undertake visits to the four provinces, adding contacts and coordination should be improved among the provinces to bring improvement in the law and order situation. He said effective steps should be taken to enhance capacity of the counter-terrorism departments in the provinces.

The law enforcement agencies should be equipped with modern weapons and equipment, he ordered. The meeting was told that steps were being taken to further streamline safe city projects in the big cities. It was told that on instructions of the prime minister, the federal interior secretary visited the four provinces and looked into issues faced by the provinces and reviewed requirement for resources in an effort to improve law and order situation in the country. Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah Khan, Special Assistants to the Prime Minister Syed Tariq Fatimi, Jehanzeb Khan, chief secretaries of the four provinces, Gilgit Baltistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Chief Commissioner of Capital Territory Islamabad, Inspector Generals of Police of the provinces, Gilgit Baltistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and officials concerned attended the meeting.

LHC directs ECP to hold Punjab polls within 90 days

LAHORE (Agencies): The Lahore High Court (LHC) late Friday directed the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to ensure that polls in Punjab are held within 90 days.

Announcing the reserved verdict, Justice Jawad Hassan accepted the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) plea and asked the electoral body to stage the polls within the constitutional limit. The PTI moved the high court after repeatedly demanding that the election commission issue the dates for the elections in Punjab. The party dissolved the provincial assembly on January 14. "...the ECP is directed to immediately announce the date of election of the Provincial Assembly of Punjab with the notification specifying reasons, after consultation with the Governor of Punjab, being the constitutional Head of the Province, to ensure that the elections are held not later than ninety days as per the mandate of the Constitution," the judgement read.

During Friday's hearing, Inspector General of Punjab Police, Dr Usman Anwar and the chief secretary appeared before the court. Punjab's top cop and bureaucrat assured the court that they will follow whatever the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) decides. The chief secretary also said that they would follow through on the court's order.

Meanwhile, when the ECP's lawyer, came to the rostrum, he said that the only issue before the court was who would give the date for the polls. He added that there was talk of a provision in the law allowing the ECP and the president to give a date for the elections.

The lawyer objected to that stance, saying the ECP and the president were not the parties in the case. "The court cannot issue orders to those who are not made the party in the case," said the lawyer. At this, the PTI's lawyer Barrister Ali Zafar said that they made the Election Commission a party to the case by amending the petition. Upon hearing this, the ECP lawyer said that the president was yet to be made party to the case.

"Your objection is that ECP is not a

party [in the case]," asked Justice Hassan. The counsel told the court that the commission was not a party in giving a date for the elections. He also asked the LHC to show the law which states that the ECP is liable to give a date for the general election. "The court itself said that they do not want to issue a verdict which cannot be implemented," reminded the ECP lawyer. He added that implementing Article 220 was not the electoral body's job.

"How my client can conduct the polls if it is not being provided with funds?" He also told the court that the ECP requires complete support from the federal government. "I have objections to the acceptance of this plea. In the law, election date can be delayed," said the lawyer. He reiterated that there is no law which states that the ECP is bound to give a date for the elections. On the other hand, Governor Baligh ur Rehman's lawyer Shahzad Shaikat said that allegations have been made against his client in all the petitions.

Shaikat contended that if the governor had dissolved the assembly then he would have been asked to announce the date. He also urged the court to reject the petition for being ineffective. When the governor's lawyer pushed the court that the governor was not bound to give a date for the polls, Justice Hassan asked if it was not clear in the Constitution then can the president be asked to give a date for the elections. "Read Article 48, the president has the same role as the governor," responded Shaikat.

PTI's counsel Barrister Ali Zafar, while responding to the governor's lawyer, told the court that the chief secretary and IG had assured the court of performing their duties. Zafar also contended that the president could give a date for the elections, adding that the question of not giving an election date cannot be left unaddressed. "Governor, president, and Election Commission can give a date for the polls via a notification. Silence cannot be maintained on this," said Barrister Ali Zafar. He added that the president has not said no and if the court directs then he will follow orders.

Sheikh approaches IHC

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Former interior minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed has approached the Islamabad High Court (IHC) seeking post-arrest bail in the case related to his allegations against PPP Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari of making a plan to assassinate the PTI chief Imran Khan.

He stated in the petition during the present campaign of political victimization, the petitioner was maliciously issued a notice under section 160 Cr.PC after having procured a frivolous application from a dummy complainant. Sheikh moved the IHC through his counsel Sardar Abdul Raziq Khan advocate and cited the state as respondent. He prayed to the court

that this petition may kindly be allowed and the petitioner be released on post-arrest bail till the final disposal of case on merits.

He added that the petitioner sent reply of notice to SHO through his counsel but he refused to receive the same. He further said that the petitioner having observed the malicious intent of police and the Government, filed a petition before the IHC on 01.02.2023 when the same was taken up for hearing on urgent basis and the court was pleased to issue notice to the IG and other police officials to appear before the High Court on 06.02.2023 while in the meanwhile operation of impugned notice was suspended.

Steps vital to stop foreign currency smuggling: CJ

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Umar Ata Bandial has said that the federal government should adopt measures to stop foreign currency smuggling. The Chief Justice remarked this on Friday while heading a three-member bench comprising on Justice Ayesha A Malik and Justice Athar Minallah which heard the Federal Board of Revenue's (FBR) petition challenging the Lahore High Court (LHC) order regarding collection of Super Tax from large scale industries.

The government had imposed a one-time ten percent tax on industries' profits to ease the impact of the rising inflation on the poor. During the course of proceedings, the court consolidated all the Super Tax cases and fixed them for hearing next week. The FBR counsel Faisal Siddiqui said that the LHC had suspended the implementation of its final decision in the case for 60 days.

There were traditions in tax cases where the court orders companies to pay 50 percent of the tax, he added. Barrister Farogh Naseem, counsel for the industries, said that all petitions of the FBR against the LHC's interim order had become ineffective after the final decision of the Lahore High Court.

The court could not order payment of 50 percent Super Tax after petitions become ineffective, he added. The Chief Justice said the case could be fixed for the hearing next week. He remarked that the FBR imposed the Super Tax in good faith. He said that it was also known that Shell Pakistan, one of the petitioners, paid taxes in the millions of rupees.

Advocate Faisal Siddiqui said that he was representing the FBR. He said that he would also represent the federal government if the country went into default. Upon this, the Chief Justice said that the country was not going bankrupt.

Delegation calls on SM Tanveer

LAHORE (APP): A delegation of the packaging and printing sector met Caretaker Provincial Minister for Industry, Commerce and Energy SM Tanveer at the Punjab Board of Investment & Trade here on Friday.

Talking to the delegation, SM Tanveer said that the packaging sector, which was important in the national economy, could not be ignored. He said that to give the packaging sector the status of an industry, they would move forward together by deciding an action plan in the light of mutual consultation and suggestions. He said it was necessary to enhance export for stability of the economy, the government would take all measures to achieve this goal.

Two arrested, weapons recovered

KARACHI (APP): The District city police on Friday arrested two suspects after an exchange of fire, in the jurisdiction of Kalari police station. According to the police spokesman, The accused arrested were reportedly involved in street crimes, robberies and extortion. The arrested were identified as Rafiq and Hanif.

Nations which advanced in technical education making progress: Governor

LAHORE (INP): Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rahman has said that it is era of IT and digital technology and the nations which made advancement in technical education and training are progressing.

This was stated by him on Friday during his visit to the Lu Ban workshop established in collaboration with China at the Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) Secretariat. Secretary Industries Punjab Asadullah Faiz, Chief Operating Officer Ahmed Khawar Shahzad and Senior Director General Akhtar Abbas Bharwana were also present on this occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, Muhammad Balighur Rahman said that the Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) should provide employment opportunities for the students by strengthening the links with the industry through which many families will become economically self-sufficient and prosperous.

Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rahmansaid that the number of students in the workshop should be increased so that more students can get

training.

He said that technical education is the reliable source of human development and the guarantor of national prosperity.

The Governor Punjab further said that 07 consortiums have been formed in universities, one of which is on science and information technology and its aim is academia.

And to strengthen industry linkages. He also interacted with the young students receiving training at the Frankincense Workshop.

On this occasion, Senior Director General of TEVTA (TEVTA) Secretariat, Akhtar Abbas Bharwana informed the Governor of Punjab in detail about the performance of the institution.

Meanwhile, Muhammad Balighur Rahman also inaugurated a branch of International Food Chain. Speaking on this occasion, he said that opening a branch of Canada's food chain in Pakistan is a very welcome thing. He said that it saddens that the confidence of international investors is being restored in Pakistan. He said that God willing, the country's conditions will improve further in the coming days.

Govt determined to make engineering universities global brands: Ahsan Iqbal

KARACHI (APP): The federal minister said that UET Lahore, UET Taxila, UET Peshawar, BUET Khuzdar and NED Karachi were being upgraded so that graduates from the universities could better serve the nation after learning advance skills.

He said when the PMLN government came into power in 2013, there were several economic challenges besides the poor law and order situation adding that the government tackled the financial crisis and put the country on the right track.

He said it was the time when many of the financially strong economic powers were keen to invest in the PML-N government initiated China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

However, the situation was changed due to the misconstrued policies of the later governments. He added that after mutual consultation with the stake holders, government had released necessary funds for operation 'Zarb-e-Azab' which proved to be fruitful for the law and order situation in the country with the sacrifices rendered by the forces and citizens.

Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal said that it was high time for collective efforts for bringing prosperity in the country adding collective efforts

were vital for the cause.

He expressed hope that the faculty and the students of the NED University would work together for such innovations which were required to meet the global advancement challenges.

Vice Chancellor (VC) NED University Prof. Dr. Sarosh Hashmat Lodi presented the memento to the federal minister.

Earlier, in his address Vice Chancellor (VC) NED University Prof. Dr. Sarosh Hashmat Lodi welcomed the federal minister and thanked him over his participation in the event.

Faculty members, Deans, HODs, scholars and students were among the participants on the occasion.

TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tenders are invited from the Firms/ Authorized Dealers/Distributors registered with Income Tax/ GST department and KPPRA, having active filing status with FBR for purchase and supply of the following items as per the given specifications/descriptions provided in the tender documents, to be used as Exhibits/Demonstration in Jurassic park at Peshawar Zoo, Tender must be submitted to the office of undersigned on or before 02-03-2023 by 12:00 PM and will be open on the same day before the committee members in the presence of contractors or their authorized representatives. The details are as follows.

S.#	Particular	Last date of receipt of tender form from the office of Peshawar Zoo to contractor	Date and time of tender opening	Amount Call Deposit
1	Purchase and Supply of animated/static models of dinosaurs and related items (Pictures attached with bidding documents and can see in Dino Valley Islamabad)	01-03-2023	02-03-2023 12:15 PM	5%

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

- Complete Tender Document with scope of work can be obtained from the office of Director/conservator Peshawar Zoo main Palosai road opposite PFI, Rahatabad Peshawar on payment of Rs.1000/- (non refundable) from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm on any working day (Monday to Friday) from the date of appearance of the tender notice till the closing date.
- Bidder must quote rates for complete whole package as well as individual item tender will be issued on the basis of consolidated rate.
- The successful bidder will also deposit 10% performance guarantee.
- Rest of terms and conditions are mentioned in the bid documents.

Director / Conservator Wildlife
Peshawar Zoo, Peshawar

INF(P) 555/23

CM pays tributes to martyred Major Jawad, Captain Sagheer

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi paid rich tributes to the heroic sacrifices of Major Jawad and Captain Sagheer who were martyred during an operation in Kohlu area of Balochistan. In a statement issued on Friday, the CM conveyed his admiration for the martyrs who selflessly sacrificed their lives for the peace and stability of the nation. He praised them for their bravery and unwavering commitment to defending their country, earning the highest honor of martyrdom. "The nation salutes these

martyrs who are the pride of our country," said the CM. "Their sacrifices will never be forgotten, and they will always be remembered as our true heroes," he added.



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PUBLIC NOTICE
Apartment No 9-A, comprising Khalsa No.3016, measuring 2420 Sft (Apartment 2251 sft + Garage 169 Sft) situated at Askari-1, Abbottabad Cantt is held on lease in Schedule IX-B of the CLA Rules 1937 in the name of Mst. Shahnaz Begum W/o PA-6319 Lt Col Salah-ud-Din (late), as per record of this office. Now, the above said lessee Mst. Shehnaz Begum intends to transfer her entire share of lease hold rights out of this holding in favour of her real son namely Mr. Muhammad Salah Ud Din (CNIC No. 11101-7569601-5) S/o Salah-ud-Din by way of Declaration Oral Gift dated 25-12-2022, under the provision of Muhammadan Law. Now, the undersigned is going to transfer the entire share of lease hold rights of above named lessee in favour of her real son on the basis of declaration of Oral Gift dated 25-12-2022 under the provision of Muhammadan Law. Any person having objections on the above said transfer by way of Oral Gift, may file his/her objections, if any, within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which the lease hold rights to the extent of shares of donor out of Apartment No.9-A, situated at Askari-1 Abbottabad will be transferred/ mutated in the name of donee, in the record of this office. Any objection received after the stipulated time/period will not be entertained/ accepted. **Military Estates Officer, Hazara Circle Abbottabad**

PUBLIC NOTICE
It is published through this notice that I Atta Ullah Khan S/o Aman Ullah Khan R/o House no.39/X, KDA Kohat is the owner of plot no. 04, Sector B-4, Size-1 Kanal, Phase-II KDA Kohat has appointed Mr. Rab Nawaz Khan S/o Abdul Jabbar R/o Jungle Khel Pir Khel Garhi Behram Khan Kohat through (Special) Deed no. 764 Bahi no. 04 Dated 29/11/22 which is registered in the office Kohat of Tehsildar/Sub Registrar the attorney holder now wants to transfer the above said plot if any Bank/ Institution/ Firm/ Person has any objection about the transfer he should contact the housing officer UADA within 15 days in writing with proofs otherwise plot will be transfer and no objection will be accepted. **(Project Director Urban Area KDA Kohat)**

GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA | COMMUNICATION & WORKS DEPARTMENT
NOTICE INVITING E-BIDDING (SINGLE STAGE TWO ENVELOPE BIDDING SYSTEM)
The C&W Division Kohistan Lower Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa invites Electronic Bids from eligible firms / contractors in accordance with procurement Rule 2014 amended upto 10/5/2022 on single stage two envelope procedure for the following works.

S#	Name of work	Required PEC Category	Bid Security i/c stamp duty Rs.	Tender Fee @ 0.03%	Period completion	Last date and time of submission of E-Bids	Date and time of opening of Technical bids
A	District Development Plan for Hazara Division SH: Construction of Roads and Bridges in District Kohistan Lower ADP No.1099/210557 Sub Head:	-	-	-	-	-	-
1.	Package No.I i. Shingle Road Narai Maidan (0-1 km) ii. Shingle Road Shungial Road to Nawon Shungial (0.75 km) iii. Shingle Road Dubair to Dhara Kaka Khel (0.25 km)	C-6 & Above Road Code	408750	5850	As per work order	01-3-2023 At 12.00 Noon	Subject to approval of Technical Bids from the competent authority
2.	Package No.II i. Shingle Road Dhar Sheikh Darra (01-km) ii. Shingle Road Dubair to Tangi Daloo vic Shungial (0.25 km) iii. Shingle Road Dubair to Dhar Bela (0.25 km) iv. Shingle Road Dubair to khorko Saleem Abad (0.25 km)	C-6 & Above Road Code	368750	5250	-do-	-do-	-do-
3.	Package No.III i. Shingle Road Shungial Road Barsigan (0-30 km) ii. Shingle Road Shungial to Khass Shungial Ameer Khan Abad (0.25 km) iii. Shingle Road Daulat Khan Kando Banked (0.15 km) iv. Shingle Road Khushal Banked (0.4 km) v. Shingle Road Sogla to BHU Banked (0.30 km) vi. Shingle Road seri/Serai Banked (0.30 km)	C-6 & Above Road Code	334750	4740	-do-	-do-	-do-
4.	Package No.IV i. Constn: of PCC Road at Renolia Bazar (0.10 km) ii. Shingle Road Soya (01-km)	C-6 & Above Road Code	368750	5250	-do-	-do-	-do-
5.	Package No.V i. Shingle Road Barkely to Dartoo (01-km) ii. Shingle Road Dubair Road to Ghundo (0.95-km)	C-6 & Above Road Code	398750	5700	-do-	-do-	-do-
6.	Package No.VI i. Shingle Road Renolia to Dhand Manikhel (01-km) ii. Wooden Bridge Mir Khan Khel/Gheel Renolia	C-6 & Above Road Code & Bridge Code	393950	4128	-do-	-do-	-do-
7.	Package No.VII i. Constn: of PCC Road Mali Dara Road to Mali Dara Jijal (0.6-km) ii. Constn: of PCC Road Dhoop Jijal (0.450 km) iii. Shingle Road KKH to Maidan Chakai (0.25 km)	C-6 & Above Road Code	406750	5820	-do-	-do-	-do-
8.	Package No.VIII i. Constn: of PCC Road Kandroom Seri Jijal (0.45-km) ii. Shingle Road Dhar Jijal (0.750km) iii. Shingle Road Bari to Bar Manzaro (0.50km)	C-6 & Above Road Code	408750	5850	-do-	-do-	-do-
9.	Package No.XI i. Shingle road Goom Gabbar jijal (0.3-km) ii. Shingle Road Och Khwar to Bela Rustam khel (0.70km) iii. Shingle Road Och Khwa to Manza Khpa (0.50km) iv. Constn: /PCC of Pattan Road 0.50km	C-6 & Above Road Code	411030	5884	-do-	-do-	-do-

1- Bid solicitation documents and instruction to Bidders can be obtained from the office on any working day or downloaded from C&W website (www.cwd.gkp.pk) before the submission date/time. 2- The bidders should submit their E-Bids as per KPPRA Notification No.S.R.O.(14)/Vol-I-24/2021-22 dated 10.05.2022. 3- A copy of the technical proposal in the required format is mandatory and to be uploaded as a part of E-Bid before submitting Financial Bid. 4- Original copies of call deposit for Bid security and tender Fee should be enclosed in the Technical proposal and shall reach to the office before closing date/time. 5- Legible scanned copy of bid security shall be submitted electronically along with the bid on E-Bidding system. 6- A bid security shall be kept in sealed in the financial proposals and the bidder shall addition, place an affidavit in the technical proposal stating that a bid security amounting to 02 percent without indicating the figure in the letter has been placed in the financial proposal or bid. Otherwise the technical proposal will be considered non-responsive and will be returned to the bidder after being examined by the procurement committee. 7- All bidders are required to be registered with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority under Finance Act 2013 Act No.XXI of 2013. 8- Venue of Bid opening is office of the Executive Engineer C&W Division Kohistan Lower.

INSTRUCTION TO BIDDERS (SINGLE STAGE TWO ENVELOPE E-BIDDING SYSTEM) 1. Technical proposals should accompany the following:- a. Bid security and tender Fee in the shape of call deposit (Original) b. Enlistment order of C&W Department (Photocopy). c. Renewal of registration of CFY (Photocopy). d. National Identity Card (CNIC Photocopy). e. Valid Pakistan Engineering Council registration copy for current calendar year (CCY). f. Form H of the company firm. g. Documents showing general capabilities, financial soundness, general & relevant record, personnel capabilities, equipment capabilities, registration with KPPRA and income Tax/NTN Certificate etc. h. Any other documents to support the Technical bid. 2. A copy of the technical proposal in the required format is mandatory to be uploaded as a part of E-Bidding before submitting Financial Bid. Scanned copy of Bid security shall be submitted electronically along with technical bid on E-Bidding system. 3. The contractors quoting their bids upto a limit of 10% below on Engineer's Estimate shall submit bid security to the extent of 2% Engineer Estimate. 4. The contractors quoting their bids more than 10% below on Engineer's estimate shall submit alongwith their bid 8% an additional security on Engineer Estimate cost in addition to 2% bid security. If the bid is not accompanied with the required amount of additional security than it will be considered as non responsive and 2% security shall be forfeited in favour of Government and the 2nd lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly. 5. Similarly, a contractor quoting bid more than 20% below shall submit with his bid an additional security on Engineers estimated cost equal to the differential amount of submitted bid and Engineers estimate alongwith detail Rate Analysis. In case of more than 20% Below bid if the bid is not accompanied by the Detail Rate Analysis and/or required amount of additional security, than the said bid shall be considered as non responsive. All the securities submitted alongwith such non responsive bid shall be forfeited in favour of the Govt; and the 2nd lowest bidder so on will be considered accordingly. 6. In case detail Rate Analysis submitted with the bids is, in view of the procuring entity, not convincing, the Head of the procuring entity may declare such bid as non responsive with out any further of bids security and record reasons thereof. 7. The procuring entity may offer the contract to next lowest bidder after due diligence in the context of financial difference between such two bids or may advertise procurement a fresh. 8. After commencement of work by the successful bidder, the procurement entity may replace the additional security with bank guarantee of the same amount from the schedule bank if the already deposited security is not in the form of Bank Guarantee. 9. The additional security shall be released to the contractor in four installments i.e 25% to be released upon completion of 25% of the project 50% to be released upon completion 50% of the project, 75% to be released upon 75% of the project and the remaining amount to be released after completion of the project. 10. All such effort to conspire to cartel making shall be considered as violation of Rule -44 and shall be attributed towards mis-procurement under Rule-54 of procurement Rules bid. 11. Technical evaluation will be carried out with pass/fail threshold. Passing criteria, includes PEC registration, Enlistment with C&W Department, Tax Payer proof, Relevant experience in past 05 years, performance, Technical personnel, required equipment, Financial status, auditor report, Managerial capabilities, litigation status etc. as mentioned application forms 1-9 which already published on C&W website. 12. Any electronic bidder who provides incorrect/incomplete information shall stand Non-responsive. 13. Any electronic bidder who submits false or forged documents or information shall stand de-barred. 14. Time allowed for the completion of the work as specified in the NIE shall start from the issuance of letter of acceptance (LOA). 15. Electronic bids validity period is 90-days. 16. Successful bidder should sign the agreement with the department with twenty Eight (28) days after issuance of LOA. 17. Call deposit of only schedule Bank shall be accepted. 18. If the evaluated electronic bid cost of two or more than two bidders is equal then the successful bidder will be declared through draw. 22. Technical bids will be opened after 30 minutes of closing time in the presence of bidder/ their representatives who choose to be present. 23. The employer has the authority to reject a bid or all the bid assigning cogent reasons. 24. Bid security of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd bidder for the specific work will be retained by the department till the approval of the bid. 25. The schools contains Internal electrification for which those contractors can apply who have entered code of Electrification in PEC & C&W enlistment.

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER : C&W DIVISION KOHSITAN LOWER

INF(P) 535/23



NATIONAL SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY
GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN

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Sr.	Name of Post	Pay Scale /PPS	No. of Post	Qualification/Experience	Job Description	Pay/ Lumpsum	Maximum Age Limit
1.	Senior Research Associate	BS-20 (PPS-10)	02	Doctorate/M.Phil/1 st class Master's Degree in Public Policy, Economics, Finance, Management, Public Administration, Governance, HR Development Law, Strategic and Security Studies, History, Political Science, Statistics, Sociology, International Relations and other relevant subjects of Social Sciences from HEC recognized institution.	Conduct research & consultancy services on relevant thematic areas of Public Policy & Social Sciences.	250,000 Annual Increment: 12,500	(45 + 5) 50 years
2.	Research Associate	BS-19 (PPS-9)	4	Doctorate/M.Phil/1 st class Master's Degree in Public Policy, Economics, Finance, Management, Public Administration, Governance, HR Development Law, Strategic and Security Studies, History, Political Science, Statistics, Sociology, International Relations and other relevant subjects of Social Sciences from HEC recognized institution. (for Health MBBS with Post Graduate in Public Health and for Education M.A M.Ed. will be preferred).	Conduct research & consultancy services on relevant thematic areas of Public Policy & Social Sciences.	175,000 Annual Increment: 8,750	(40 + 5) 45 years
3.	Research Fellow	BS-18 (PPS-8)	3	MS/M.Phil or equivalent degree in relevant subject from a reputed local or foreign university 3 years experience of designing, implementing and supervising social science research. Relevant experience of the Thematic area would be given preference.	Conduct research & consultancy services on relevant thematic areas of Public Policy & Social Sciences.	125,000 Annual Increment: 6,250	(35 + 5) 40 years
4.	Deputy Director (IT) Graphics Design	BS-18 (PPS-8)	1	MS/M.Phil or equivalent Degree in Computer Sciences / Computer Engineering / IT / Software engineering or related from a reputed HEC recognized local or foreign Institution. 3 years experience of graphics designing with hands-on experience/skills of designing tools like Adobe Photoshop, CorelDraw etc.	Designing and Printing of Research Journals, Course Reports, Broucher, Panaflex etc.,	125,000 Annual Increment: 6,250	(35 + 5) 40 years
5.	IT Support Officer	BS-14/15 (PPS-5)	1	Minimum 14 Years of education in Computer Science / Software Engineering/ IT or related from a reputed HEC recognized local or foreign Institution. Minimum 1 year of relevant experience.		40,000 Annual Increment: 2,000	(25 + 5) 30 years

- Required qualification, experience, detailed job descriptions and application forms are available at www.nspp.gov.pk.
- Applicants already working in Government/Semi-Government/Autonomous Bodies are requested to apply through proper channel.
- As per Finance Division's O.M dated 19.07.2017, Government employee must resign from the government service before the appointment for the project post.
- Only shortlisted candidates will be called for interview. No TA/DA will be admissible.
- NSPP reserves the right to increase, decrease the number of posts or cancel any of the advertised post(s).
- Last date of application submission is one month from the date of advertisement.

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PID(L) 2331



Paraplegic center secures 1st position in poster competition

Kashif Ullah Khalil

PESHAWAR: Peshawar Paraplegic Center won Research Poster Competition while 20 teams from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa participated in the competition.

The aim of competition was to develop creativity among people with disability and to encourage special persons. The event was organized by Rehman Rehabilitation Center in which 20 teams from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa participated.

Peshawar Paraplegic Center was led by Research and Pharmacy In-charge Ifthikhar Ali Jan along with Senior physiotherapist Benish Mehmood. Peshawar Paraplegic Center displayed poster was created after research and team which was appreciated by the participants and Judges.

The poster has displayed wheelchair users which was impacted by spinal cord injuries and effects of wheelchair on his livelihood. Peshawar Paraplegic Center Patron-in-Chief Dr. Syed Muhammad Ilyas announced cash prize for success of the center and paid tribute to participants.

Minister warns action against hoarders

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for food and Irrigation Fazl Elahi on Friday warned of taking strict legal action against profiteering and hoarding of subsidized flour and directed the concerned department to ensure uninterrupted and transparent supply of flour on government rates in the markets.

Talking to a delegation of Pakistan Flour Mills Association (PFMA) here at his office, he said that the government was ensuring transparent and equal distribution of flour on subsidized rates. He assured that pragmatic steps were being taken to remove hurdles in purchase and transportation of wheat and flour from Punjab.

The Minister said that the provincial government was committed to providing relief to the masses on priority basis in all available resources. The delegation was led by Chairman PFMA Naem Butt while Additional Secretary Food Kashif Jilani and Director Food Yasir Hussain were also present on the occasion.

138 timber smuggler held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: On the orders of Regional Police Officer Malakand Sajjad Khan the police arrested 138 timber from across the district and sent 16 accused to jail under 3-MPO during the last three months.

Under the supervision of District Police Chiefs of Malakand division, 49 were arrested from Swat, 13 from Bunner, 12 Shangla, 29 Lower Dir and 35 from Upper Dir. Similarly two each from Swat and Lower Dir district, 11 from Upper Dir and one from Lower Chitral were booked under 3-MPO and sent to jail.

The police took three trucks, 20 pick-up, one ambulance and other vehicles loaded with timber and logs into custody and handed over to Forest Department which imposed a Rs 10 million fine on the arrested accused.

Completion of ongoing uplift plans priority: Governor

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali Friday said the country is suffering from economic problems, but projects of public interest in the merged districts are among the main priorities of the present government.

This he said while chairing a high-level meeting of the Department of Communications and Construction held at the Governor House. In the meeting, the supervising Provincial Minister

Muhammad Ali Shah, Secretary of Communications and Construction Department Imtiaz Ali Shah and other officials of the Department were also present.

In the meeting, the Governor was briefed on the development projects of the Department of Communications and Construction and ongoing development projects in the adjoining districts. Governor KP Haji Ghulam Ali on this occasion directed to provide a list of ongoing projects under the

Annual Development Program in the merged districts.

Haji Ghulam Ali said that discussions would be held with the Federation for the release of required funds for the ongoing projects of the Department of Communications and Construction in the merged districts. He said, despite its bad financial position as the country is suffering from economic problems, the projects of public interest in the merged districts are among the main priorities to complete.



PESHAWAR: Governor KP Haji Ghulam Ali giving keys of vehicles to administration of nursing colleges during his visit to Provincial Health Services Academy.

Traders demand one time checking of export cargo

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Traders and manufacturers, dealing with exports, have urged the authorities concerned to carry out one-time checking and examination of vehicles-laden with export cargo instead of multiple inspections to avoid huge financial losses and bring swiftness in the clearing process.

The issue was taken up by a businessmen delegation led by Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) President, Muhammad Ishaq during a meeting with Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Regional Directorate Commander, Brig Abdul Manan here at the regional office of the ANF, said a press release issued on Friday.

The delegation was comprising of President Frontier Customs Clearing Agents Association (FCCA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ziaul Haq Sarhadi, former senior vice president of the SCCI Engineer Saad Zahid, senior

member Khalid Shehzad, Dr Muqbool Khan, Mumtaz Khan, Asif Khan, Mazharul Haq, Syed Ejaz Ali Shah, Khalid Sultan Khawaja and others.

Regional Director ANF Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Incharge Bacha Khan International Airport Peshawar, Aza Khel Dry Port, IT Branch, DDR Branch Karachi port, and Incharge Investigation Cell were also present during the meeting.

During the meeting, Muhammad Ishaq informed the Commander Brig Abdul Manan, senior officials of ANF and the participants of the meeting regarding grievances and reservations of business community regarding multiple checking, scrutiny and examination of export-laden cargo consignments causing wastage of time besides slowing down of the clearance process.

Ziaul Haq Sarhadi said that huge financial losses were being inflicted to the traders owing to multiple

times checking and scrutiny of export cargo. He demanded an end to the practice of re-examination after clearing of export cargo at Peshawar Dry Port.

Saad Khan Zahid told the meeting about the problems faced by the industrialists due to multiple checking and examination of the export cargo and suggested a number of proposals for their amicable resolution. The SCCI President thanked the senior officials of the ANF for keenly listening to issues of the traders' community and giving assurance for all those issues which had fallen into jurisdictions and ambit of the anti-narcotics force.

Ishaq appreciated the ANF for always playing a pivotal role in facilitating traders and resolving their issues on priority grounds and providing maximum relief to the community. Brig Abdul Manan said the ANF is fully committed to facilitating businesses, trade and exports at every level.

Tobacco control through police stressed

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Government and non-government stakeholders in an event in Peshawar, signs first-ever consensual statement at provincial level to promote and prioritize tobacco control as public health priority through policy and resource reforms in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

According to the press statement, the event was jointly called by a local NGO Blue Veins in collaboration with Tobacco Control Cell on 2nd February 2023. The event was well attended by Govt officials from secretariat of Health, Health Department, Directorate General of Health Services, Elementary & Secondary Education, Higher Education Department, Excise and

Taxation, Narcotics Control, Additional Commissioner Human Rights & Relief and Additional Assistant Commissioners from Peshawar and Haripur, National Human Rights Institutions, Social Welfare Department, Child Welfare & Protection Commission, various private & government hospitals, academia, lawyers and civil society organizations.

The signed statement recognizing the need for international, national, and provincial level cooperation and support to address the global tobacco epidemic effectively, holds the commitment to strengthen stronger collaborations and coordinated efforts across Government and non-government institutions to lead policy development, reforms and imple-

mentation on tobacco control and support.

Further the stakeholders pledged to allocate human and financial resources for awareness and educational programs on prevention of tobacco use among young people, cessation support initiatives, and evidence-based researches on the tobacco. Ajmal Shah Coordinator of the Tobacco Control Cell says that the "Health department making all efforts to accelerate implementation to WHO FCTC but the area require multi-sectoral response. The commitment and engagement of stakeholders would be of great contribution to promote effective laws, policy actions, and monitoring mechanisms for smoking restrictions and smoke-free public places."

Steps to bring reforms in prisons underway

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister for Prisons, Shafiullah Khan on Friday visited Central Jail Peshawar where he was presented a salute by the guards of the prison.

The Minister inspected the library, medical center and other sections of the prison and talked with the inmates. He inquired about the facilities being provided at Peshawar Prison from the inmates.

Superintendent Jail briefed the minister on administrative affairs of the prison and said all possible facilities were being provided to the prisoners. The Minister on the occasion said that jails were not torture cells but in fact rehabilitation centers. He said the caretaker government was taking tangible steps for bringing reforms in the prisons' sector. He assured that the government would provide all possible support to the jail authorities for improving the situation inside the prisons.

890,000 tourists visit KP in one month

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province being a tourists' destination attracted as many as 890,777 foreign and domestic tourists in one month, said a report issued here by KP Tourism Authority.

The report said that More than 55 foreigners and 890,722 domestic tourists visited Kaghlan and Naran valleys, Chitral Lower, Chitral Upper, Galiyat, Malam Jabba and Dir Upper. Malam Jabba attracted 552,785 domestic and 17 foreign tourists, followed by Galiyat with 233,666 domestic and four foreign tourists.

79,548 domestic tourists visited Kaghlan and Naran valleys, 23,711 domestic and 24 foreign tourists visited Chitral Lower and 1,012 domestic and three foreign tourists visited Dir Upper. It said that the KP tourism department provided online information, booking, reservations and guidance services besides facilities including accommodation to the tourists.

Govt decides to distribute LGs reposs

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The provincial government of KP has decided on the indiscriminate distribution of flour in the provincial capital through the representatives of the local government.

The decision was taken on the request of the City Mayor of Peshawar, Haji Zubair Ali, said a statement issued here by the Commissioner Peshawar Division on Friday. In this connection, Commissioner Peshawar has directed the district administration to cancel all unnecessary flour quotas and make arrangements for the provision of 200 bags of flour to Village Councils on a daily basis.

The officially provided flour would be further distributed under the supervision of the chairman of the concerned NCs and VCs, and the quota would be allotted in the same name. The district administration has been further directed to make chairmen of all NCs and VCs bound to ensure the implementation of the code of conduct for the purpose and in case of any violation cancel the quota of the concerned chairman and also imposed heavy cash penalty on him.

PHC CJ administer oath from three Additional Judges



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Justice Peshawar High Court Justice Qaiser Rashid Khan administered oath from three Additional Judges as Justice Kamran Hayat Miankhel, Justice Ijaz Khan and Justice Muhammad Faheem Wali, on Friday.

During oath taking ceremony all Judges of Peshawar High Court graced the occasion.

Amongst the others, the ceremony was attended by the Advocate General, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, District & Sessions Judge, Peshawar, Additional Attorney General of Pakistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Vice Chairman Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Council, Presidents and General Secretary along with cabinet of Peshawar High Court Bar Association, Peshawar, President & General

Secretaries of Peshawar High Court Bar Associations Abbottabad, D.I. Khan, Mingora & Bannu Bench.

Moreover, President & General Secretary along with cabinet of District Bar Association Peshawar, Principal Officers of Peshawar High Court and Special Courts Judges, Peshawar. A large number of senior lawyers also attended the ceremony.

Early elections only solution of crisis: ATP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Amun Taraqqi Party (ATP) chairman Muhammad Faiq Shah remarked persistent political impasses could bring further deterioration and stressed the need to build a broad-based cohesion at national level and defuse the tension and work together for political and economic stability.

Shah strongly opposed the government's plan to present a mini-budget with a tune of new taxes Rs 300 billion. The spiraling price-hike has already broken the backbone of the poverty-stricken masses, he added. He said the additional taxes would add to miseries of poor masses.

Commenting on reaching agreement between Pakistan's authorities and IMF on the stalled bailout package, Shah in a statement issued here on Friday said prices of electricity, gas, petroleum products will further be escalated that could

directly affect working and poor masses. Praising the opposition over its decision to participate in joint session parliament, Shah said return of members of opposition benches to parliament is a good omen.

The party chief asked the government and opposition to bring joint reforms and to pave the way for holding fresh general elections in a transparent and fair manner in the country. Talking about the increasing political victimization, Shah emphasized that institutions should not be used for targeting political rivals.

Let the institutions free and depoliticized to bring constitutional reforms, provide justice to people on emergent grounds, Shah stressed. The ATP chairman expressed grave concern over the hypocrisy and stubborn attitude of politicians. He said growing political tussle was an attempt to deviate from the real public issues

and cover up failure and poor performance.

Faiq noted the inflation-hit people have left in lurch as they are left on mercy of hoarders and profiteers, criticizing the local administration and authorities for their inability to take actions against them. He said prices of food commodities, especially flour, edible oil have surged up throughout the country. The party leader maintained food items were unavailable to people at subsidized rates at utilities stores and government-designated fair price shops/points.

No one is paying heed to miseries of the inflation-hit masses, saying that the situation is going from bad to worse from each passing day, Shah observed. He emphasized the holding of fresh general elections is the only solution to the present crisis. He, however, reinforced that reforms should be brought before the holding of fresh elections in the country.

Provision of illegal medical services in beauty parlors banned

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Care Commission conducted a large-scale operation against beauty parlors, salons, cosmetic clinics and other similar establishments in the Peshawar district last week.

Six inspection teams were formed, consisting of field officers from all zonal offices in the province, and

a total of 200 beauty centers were inspected. As a result of the inspection, 17 beauty centers were issued show-cause notices for providing medical services that should only be provided by a doctor, and necessary instructions were issued by the inspection teams.

In response to this, the Health Care Commission has banned beauty parlors from providing such services and has decided to take

legal action against any beauty parlor that violates this ban. The CEO of the Health Care Commission expressed their determination to ensure the provision of quality medical facilities to the people and stated that such operations will be organized in other districts of the province as well. The commission will not tolerate any negligence in providing medical care to the public.

Power suspension notified

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) on Friday informed that due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Jamrud Grid Station on 11th, 14th and 18th February from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. affecting consumer of 11 KV Hayatabad 1,2,3,4,5, New Hayatabad, Health Care Hospital, Health Exultance, North West Hospital, Academy Town, RMI, Kacha Garhi, Karkhano, Gul Abad, PIC, Hayatabad Surgical, Peshawar General, Shakas 1, Health Net Hospital, Northern Bottling, Mohmand Steel feeders will face inconvenience.

It said that power supply will also remain suspended from 132 KV Peshawar University Grid Station on 11th, 14th, 16th, 20th, 25th and 28th February from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. resultantly consumers of 11 KV Danish Abad, Rahat Abad 2, Gharib Abad,

feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Peshawar Cantt Grid Station on 11th, 14th, 16th, 20th, 25th and 28th February from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. resultantly consumers of 11 KV Saddar Road, MES 2, Mall Road, Afridi Abad, Kohat Road, Ameen Colony feeders will face inconvenience.

It said that power supply will also remain suspended from 132 KV Shahi Bagh Grid Station on 11th, 13th, 20th and 25th of February from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. resultantly consumers of 11 KV Sikandar Pura and Nishat feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Peshawar City Grid Station on 11th, 14th, 16th, 20th, 25th and 27th of February from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. resultantly consumers of 11 KV Nishtarabad, Islamabad, Sikandar Pura, Zaryab, Chamkani, Chughal Pura, Mian Umar Baba, Kareem Pura, Dalazak, Sarbuland Pura feeders will face inconvenience.

Long live Pakistan, Iran relations

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Forty-four years ago on February 1979, the most popular revolutions of the 20th century won amidst a cold winter. The revolution succeeded through the all-out support on the side of the people participating in the rallies led by the founding father of the movement, Imam Khomeini.

Throughout the past years, despite the treacheries, conspiracies and obstacles fabricated by the hostile enemies of Iran such as imposed war, sanctions, terrorism, the maximum pressure campaign, Iran has not stopped its progress train, moving

non-stop in the direction of scientific, economic and technological achievements in order to gain self-sufficiency in different fields including industry, agriculture and technology. The statistics and figures presented by the reputable international institutions indicate that Iran has enjoyed all-round progress and development year by year, especially in the field of science and technology.

Before the revolution, the Iran society struggles a lot to overthrow the royal regime and removed foreign-affiliated elements from the Iranian political scene. Finally, the endeavors and resistance resulted in the establishment of a system based upon the reli-

gious democracy and the increase in the role of the people in the determination of their destiny. Since then, the Iranian nationals have a predominant role in the determination of their political and social destiny through the different democratic elections of the head of the different powers and institutions directly or indirectly.

The government and people of Iran are proud to have proven in these 44 years that; when it's time for the negotiations based on mutual respect and respectable agreement, they always respect the agreements and are fully committed to all the commitments agreed upon by them. Where they face with the maximum

oppressive pressure, they will inflict an unprecedented defeat on the founders of the economic terrorism with maximum and heroic resistance, and when there it comes the for the violation of their rights and aggression by the hostile sides, they have defended the security of their country with courage and determination.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has played an incomparable role in ensuring the stability and security of the region and the world with heroic sacrifices at the forefront of the fight against the ominous phenomenon of terrorism, extremism and drug trafficking. Iran has paid a heavy cost in this way and sacrificed valuable lives

in the fight against the afore-mentioned plights. We commemorate the memory of Iran's national heroes, as well as the hero of the fight against terrorism and extremism, Lieutenant General Qasem Soleimani and all the martyrs who sacrificed their valuable lives to ensure peace and security in the region and the world.

Iran, enjoying its geographical strategic location, enormous natural resources, human resources and a large potential market, has a great and pristine capacity to develop and expand economic and trade cooperation in all fields with all the countries.

During the last few years, the relations between the two friendly, brotherly

and neighboring countries, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, have been growing in various fields. This level of connection and solidarity between the two countries is based upon the commonalities and links that have been formed between these two countries during the ages. Past and present are the harbingers of a bright tomorrow for our dear homelands of Iran and Pakistan.

I wish a bright, promising and prosperous future with all-round improvement of the relations and between the two brotherly, friendly and neighbouring countries of Iran and Pakistan. Long live comities.



In brief

Five killed in Miranshah firing F.P. Report

MIRAN SHAH: At least five people were killed when a rival group opened fire on a car in North Waziristan's central city of Miranshah on Friday morning. The district administration while confirming the incident informed that assailants opened heavy fire on a car in Tolkhel area of Miranshah, killing all the five people in the car. Area police said a dispute related to land's ownership led to the unfortunate incident. Police said evidence has been collected from the crime scene for investigation while the bodies were shifted to District Headquarters Hospital for medico legal procedure.

Body of missing teenager found

MULTAN (INP): The body of a missing teenager was recovered from the Basti Malook area on Friday. According to Basti Malook police spokesperson, the victim, identified as 13-year-old Ali, son of Muhammad Yunis, was a resident of Laar. He was reportedly missing for a couple of days. The Primary investigation indicated that there were bruise marks on the face and other body parts, raising suspicion that the boy was killed after a physical assault. However, a clear picture would emerge after the autopsy report, he added.

Three kite sellers nabbed

SARGODHA (INP): Satellite town Police on Friday launched nabbed three kite sellers and recovered 425 kites from them. The raiding team arrested three kite sellers from different areas. They were identified as-- Touqeer, Akber and Dilawar. Further investigation was under way.

Various fertilizer dealers fined

SARGODHA (INP): The district administration fined various fertilizer dealers for selling fertilizer at exorbitant rates in the city here on Friday. According to the official sources, Assistant Director Agriculture (extension) Aslam Khan conducted raids at various areas including Chak 42 SB and imposed fines Rs 22,000 to various fertilizer dealers for selling fertilizer at high rates.

Attempt foiled

SUKKUR (INP): The police on Friday foiled an attempt to declare murder of husband as outcome of resistance during robbery attempt. According to details, a woman along her paramour shot dead husband in Sukkur and declared it killing by dacoits during robbery. However, during investigations, the woman and her alleged paramour were found involved in murder. The police have registered a case and started raids to arrest the woman and her accomplice.

Three drug traffickers held F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Local police on Friday claimed to have arrested three drug traffickers and seized narcotics and weapons from them. An official said that area police with the help of a narcotics eradication team had launched a special drive against drug peddlers on the directives of district police officer Ziauddin Ahmed. He said that a party of Ghaznikhel police station raided a narcotics den in Asmatatab area and captured a suspect identified as Shah Wali there. "The cops recovered 1100 gram hashish and 430 gram ice drug from the arrested man and shifted him to the police station where a case was registered against him under relevant sections of law", he added.

Xen: Free electricity supply impracticable



F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Xen Executive Engineer (Xen) Tribal Electric Supply Cooperation Organization (Tesco) Ali Askar has said that the Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) cannot provide free power supply to the tribesmen and insist on them to install electricity meters for continuous provision of power. He also advocated for unnecessary consumption of electricity.

While speaking on the occasion of Kuli Kachehry (open court) set up in Jirga on Friday for creating awareness among the masses for the smooth supply of electricity/digital meterization. He said that provision of power had been continued to the merged tribal district since long, however in the prevailing situation, the Wapda could

not afford free or subsidized rate electricity.

The Landi Kotal subdivision consumed electricity worth 163.71 million rupees per month he said and urged the attendants to install consumers' electricity meters for uninterrupted power supply. He maintained that with fixing of meters, local traders enjoyed more than twenty hours of electricity supply.

Earlier, councillor Azizullah Afridi, Haji Banares Khan, Najeeb Khwarichan and others apprised the officials of their problems and said it was obligatory on the State to provide basic facilities to every citizen of the country. They said that due to lack of electricity their routine works were halted.

Due to large scale unemployment and deficiency of job opportunities, they could not pay for electricity

bills; therefore they added an acceptable solution should be framed. They threatened that if electricity was not supplied to them they would lock the local grid station.

The locals carried out placards inscribed with slogans in favor of their demands and fastened black ribbons around their hands in protest. Assistant Commissioner, Landi Kotal Irshad Mohmand also spoke on the occasion and said that the government was passing through financial crises hence efforts should be made for the wellbeing of the country. Senior Divisional Officer (SDO) Amir, Station House Officer, Assistant Director Industry Arafat Afridi (SHO) Akbar Afridi and a number of elders, political workers, councillors and members of civil society attended the moot.

Six candidates obtained papers for NA-40

F.P. Report

KHAR: As many as six persons obtained candidature forms for NA-40 constituency for by-election which was vacant following resignation by Gul Dad Khan, on Friday.

This was disclosed by District Returning Officer (DRO) Ajmal Hafeez and added that candidature forms should will available and till last date fixed on 14th February for submission. He added that polling for NA-40 is scheduled for 19th March on Sunday. DRO claimed that Zafar

Ullah Khan will Returning Officer for by-elections. Former Member National Assembly (MNA) Gul Dad Khan, former Member Provincial Assembly Siraj Khan, Najeeb Ullah Khan, Ishfaq Khan, Gul Karim Khan and Anwar-ul-Haq obtained nomination forms for by-elections on NA-40.

Anti-polio campaign at Bajaur: Deputy Commissioner Bajaur, Fahad Wazir on Friday inaugurated anti-polio campaign that was planned to vaccinate children residing in selected union councils of the district.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by District Police Officer, Additional Deputy Commissioner and representatives of health and concerned departments. On the occasion, DC also chaired a meeting to review arrangements of anti-polio drive. He also directed staff to work with dedication and achieve targets of vaccination campaign.

It is worth mentioning that anti-polio drive would start from February 13 in selective nine union councils to vaccinate children below five years of age.

LG members flay ECP's order

F.P. Report

SHANGLA: Local Government (LG) members Tehsil Council Alipuri has condemned suspension of the institution in wake of by-elections and polling Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly and declared it unconstitutional, on Friday.

This was claimed by Tehsil Council Alipuri during

emergency meeting held at District Press Club in which Chairman Waqar Ahmad Khan and opposition leader Ali Bas Khan along with other members of the council were present. They claimed that first of all LG elections were conducted on court's order because the high-ups didn't will for dissolution of powers.

The tehsil council claimed that it will weaken democratic norms and institutions in Pakistan because political stability can be restored by powerful local government system. They added that LG system works as nursery for democracy and developed nations have strongest Local Government systems in the world.

Anti-polio drive inaugurated in Lakki

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Lakki Marwat deputy commissioner Fazal Akbar inaugurated the five day anti-polio at a ceremony held in the district headquarters complex Tajazai on Friay. He administered several children below five with oral polio vaccine and said that his administration was committed to make the district polio-free. DHO Dr Abdulgul and other health officials were also present.

On the occasion, the dis-

trict health officer said that the health department had finalised arrangements for the five day polio eradication campaign commencing from Feb 13. He said that a total of 998 teams had been constituted to immunize more than 196403 kids under the age of five against the crippling disease. Dr Gul said that more than three hundred health officials including 54 union council polio eradication committees' chairmen and 255 area in charge officers would be deployed to monitor the five

day drive.

The deputy commissioner said that his administration with support of local police had made foolproof security arrangements for the vaccinators. He said that the officials of district administration would also perform monitoring duties besides helping polio workers to cover refusal cases. Mr Fazal called upon people from all walks of life, especially parents, to cooperate with polio teams and ensure vaccination of their children against polio.



SHANGLA: Police officials inspecting Alipuri-Khwazakhela road after heavy snow. — F.P. photo

Four dead in Quetta bus-truck collision

QUETTA (PPI): Four people died while 15 others sustained injuries in a collision between a passenger bus and a truck in Basima area of Washik in Quetta. Four people died while 15 others sustained injuries in a collision between a passenger bus and a truck in Basima area of Washik in Quetta on Friday.

According to rescue officials, the accident between the bus and truck occurred at Basima Zek in which four persons lost their lives and 15 others got hurt. The bus was going to Turbat from Quetta.

Rescue officials stated that condition of four of the injured was critical. They said after providing first aid to the wounded in Basima, they were referred to Quetta for further medical treatment. The persons who died in the accident belonged to District Mastung.

Security situation reviewed

F.P. Report

MINGORA: A meeting of the Divisional Intelligence Coordinating Committee was held at the Commissioner's Office Saidu Sharif presided by Commissioner Malakand Division Saqib Raza Aslam. Regional Police Officer Sajjad Khan also participated in the meeting. The meeting was attended by the Deputy Commissioners of the districts of Malakand Division and officials of intelligence agencies.

In the meeting, the overall security situation in Malakand Division was reviewed. In the meeting, the overall security situation and resources for the by-elections on the vacant seats of the National Assembly and the general election of provincial assembly were reviewed. In the meeting, the Deputy Commissioners of the districts briefed the committee on the issues related to the peaceful conduct of the election at the district level. While presiding over the meeting, Commissioner Malakand Division Saqib Raza Aslam issued orders to hold a meeting of intelligence coordination committees at the district level and send detailed recommendations to the divisional coordination committee.

Redressal of public issues assured

F.P. Report

WANA: Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) South Waziristan Naik Muhammad while talking to media representatives said that according to the vision of the provincial government the administration is working to solve public problems, on Friday.

ADC said that after the division of South Waziristan into two districts, the complex process of bifurcation is being completed rapidly, which will reduce administrative problems in the two new districts of South Waziristan. He further said that the doors of the district administration are open for the public and the Deputy Commissioner has directed all the staff in the South Waziristan compound to report to their offices at nine o'clock and is also paying them a surprise visit.

PML-N candidate submits papers

Syed Wali Ullah Shah

NOWSHERA: Press Secretary Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) Youth Wing Haji Jan Muhammad submitted candidature for NA-26 Nowshera for by-election, on Friday.

During submission of nomination form Jan Muhammad was accompanied by PML-N Khyber Pakhtunkhwa press secretary and former Member Provincial Assembly Ikhtiyar Wali Khan. They claimed that PML-N has potential to overcome problems by Pakistani nation.

Nine petrol pump owners booked for artificial shortage

Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: Taking notice of artificial shortage of oil products in the district Hafizabad, officers of district administration took actions against hoarders and profiteers and get registered 9 cases against owners of petrol pumps and oil agencies in the district.

According to details, on the special directions of Deputy Commissioner Umar Farooq Warraich, Assistant Commissioner Hafizabad Rab Nawaz Chadhar conducted raids of various petrol pumps and imposed Rs. 50,000/- fine to owners of petrol pumps for selling oil products on arbitrary prices while 5 cases got registered with different police stations on the area. Assistant Commissioner Pindi Bhattian Bilawal Ali also inspected different petrol pumps and imposed Rs. 45,000/- fine to pumps owners involved in overcharging. Meanwhile, Civil Defence Teams visited different oil agencies and sealed 4 oil agencies in the district.

Annual sports festival held: Annual Sports Festival held in Government Post Graduate

Collage for Women Hafizabad. Deputy Director Colleges Hafizabad Professor Azhar Janjua and Principal Shamaila Yaseen inaugurated the sports festival. Students of the college presented guard of honour to express affection and solidarity with Pakistan Army. Students took part in different sports competitions.

Principal Shumaila Yaseen said on the occasion that sports festival was arranged to promote healthy activities and to provide recreational opportunities to the students. She said that students had taken part in different games eagerly and showed good performance. Such activities post and enhance academic abilities of students, she added.

Free medicine at DHQ assured: Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad Umar Farooq Wariach directed the Medical Superintendent DHQ Hafizabad and Chief Executive Officer Health Dr. Nayyar Imran Haidar to ensure provision of free of cost medicines to patients in DHQ hospital as par policy and directions of the Punjab government. He issued theses direc-

tions while visiting DHQ Hospital Hafizabad, on Thursday. CEO Health Dr. Nayyar Imran Haidar, AMS Dr. Jhanzaib and Dr. Abid Bhatti were also accompanied by him. DC inspected outdoor, indoor, dental, children, nursery, medical wards, ICU, Dialysis Unit and other parts of the hospital and reviewed availability of medicines, diagnostic facilities to patients, cleanliness and other arrangements in the hospital. He asked different questions from patients admitted in the hospital regarding provision of treatment facilities in the hospital. DC directed the CEO Health and other officers to provide free of cost medicines to patients and to improve cleanliness of the hospital.

Meanwhile, ADCR Imtiaz Ali Baig inspected domicile branch, registry branch, AC Office and other branches and checked attendance of officers and officials on the directions of Deputy Commissioner. He directed the government employees to observe office timings strictly for improving services deliveries and warned that punitive action would be taken against absent employees from the offices.

Earthquake jolts Swat, adjoining areas

F.P. Report

MINGORA: An earthquake tremors jolted Swat and its adjoining areas on Friday. The magnitude of the quake on the Richter scale was recorded at 4.4. The National Seismic Monitoring Centre said that the quake took place at a depth of 203 kilometers, while the epicenter of the quake was located near Pakistan and Afghanistan border.

The tremors caused

panic among the residents and they rushed out of their home. According to the National Seismic Monitoring Centre, the earthquake struck at a depth of 203 kilometres while its epicentre was located near the border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan. There were no reports of any casualties or damage but still the temer caused panic among the local people.

It was worth mentioned here that the death toll from

the massive earthquake in Turkey and Syria kept on climbing Thursday, topping 21,000 as the first UN aid reached Syrian rebel-held zones but hopes of finding more survivors faded. The chief of the World Health Organization said he was on his way to Syria, as bitter cold hampered the search of thousands of flattened buildings and threatened the lives of many quake victims who are without shelter and drinking water.

Residents hold protest against load-shedding



F.P. Report

BANNU: All City Alliance protested against the non-provision of facilities and demanded the timely start of construction work on Government High School No. 2. The protesters demanded redressal of electricity load-shedding, non-supply of gas, artificial shortage of flour and oil and other problems.

Expressing their anger, the protesters blocked Tanchi Bazaar Chowk for traffic for several hours. Maulana Saeed of All City Alliance, Dr. Abdul Rauf Qureshi, Organizer of All City Alliance Malik Qasim Khan, Master Farmanullah Mira Khel, Malik Zarnoosh, Pir Noor

Muhammad Shah and others addressed the protest demonstration.

He said that the construction work has been approved in Government High School No. 2, but unfortunately, the construction work is not starting due to the disinterest of the district administration, due to which there is a fear of losing the academic year of more than three thousand students.

He said that oil is available all over Pakistan but unfortunately it is not available in Bannu due to artificial shortage, on the other hand load shedding of gas and electricity has made it impossible for the poor people to live due to which the business system is dis-

rupted. He said that the employees of WSS are not getting their salaries and they are taking retaliatory actions. He said that the long silence and not taking notice of our administration is meaningful. The district administration is only conducting demonstration operations.

Everything is provided for the district administration officers but unfortunately the people are being destroyed. He threatened that if the construction work of Government High School No. 2 is not started as soon as possible and other issues are not resolved, he will be forced to start a series of protests from Sunday.

RPO arrives for two-day visit to Kurram district

F.P. Report

PARACHINAR: Regional Police Officer (RPO) Kohat Division Dar Ali Khattak on Friday arrived for two-day visit to Kurram district. He visited various localities of the district and addressed a tribal jira in Governor Cottage, Parachinar.

He also held an introductory meeting with the tribal elders. Besides, Deputy Commissioner

(DC) Kurram, Wasil Khan Khattak, District Police Officer (DPO), Abdul Samad and elders of Turi Bangash tribes, the elders of Central Kurram, trade union, social and political personalities of the district were also present on the occasion.

The tribal elders highlighted issues related to law & order including shortage of police personnel, establishment of police

training school and growing menace of narcotics and demanded practical steps for eradication of all real culprits.

On this occasion, the RPO resolved some problems on the spot and recommended some issues to concerned quarters. The tribal elders appreciated the efforts of RPO Kohat, DC Kurram and DPO Kurram and also expressed gratitude to them.



Hope dims for families in Turkey as rescue turns to recovery

KAHRAMANMARAS. Turkey (AP): Precious hours have turned to tense days across earthquake-hit southern Turkey as fewer people are pulled alive from the rubble. While family members watch rescue workers shift to recovery, they also face an awful truth: that it's unlikely they'll ever be reunited with their missing loved ones.

In Nurdagi, a city of around 40,000 nestled between snowy mountains some 35 miles (56 kilometers) from the epicenter of the quake, throngs of onlookers - mostly family members of people trapped inside - watched as heavy machines ripped at one building which had collapsed, its floors pancaked together with little more than a few inches in between. Mehmet Yilmaz, 67, watched from a distance as bulldozers and other demolition equipment began to bring down what remained of the building where six members of his family - including three children and a three-month-old baby - were trapped.

The operation there had become one not of rescue, but of demolition. "There's no hope. We can't give up our hope in God, but they entered the building with listening devices and dogs and there was nothing," said Yilmaz. He hasn't moved from his hopeful perch beside the building for three days. He estimated about 80 people were still trapped within the collapsed structure, but said he didn't believe any of them would be recovered alive.

"The building looks like stacks of paper and cardboard, the fifth floor and the first floor have collided into one," he said grimly, his eyes full of resignation. Scarcely a building remains in Nurdagi that has not suffered major damage. In those where it was believed there could still be survivors, workers used pick axes, jackhammers and shovels to carefully chip away at the hunks of concrete and twisted knots of rebar in hopes of



discovering a sign of life. In other buildings, like the one where Yilmaz's family was trapped, it became more about recovery. In Kahramanmaras, the nearest city to the earthquake's epicenter, workers continued to search for survivors, but most of their discoveries were comprised of the dead. Standing atop a tall mound of debris, three men reached into a crevice and pulled out a body wrapped in a red blanket, its bare feet protruding. The body was placed in the bucket of a backhoe and slowly lowered to the ground.

One rescue worker was heard saying that his psychological state was in decline after days of searching, and that the smell of death among the rubble was becoming too much to bear. Nearby, an indoor sports hall serves as a makeshift morgue to accommodate and identify bodies that were recovered from the debris. On the basketball court-sized floor of the hall lay dozens of bodies wrapped in blankets or black shrouds, at least one of which seemed to be the small body of a five or six-year-old child. At the entrance to the morgue, a man wept aloud over a black body bag that lie

next to another in the bed of a small truck. "I'm 70 years old! God should have taken me, not my son!" he cried. Erdal Usta, an assistant to the provincial prosecutor, said the bodies that are dug from the rubble are brought to the building and catalogued, and await identification by relatives who can then transport them to receive burial.

One woman, who did not wish to give her name, said she had brought the body of her father-in-law to the morgue to be formally registered as deceased. She and her family, she said, had dug the man out of the debris with their own hands, but he had been crushed in the collapse. In Nurdagi, 67-year-old Mehmet Nasir Dusan sat in a chair watching as the remnants of a 9-floor building were brought down by excavators in billowing clouds of dust. He said he held no hope, either, of reuniting with his five family members trapped beneath the debris. Still, he said, recovering their bodies would bring some small comfort. "We're not leaving this site until we can recover their bodies, even if it takes ten days," he said. "My family is destroyed now."

Macron mulls stripping Putin of France's top honour

PARIS (AFP): French President Emmanuel Macron said Friday he might strip his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin of France's top honour, but is waiting for the "right moment" to do so. Putin received the Grand-Croix de la Legion d'Honneur, the top rank in France's honours system, in 2006 at a time when Moscow enjoyed better relations with Paris and the West.

But since Putin ordered last year's all-out invasion of Ukraine, ties have all but broken down and the European Union has imposed a range of tough economic sanctions. Macron awarded Putin's enemy Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky the top honour, but he has yet to formally remove it from Putin. Speaking after an EU summit in which leaders considered stepping up weapons deliveries to Ukraine, Macron admitted that the question of Putin's medal was "symbolic but important". But, while Macron said he believed he had the right to revoke the honour, he added: "It is not a decision that I made today." These decisions, he said, "are always meaningful and I think you have to appreciate the right moment to make them".

Reporter held during news event

EAST PALESTINE, Ohio (AP): A reporter was pushed to the ground, handcuffed and arrested for trespassing while covering a news conference about the derailment of a train carrying toxic chemicals in Ohio. NewsNation posted video of correspondent Evan Lambert being arrested in the gymnasium of an elementary school in East Palestine where Gov. Mike DeWine was giving an update about the accident.

Lambert was held for about five hours before being released from jail, NewsNation reported. "I'm doing fine right now. It's been an extremely long day," Lambert said after his release. "No journalist expects to be arrested when you're doing your job, and I think that's really important that that doesn't happen in our country." At the end of his news conference, DeWine said he didn't authorize the arrest and reporters have "every right" to report during briefings.

"If someone was stopped from doing that, or told they could not do that, that was wrong," DeWine said. A following statement from the governor's office said DeWine didn't see the incident because a bank of cameras blocked his view but he did hear a "disagreement toward the back of the gymnasium." DeWine "has always respected the media's right to report live before, during, and after his press briefings" the statement said. Mike Viqueira, NewsNation's Washington Bureau chief, called the arrest an infuriating violation of the First Amendment.

The Washington, D.C.-based Lambert could still face charges of disorderly conduct and criminal trespassing, NewsNation said. The Columbiana County Sheriff's Office administration said the arrest was made by officers from the East Palestine Police Department. A message seeking comment from the department was not immediately returned.

About 50 train cars, including 10 carrying hazardous materials, derailed in a fiery crash Friday night on the edge of East Palestine. Federal investigators say a mechanical issue with a rail car axle caused the derailment. Nearby residents in Ohio and neighboring Pennsylvania were ordered to evacuate when authorities decided to release and burn chemicals from five tankers filled with vinyl chloride, sending hydrogen chloride and the toxic gas phosgene into the air. At the news conference, authorities said sampling had shown air quality in the area was safe and residents could return home, although DeWine said some residents may want to wait until the air inside their homes is checked.

Pence subpoenaed by special counsel probing Trump

WASHINGTON (AP): Former Vice President Mike Pence has been subpoenaed by the special counsel overseeing investigations into efforts by former President Donald Trump and his allies to overturn the results of the 2020 election, according to a person with direct knowledge of the event.

The subpoena to Pence as part of the investigation by special counsel Jack Smith was served in recent days, according to the person, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive issue. The extraordinary scenario of a former vice president potentially testifying against his former boss in a criminal investigation comes as Pence considers launching a 2024 Republican presidential bid against Trump. The two have been estranged since a mob of Trump's supporters stormed the US Capitol building on Jan. 6, 2021, in an attempt to stop Democrat Joe Biden's victory. The subpoena is an aggressive step from a prosecutor who for years led the Justice Department's public corruption section and who oversaw indictments against major political figures. The move sets the stage for a likely executive privilege fight, given Pence's close proximity to

Trump for four years as major decisions were being contemplated and planned. It is unclear whether efforts to secure voluntary testimony from Pence stalled before the subpoena was issued.

Spokespeople for Pence and Smith declined to comment on the issuance of the subpoena, which was first reported by ABC News. Pence was a central figure in Trump's efforts to stay in power after losing the 2020 election. Trump falsely insisted that his vice president, who had a ceremonial role in overseeing the certification of the election, could simply reject the results and send them back to the battleground states he contested. On Jan. 6, Trump supporters driven by the lie that the election was stolen marched to the Capitol building, brutally pushed past the police and smashed through the windows and doors while Pence was presiding over the certification of Biden's victory. The vice president was steered to safety with his staff and family as some in the mob chanted, "Hang Mike Pence!" While the mob was in the Capitol, Trump tweeted, "Mike Pence didn't have the courage to do what should have been done to protect our Country and our Constitution."

Smith, who was named special counsel in

November by Attorney General Merrick Garland, has been tasked with overseeing investigations into Trump's attempts to subvert his defeat, his actions leading up to the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol and his possession of top-secret government documents at his Florida estate, Mar-a-Lago. Federal prosecutors have been especially focused on a scheme by Trump allies to elevate fake presidential electors in key battleground states won by Biden as a way to subvert the vote, issuing subpoenas to multiple state Republican party chairs. Federal prosecutors have brought multiple Trump administration officials before the grand jury for questioning, including former Trump White House counsel Pat Cipollone and Pence's own former chief of staff, Marc Short.

In a sign of the expanding nature of the investigation, election officials in multiple states whose results were disputed by Trump have received subpoenas asking for communications with or involving Trump and his campaign aides. A House committee investigating the Jan. 6 attack recommended that the Justice Department bring criminal charges against Trump and associates who helped him launch a pressure campaign to try to overturn his 2020 election loss.

Russia backs Sudan bid to lift UN sanctions

KHARTOUM (AFP): Russia's top diplomat Sergei Lavrov held talks in Khartoum with Sudanese officials, pledging support for their call to lift long-standing UN sanctions on the African nation. Lavrov's two-day visit is part of Russian efforts to shore up influence on the African continent amid broad international attempts to isolate Moscow following its invasion of Ukraine last year.

"We stand with the Sudanese side in its endeavour to lift the sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council," Lavrov told a press conference alongside Khartoum's acting foreign minister Ali al-Sadiq. Sadiq emphasised the need for the two countries to cooperate at the United Nations and to push "for reform... in the Security Council". Sudan has recently repeated calls for the body to lift sanctions and an arms embargo imposed during conflict in the country's Darfur region in 2005. Lavrov held talks with army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, who in October 2021 led a military coup that derailed Sudan's transition to civilian rule and triggered cuts to crucial Western aid.

He also met with Burhan's deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the powerful paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. The Russian diplomat's arrival in Sudan marked the latest stop in a tour that has included Mali and Mauritania. Last

month, Lavrov visited Eritrea, Angola, Eswatini and South Africa. Sudan and Russia have been "cooperating in the fields of economy and investment", Lavrov said, hailing Sudanese efforts "to attract Russian investments". He said Moscow "appreciates the comfortable conditions" created for Russian mining companies operating in Sudan. Counterpart Sadiq said Sudan would take part in a Moscow-Africa forum slated to take place in Russia in July.

Sudan relied militarily on Russia under strongman Omar al-Bashir, who was ousted in 2019 following three decades in power marked by international isolation and crippling US sanctions. Its military leaders who toppled Bashir maintained ties with Moscow while a transitional government sought to repair relations with the United States and the West. Following the 2021 coup, Russia told the UN Security Council that Burhan was needed to maintain stability, a diplomat speaking on condition of anonymity told AFP at the time. Earlier this week, special envoys and representatives including from the United States, Norway, Britain, Germany and France arrived in Sudan. US ambassador to Sudan John Godfrey said on Twitter that the representatives came "to support" a December deal signed between Sudan's military leaders and civilian factions.

Washington delisted Sudan as a state sponsor of terror in December 2020, and last year appointed its first ambassador to Khartoum in nearly 25 years. The United States has been pushing back against Russia's bid to expand influence among African countries. In 2020, it slapped sanctions on Russian-based M Invest, which the US Treasury Department said served as a front in Sudan for Russian private military contractor Wagner and was awarded "concession agreements to explore gold mining sites" under Bashir. Without mentioning Sudan, Lavrov defended Wagner's operations in other parts of Africa, saying the group was deployed "upon the direct request of governments".

Last month, the US expanded sanctions on Wagner over its role in the Ukraine war and accused it of "committing widespread human rights abuses and extorting natural resources" in African countries. Sudan has consistently denied the presence of Wagner on its territory. In December 2020, Moscow announced a 25-year deal with Sudan to build and operate a Red Sea naval base that was negotiated under Bashir. In 2021, Sudan's military said the deal was under "review". Lavrov said that the issue was awaiting legislative approval. Sudan has had no parliament since Bashir's ouster.

Egypt's inflation continues to surge as food prices rise

CAIRO (AP): Egypt's annual inflation surged to a new high in January as the country continues to battle ongoing price hikes and a depreciating currency, the Egyptian statistics bureau said. The state-run Central Agency for Mobilization and Statistics published figures showing that the annual inflation stood at 26.5% last month, up from 21.9% in December. In January 2022, the same figure stood at just 8%, before spiking after the outbreak of Russia's war in Ukraine the following month, shaking the world economy.

During January, the prices of basic commodities in Egypt rose steadily. The cost of bread and cereal increased on average by 6.6% while the price of meat and poultry climbed by 20.6%, the bureau said. The Egyptian economy has been hit hard

by years of government austerity, the coronavirus pandemic and the fallout from the war in Ukraine. Egypt is the world's largest wheat importer, with most of its imports having traditionally come from eastern Europe. Greatly affected by the enduring hikes are Egypt's lower-income households, most of whom are reliant on government subsidies for basic goods such as bread. Nearly 30% of Egyptians live in poverty, according to official figures. In December, Egyptian authorities and the International Monetary Fund agreed on a \$3 billion bail-out package to ease the crisis. The IMF deal was struck in exchange for Egypt implementing a number of economic reforms, including a shift to a flexible exchange rate. The deal also allows for a further \$14 billion in possible

financing for Egypt. The value of the Egyptian pound has continued to slide following its decision to shift to a flexible exchange rate. The currency has lost around 50% of its value against the dollar since the start of 2022. The Egyptian government unveiled plans to sell stakes in dozens of state-controlled companies, including banks and energy firms. Economists have long criticized the economic dominance of the Egyptian government and the army, labelling it a barrier to private sector growth. Egypt is also facing a foreign currency shortage. Many banks have placed limits on foreign cash withdrawals, while Egypt's government announced it is postponing numerous future projects that would require significant foreign expenditure.

20 years later, US Senate eyes repeal of Iraq war authorization

WASHINGTON (AP): Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said that the Senate will vote to repeal two decades-old measures giving open-ended approval for military action in Iraq, raising the hopes of a bipartisan group of senators who want to reclaim congressional powers over US military strikes and deployments.

The vote, which would come after consideration in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, could take place just before the 20th anniversary of the US invasion of Iraq. It would repeal the 2002 measure that greenlighted that March 2003 invasion, along with a separate 1991 measure that sanctioned the US-led Gulf War to expel Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's forces from Kuwait. "Every year we keep this authorization to use military force on the books is another chance for a future president to abuse or misuse it," Schumer said. "War powers belong squarely in the hands of Congress, and that implies that we have a responsibility to prevent future presidents from hijacking this AUMF to bumble us into a new war." He was referring to the Authorization for Use of Military Force.

The bill, led by Sens. Tim Kaine, D-Va., and Todd Young, R-Ind., passed the Senate Foreign Relations panel and the then-Democratic-led House in 2021. But it never came up for a vote in the full Senate, despite significant bipartisan support. The Iraq war authorizations "are no longer necessary, serve no operational purpose, and run the risk of potential misuse," Kaine said. The House is now led by Republicans, and it's unclear if leaders would bring the bill up for a vote. Forty-nine House Republicans supported the legislation two years ago, but current House Speaker Kevin McCarthy opposed it.

The Biden administration has supported the move, arguing that ending the war authorization against Iraq of the Saddam Hussein era would make clear that the Iraq government of today is a partner of the United States. It would also remove a grievance for rival Iran to exploit, State Department officials have said. But Republican opponents have argued that revoking the two authorizations for military force would signal US weakness to Iran. "The ayatollah is listening to this debate," Republican Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas said, referring to Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, when the panel debated the legislation two years ago.

Ukraine caught Russian plan to 'destroy' Moldova

BRUSSELS (AP): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that his country has intercepted plans by Russian secret services to destroy Moldova, and Moldovan intelligence confirmed the claim. Speaking to European Union leaders in Brussels, Zelenskyy said he recently told Moldovan President Maia Sandu about the alleged scheme.

"I have informed her that we have intercepted the plan of the destruction of Moldova by the Russian intelligence," Zelenskyy said through a translator. He said the documents showed "who, when and how" the plan would "break the democracy of Moldova and establish control over Moldova." Zelenskyy said the plan was very similar to the one devised by Russia to take over Ukraine. He added that he did not know

whether Moscow ultimately ordered the plan to be carried out. After Zelenskyy's comments, Moldova's Intelligence and Security Service released a statement confirming it has received "respective information from our Ukrainian partners" and said it has also identified "subversive activities, aimed to undermine the Republic of Moldova, destabilize and violate public order."

"At the moment, we cannot provide more details as there is a risk of jeopardizing various ongoing operational activities," the statement read, adding that all of Moldova's state institutions "are working at full capacity and will not allow these challenges to happen." Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov charged last week that the West was considering turning Moldova into "another Ukraine." He

alleged that the West backed the 2020 election of the pro-Western Sandu, claiming that she is eager to take the country into NATO, merge Moldova with Romania and "practically is ready for anything." In December, Moldova's national intelligence agency warned that Russia could launch a new offensive this year with the aim of creating a land corridor through southern Ukraine to Moldova's Moscow-backed breakaway region of Transnistria.

Transnistria broke away after a 1992 civil war but is not recognized by most countries. It extends roughly 400 kilometers (250 miles) from the eastern bank of the Dniester River to the country's border with Ukraine. Russia has about 1,500 troops nominally as "peacekeepers" in the breakaway region.

NK unveils record number of ICBMs at mily parade

SEOUL (AFP): North Korea's Kim Jong Un oversaw a major military parade showcasing a record number of nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missiles, state media reported, including what analysts said was possibly a new solid-fuelled ICBM. The parade to mark the 75th founding anniversary of North Korea's armed forces featured fireworks, military bands and uniformed soldiers marching in unison to spell out "2.8" -- the date of the celebration -- and "75", the official Korean Central News Agency reported.

Kim attended the parade with his wife, Ri Sol Ju, and daughter Ju Ae, video on state media showed. He wore the black coat and fedora combination favoured by his grandfather, North Korea's founding leader Kim Il Sung. Images showed Kim flanked by his top generals in Pyongyang's central Kim Il Sung Square, saluting as troops and missile units paraded past while patriotic music played. The weapons on show included at least 10 of the North's largest Hwasong-17 ICBMs, as well as vehicles apparently designed to carry a solid-fuelled ICBM, Seoul-based specialist site NK News reported.

North Korea has long sought to develop a solid-fuel ICBM because such missiles are easier to store and transport, are more stable and quicker to prepare for launch, and thus harder for the United States to detect and destroy pre-emp-

tively. KCNA said the crowd broke into "enthusiastic cheers" when the ICBMs appeared in the square, and that the parade also featured "tactical nuclear weapons operation units". North Korea stages military parades to mark important holidays and events and are closely monitored by observers for clues about the reclusive regime's progress on its banned ballistic and nuclear weapons. The parade showcased the "tremendous nuclear strike capability of the DPRK", KCNA said, referring to North Korea by its official name.

Commercial satellite images taken by Maxar Technologies at 10:05 pm (1305 GMT) showed a large North Korean flag and thousands of people assembled at Kim Il Sung square. Analysts said the scale and scope of the weaponry on display showed advances that represented a challenge to the United States. "They've shown more ICBMs in the latest parade than they've ever shown before, consistent with a longstanding directive from Kim Jong Un on mass producing nuclear weapons and delivery systems," US-based analyst Ankit Panda told AFP. This is an issue, he said, because Washington has planned its homeland missile defence system to deal with a "limited" missile threat from North Korea.

"North Korea has now demonstrated that their nuclear forces are far from 'limited'," Panda said. Other analysts said

Pyongyang was sending a clear message by parading more of Kim's most advanced Hwasong-17 missiles. "This is North Korea trying to declare itself a full-fledged nuclear power," Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul, told AFP. "Kim Jong-un let North Korea's expanding tactical and long-range missile forces speak for themselves." Pyongyang's state media had for years never mentioned Kim's children -- Seoul's spy agency believes he has three with wife Ri -- but he appeared with his daughter Ju Ae at an intercontinental ballistic missile launch in November last year.

The 10-year-old has since appeared alongside her father at several high-profile events, most recently a banquet to mark the army's founding anniversary. Analysts say she is the equivalent of a North Korean "princess" and that her appearances with her father could indicate she is his anointed successor. North Korea has held four night-time military parades in recent years. The parade comes after North Korea vowed to expand and intensify military drills to ensure its readiness for war. This followed a record-breaking year of weapons tests, including firing its most advanced ICBM. Kim recently called for an "exponential" increase in Pyongyang's nuclear arsenal, including mass-producing tactical nuclear weapons and developing new missiles for nuclear counterstrikes.

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What next after economic crisis overs?

ACCORDING to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), the country's foreign exchange reserves slipped to the alarming level of below \$3 billion for the first time in nine years, reducing import capacity to slightly over two weeks ahead of the proposed revival of the IMF \$6.5 billion loan program. According to the details, after an external loan payment worth \$ 170 million, the forex reserves slid down to \$2.92 billion during the last week, which raised the risk of default on the repayment of foreign debt.

Pakistan's economy has been in turmoil long before the summer catastrophic supper floods, and the government shuffle last April because of the global energy crisis, skyrocketing inflation, and the disastrous effects of war in Ukraine along with continuous political unrest and internal chaos that prevailed in the country since late 2022. The economic crisis usually emerged in Pakistan on a periodic basis as the Country's domestic production is nominal vis-a-vis its consumption and foreign imports that imbalance the national economy every other year so foreign loans had been an ad-hoc solution to recurrent economic challenges throughout history. Yet, governance has become difficult for the administrators as the new loans are insufficient to manage both repayments of foreign debt and running state businesses simultaneously, while politicking monetary affairs by the successive governments had proved to be poisonous for the economic policies of the country in the past. Currently, the nation faces a worst economic crisis, the risk of a debt repayment default as the South Asian nation has to pay back nearly \$ 75 billion by 2025 that is an impossible phenomenon without the implementation of comprehensive economic reforms, revenue generation, as well as loan restructuring with foreign donors to make things manageable. Pakistan's foreign reserves have sharply declined due to the reduction in foreign remittances, dollar smuggling, the rupee continuous depreciation, and delay in the 9th review of the IMF program, thus complicating the already fragile economy.

Currently, the revival of the IMF program became essential for the economic survival of Pakistan because friendly nations also linked their economic assistance with the IMF recommendation. Recently, Pakistan and the IMF have concluded the crucial 9th review of the ongoing EFF, while the global lender handed over a regressive reforms agenda to the government to meet its economic goals in the coming months, however, Washington based shylock has yet not okayed the release of \$1.2 billion tranche for the country.

The Finance Minister and other high-ups are confident and have started jubilating triumph over the success of the revival of the IMF program which would be helpful in averting impending economic collapse for at least this time. According to the government, the dialogues with the IMF were extremely difficult and the government was compelled to sacrifice a lot in terms of the party's political assets, public welfare, and development goals to make it happen. In fact, government Economists must once think about their leadership talent as they failed to achieve excellence even in a single area of the national economy despite the abundance of human and natural resources in the country. Thus, the nation has no optimism about the performance of its leaders in the future.

Airplane crash and Western predictions

ACCORDING to the western media, an international team of investigators claimed that it has found strong indications that Russian President Vladimir Putin approved the supply of heavy anti-aircraft weapons to Ukrainian separatists who shot down Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 in 2014. According to the details, the investigators claimed that they have strong indications, but still have not reached a high bar of complete and conclusive evidence that confirms their study.

A Malaysian Airliner en route from Amsterdam to Kula Lumpur was shot down by an unknown missile over a conflict zone in Eastern Ukraine on July 17, 2014. The deadly crash resulted in the death of all 283 passengers along with 15 crew members while leaving thousands of others deprived of their loved ones. The wreckage of the plane was found in Donetsk Oblast controlled by pro-Russian Separatists forces. The unfortunate incidents attracted worldwide condemnation for Moscow and a Dutch-led global joint investigation team (JIT) probed the incident that revealed that the airliner was hit by a Russian-made Buk surface-to-air missile launched from the pro-Russian separatists-controlled territory in Eastern Ukraine.

In fact, the sad story of the airplane crash later fell prey to global politics and rivalry as Russia and the west started blaming each other for tragic mishaps over contested territory. Russia has always denied any involvement in the downing of the flight over eastern Ukraine and refused to cooperate with the international investigation. A Dutch court convicted two Russians and a Ukrainian rebel for their roles in shooting down the plane, however, western investigators are still mulling over scenarios that prove Putin's involvement in the incident but failed so far.

Historically, western investigators have special expertise in discovering miracles out of nothing. Earlier, they assumed the presence of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) in Baghdad and brought ruination to Iraq, then they forecasted the construction of chemical and nuclear weapons in Syria and Lybia, and brought destruction in those nations. Recently, western Strategists echoed prophecies about an impending war in Ukraine which did not end until Putin invaded Ukraine. Currently, the west is seriously engaged in creating a link between the airplane crash and Krimlin Strongman to malign him at the global level. Thus, the outcome of the latest prediction of western strategists is uncertain so far.

Washington forges rare political unity in condemning China over balloon drama

Stephen Collinson

CHINA'S audacious spy balloon flight across North America has spectacularly backfired by enshrining rare bipartisan unity in Washington. The coming together of Republicans and Democrats is certain to stiffen future US strategic, economic and military resolve in the Pacific region and further damage buckled relations with Beijing.

The fierce congressional reaction to the balloon and the US government's disclosure of intelligence about it and China's balloon espionage program, meanwhile, threatened to further damage the world's most crucial diplomatic relationship - especially after China hit back by accusing the US of being the world's most gratuitous spy state. The unanimity of American anger toward China was exemplified by a House resolution condemning China that passed by a stunning 419-0 margin. It followed a growing realization in Washington, and more broadly across the country, that a long-predicted geopolitical confrontation may now be a reality. But despite the united political front in Washington, fury is boiling in both parties over the failure to down the balloon before it traversed the continent amid rising questions about the implications of China's breach of US airspace. Administration officials faced a gauntlet of criticism from lawmakers during a classified briefing on the issue on Thursday. And Republicans stepped up efforts to brand President Joe Biden as weak over the incursion despite his warning to President Xi Jinping in his State of the Union address earlier this week that he would vigorously defend US sovereignty.

This growing discord threatens to so politicize China policy that it will drain any efforts to defuse an escalating Cold War. The Biden administration wants to pursue those efforts despite the tensions caused by the balloon crisis. There's also a risk that Republican efforts to leverage the drama for domestic political gain could bust unity over policy toward America's giant Pacific rival. Such a partisan split would ironically deliver a greater payoff for China's communist rulers than any information picked up by the balloon over the US. The unanimous House vote on the incident had not been assured. It required Republican leaders to omit language critical of Biden and followed unusual bipartisan cooperation fostered by Texas Rep. Mike McCaul, who chairs the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and the top Democrat on the panel, New York Rep. Gregory Meeks. The resolution describes the balloon flight as a brazen violation of US sovereignty. McCaul said the bipartisan nature of the vote was critical and called on everyone to stand together against a "common enemy."

"We wanted it to be America against China - not internal fighting, because China would see that as a moment of weakness, that we're divided on party lines, and we didn't want to project that," McCaul told CNN. This strong signal sent to Beijing raises the possibility that the spy balloon mission has demonstrably hurt China's interests - especially if it results in a bipartisan zeal to increase defense spending, the size of US arms and equipment packages to allow Taiwan to defend against a possible Chinese attack and more resources to US allies. While there is agreement on the challenge now posed by China, there was mystification and some anger elsewhere in Congress on Thursday, even as officials held classified briefings and the FBI pushed forward on its effort to evaluate intelligence from the remains of the balloon salvaged from the Atlantic after it was shot down on Saturday.

In a Senate hearing, Democrats as well as Republicans, criticized Defense Department officials and questioned why they did not tell Americans more once the balloon was spotted. "You guys have to help me understand why this baby wasn't taken out

long before," said Sen. Jon Tester, a Montana Democrat who could be facing a tough reelection next year. The balloon floated above his state, which hosts US missile installations. Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski was furious that the Chinese balloon crossed her state. "As an Alaskan, I am so angry," Murkowski said. "If you're going to have Russia coming at you, if you're going to have China com-

ing at you, we know exactly how they come. They come up and they go over Alaska." Sen. Brian Schatz, a Democrat from Hawaii, said he understood why the White House might have kept China's balloon program classified but added, "We all understand that some of the desire to keep things classified, it has to do with not wanting to disclose to the public things that might be inconvenient politically for the department." The White House has previously explained that it waited until the balloon was off the Carolinas to shoot it down based on Pentagon advice that doing so before could endanger lives and property on the ground. Officials also said they took steps to ensure it was not an intelligence threat as it wafted across the country.

But some Republicans are accusing the White House of a cover-up that they think exposes Biden as feckless and unfit to be commander-in-chief as he eyes reelection, despite his strong role in standing up to Russia over Ukraine.

"I think the public, and Congress, would never have known about this if the Billings, Montana, paper hadn't published a picture that showed the balloon and US assets tracking the balloon. I think their

plan was clearly to keep this a secret," Missouri Sen. Josh Hawley told CNN after a classified briefing. "The United States was grossly unprepared, this administration was grossly unprepared, and frankly I think it was a huge mistake for them not to take down the balloon before it entered the continental United States," Hawley added.

While the House vote on the resolution condemning

A senior State Department official said the balloon had been capable of conducting signals intelligence collection - or intelligence gathered by electronic means - and was part of a fleet that had flown over "more than 40 countries across five continents."

China was unanimous, many Republicans used the debate before the resolution passed to lacerate the Biden administration.

"We watched in real time from our backyards and workplaces as a foreign aircraft equipped with spyware navigated over our neighborhoods, our military installations and our vital infrastructure," said Missouri GOP Rep. Ann Wagner, the vice chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. "The administration again showed the dictatorship in Beijing that they could again be bullied. President Biden's weakness and indecision sends a dangerous signal to our adversaries like Iran and Russia and North Korea."

Still, Utah Sen. Mitt Romney said he came away from the classified briefing more confident in the administration. "I believe that the administration, the president, our military and intelligence agencies, acted skillfully and with care," Romney, the 2012 Republican presidential nominee, said. Besides the classified briefings, Biden administration officials divulged new information about the balloon to the public Thursday, some of it gleaned by flybys by U-2 spy planes before it was downed. A senior State Department official said the balloon had been capable of

the information and public opinion warfare the US has waged on China. As to who is the world's number one country of spying, eavesdropping and surveillance, that is plainly visible to the international community," she added. Lawmakers were told Thursday that the order to send the balloon was dispatched without Xi's knowledge, sources familiar with Hill briefings said. But the idea Xi was unaware of balloon "is the working theory and an ongoing intelligence gap," a source briefed on the matter said.

Intelligence experts in the United States have been perplexed at the political furor stoked by a mere balloon - a comparatively unsophisticated asset that pales in significance compared to multi-pronged Chinese intelligence operations against the United States including economic, cyber and traditional espionage. Indeed, the US mounts a similarly broad collection mission against China, which was exposed when a Chinese jet fighter collided with a US spy plane in international airspace over the South China Sea in 2001. But the balloon flight, over US territory, has had a symbolic impact greater than that so far generated amid years of building tensions with China, including over

conducting signals intelligence collection - or intelligence gathered by electronic means - and was part of a fleet that had flown over "more than 40 countries across five continents."

Beijing is likely to be irked by more details being made public about its balloon program, as evidenced by comments by Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning in a briefing Thursday. "I am not aware of any 'fleet of balloons'," Mao said. "That narrative is probably part of

Taiwan. "I would never have imagined that my Saturday afternoon would have been disrupted due to a Chinese spy balloon not - only that floated across most of South Carolina, it floated across the entire continental United States," said freshman Republican Rep. Russell Fry whose South Carolina district contains coastal areas where the balloon was shot down.

"It does - if you watch it, and you were there on the ground - sound like it was straight out of a sci-fi movie," he said on the House floor, blasting the Biden administration for negligence and bemoaning an international incident that unfolded off the shores of Myrtle Beach. In the Senate, the dramatic events of the past week have caused a reassessment of years of US-China policy, which has seen efforts by the Clinton, Bush and Obama administrations to try to usher China peacefully into the global economy degenerate into a brewing confrontation in the Trump and Biden administrations. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman said at a hearing that the Biden administration did not "see another Cold War, but we do ask everyone to play by the same set of rules."

The problem, however, is that China interprets such US calls as an attempt to thwart what it sees as its rightful rise as a regional and global superpower. Sherman argued that US policy in the 21st century designed to head off confrontation had not failed, but that conditions in China had changed. "Xi Jinping is not the Xi Jinping of the 1990's that we all thought we knew," Sherman told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. She added that China under Xi was "the only country that wants to change that rules-based order, that can successfully do so and are trying to make that happen." "It is true that our way of life, our democracy, our belief in our values, in the rules-based international order is being challenged," she continued. "And we have to meet that challenge."

pressure the Assad government to end the conflict and respect human rights. However, in the wake of Monday's earthquakes, it is essential that these sanctions do not undermine the ability of the international community and aid organizations to provide support and assistance to those affected. The Biden administration needs to revisit this act, which has hurt the Syrian people much more than the Assad regime. The current situation in Syria has highlighted the importance of cooperation with the Syrian government in addressing the humanitarian crisis it has caused. Despite the challenges posed by the US sanctions and the ongoing conflict, it is crucial that all parties work together to provide support and assistance to those in need. The well-being of the Syrian people should be the top priority. It is time to set aside political differences in the face of this disaster.

CNN

Turkiye, Syria earthquakes: Helping the Syrian people more important than politics

Daoud Kuttab

IN times of crisis, such as when a humanitarian disaster takes place, the importance of saving lives and helping fellow human beings must rise above politics. The recent earthquakes that hit Türkiye and Syria have caused death, destruction and homelessness affecting thousands of our fellow human beings. But while aid has poured in from all over the world to Türkiye, only a handful of countries have sent support to Syria.

According to the UN, the earthquakes affected more than 1 million Syrians, with hundreds of thousands in need of aid and assistance. The disaster also caused widespread damage to infrastructure and housing, making it even more difficult for those affected to access necessities such as food, water and medical supplies.

In addition to the earthquake, the humanitarian crisis in Syria has been

exacerbated by years of conflict and the economic sanctions imposed on Damascus by the international community due to the leadership's repeated violations of the basic human rights of its own citizens. These sanctions, which target the Syrian government and its supporters, have made it difficult for aid organizations and foreign governments to provide support to the affected population.

Sanctions on Syria, especially the Caesar Act, which was passed into law by the US during the Trump era, have had a devastating effect. But it has been the people, not the regime, who have paid the highest price for these sanctions. The Syrian people are again paying a high price for the inaction and hesitation of many countries. Although the sanctions that have been imposed on the Assad regime due to its harsh treatment of fellow Syrians provide an exception for humanitarian support, most

countries have refrained from providing such support. Those countries are either unaware of this exception or are avoiding cooperation with the Syrian government from a position of exaggerated concern that they may be breaking international sanctions.

Despite the overall boycott of Syria, several countries - largely its neighbors - have provided aid to the Syrian people. But as of the time of writing, not a single Western country has offered direct support. The countries that have offered support include but are not limited to: Saudi Arabia, which has flown medical and humanitarian supplies to the affected areas and has pledged to continue to support the relief effort through its aid organizations; Jordan, which has sent a team of aid workers and medical supplies and has pledged to support the relief effort as needed; Russia, which has dis-

patched emergency teams and aid supplies; Türkiye, which has sent search and rescue teams as well as aid supplies; Iran, which has sent medical and humanitarian aid; Qatar, which has pledged financial support for the relief effort; Egypt, which has sent five military transport planes loaded with large quantities of medical supplies to Türkiye and Syria; and Algeria, which has sent planes loaded with about 115 tons of food and medical supplies, tents and blankets.

In addition to these countries, several international organizations have also offered support, including the UN, the International Committee of the Red Cross and various nongovernmental organizations. These organizations have provided essential supplies such as food, water, shelter and medical supplies to those affected by the earthquakes. Religious groups, including

mosques and churches, and private charities from Jordan, Palestine and other countries have also launched fundraising efforts for affected Syrians. It is important to note that the aid provided by these countries and organizations has been coordinated with the Assad government with the assurance that it will reach those who need it most. By working together, all parties involved are hoping the affected population receives the support and assistance required in the wake of this disaster.

Despite the challenges posed by the sanctions, the international community and aid organizations must work closely with the Syrian government to address this humanitarian crisis. This requires a coordinated effort to ensure that aid is distributed efficiently and effectively and that those in need receive the support and assistance they require. It is important to note that the Caesar Act sanctions are intended to

pressure the Assad government to end the conflict and respect human rights. However, in the wake of Monday's earthquakes, it is essential that these sanctions do not undermine the ability of the international community and aid organizations to provide support and assistance to those affected. The Biden administration needs to revisit this act, which has hurt the Syrian people much more than the Assad regime. The current situation in Syria has highlighted the importance of cooperation with the Syrian government in addressing the humanitarian crisis it has caused. Despite the challenges posed by the US sanctions and the ongoing conflict, it is crucial that all parties work together to provide support and assistance to those in need. The well-being of the Syrian people should be the top priority. It is time to set aside political differences in the face of this disaster.

Arab News

World must quickly find a way to end Ukraine war

Mohamed Chebaro

NEARLY a year has lapsed since Russia launched its special operation to change the regime in Ukraine and prevent the country from allegedly seeking further ties with the EU and NATO. However, the invasion of Ukraine has been met by a series of unexpected obstacles that have exposed Russia's limited power and highlighted once again how a small force with the right tactical weapons, intelligence and a determined human asset can blunt the efforts of one of the largest armies in the world.

As political and diplomatic efforts continue to be elusive, the Russian preparations for a late winter offensive that would metamorphose into an all-out spring push to punch through Ukrainian defenses are likely to yield only lim-

ited results, according to most military experts, further highlighting the conundrum the world finds itself in. Moscow looks unable to achieve its maximalist aim of annexing Ukraine or influencing a regime change at its doorstep in the face of alleged eastward NATO expansion. The Ukrainians, despite the substantial support they have received, will not be able to liberate all the territories occupied since Feb. 24, 2022, or those seized in 2014.

All evidence, therefore, continues to point to the fact that attrition is likely to remain the name of the game in Ukraine for the foreseeable future, with no one likely to emerge victorious in 2023 - short of course of an accident or a miracle that could spur all parties back to the negotiation table. Losses in military terms have been colos-

sal for the Russians, as well as for the Ukrainians, who have also suffered substantial civilian losses and infrastructure damage, which, given Kyiv's defensive posture, is likely to continue as the conflict risks becoming frozen.

A year on, it is obvious that Russia has lost out and, in comparison, Ukraine has survived, with its military successes emboldening its leadership. The West has also outperformed all expectations and remained united in the pursuit of its goal of supporting Ukraine with enough "defensive" weapons to frustrate Moscow's advances. At the same time, the West is denying the Ukrainians the assault capabilities to turn the table on the Russians in the hope of keeping a ramp open for the Kremlin to walk down in the future.

Meanwhile, global players like China and India have reaped some short-term benefits through their access to cheaper Russian energy, but they have stayed on the fence, refraining from actively pushing for peace, even though a protracted war would likely negatively impact their economic growth. Russia's invasion has descended into a zero-sum game and a guessing game to counter the fluid strategy of the opponent. It is clear that the West has crossed a new threshold in its assessment of the war, scaling up its weapons deliveries to Kyiv in terms of numbers and strategic quality, which modern theaters of war have not seen used before. This demonstrates the stakes at play in the game of denying Russia a victory that could further encroach

on democracy, liberty and Western freedoms and way of life.

Russia's illegal annexation of four partially occupied regions of Ukraine last October, along with the constant posturing and nuclear threats, have served to persuade hesitant nations in the West, such as Germany, to open their storage facilities and deliver advanced battle tanks, air defense shields and other hardware to Ukraine. This disproves the Kremlin's long-held view that EU countries would not stay the course and that their support to Ukraine would falter in the face of energy security disruptions, the increased cost of living and economic volatility. All the indications coming from the Kremlin point to the intention of achieving all prewar goals, unless something drastic happens. The Ukrainian leadership,

meanwhile, is intent on winning back at least what it has lost since February 2022 as the only way to prevent any future Russian adventures.

Another aspect of this war is that it has constantly tested the world order that was fought for and conceived during and after the Second World War. Its conclusion cannot be allowed to see the demise of that order at this juncture of history, when humanity is facing threats of a chaotic transition induced by the new digital age, overseen by a short-termist global leadership that is still grappling with climate change, shrinking resources and wider gaps between the haves and have-nots. All of this comes at a time of unparalleled geopolitical divisions and a world that is, more than ever, lacking in trust and solidarity to uphold the common good.

How the war in Ukraine obscured an uncomfortable truth

WHAT a difference a year - and a war - makes. Around this time last year - with Russia on the brink of launching its full-scale invasion - Ukrainians' confidence in their president to handle the military threat massing on their doorstep was low. Former comedian Volodymyr Zelensky's popularity ratings were tanking as he battled allegations of unmet campaign promises to tackle endemic corruption.

At the time, one of the major complaints against Zelensky was that he'd let pledges to reform the judicial system slide - a delay that threatened to derail Ukraine's aspirations of joining the European Union. For Ukrainians, it was an emotive issue. It is worth recalling that becoming part of the bloc was the main motivation of thousands of protesters taking to the streets in freezing temperatures during the 2013-2014 Revolution of Dignity - also known as the Maidan. Then on February 24, Russia's total invasion blasted these concerns into the background. Almost overnight, that dark cloud over Zelensky vanished as he defied critics, and miraculously pivoted into the role of heroic wartime president and global symbol of defender of the free world.

His popularity ratings surged - and have stayed high ever since - currently hovering at around 84%. But even a war, it seems, cannot galvanize a nation to the point where the most greedy cease their dirty deeds. Since the start of February, serious allegations have surfaced of senior officials either profiting off of the war or conducting themselves with gross incompetence. In one case, defense ministry officials reportedly allowed foodstuffs for the military to be purchased at heavily inflated prices (a well-known ploy to skim off money).

In another, a deputy prosecutor general was sacked after being spotted holidaying with his family in Marbella, Spain. He reportedly drove there in a Mercedes owned

by a wealthy businessman. The scandals couldn't have come at a worse time for the Zelensky administration, which is reportedly grappling with a monthly budget deficit of \$5 billion. It could also raise eyebrows among skeptical Republican legislators on Capitol Hill who've been questioning the more than \$100 billion in aid

"The decision was made in reaction to some MPs that were found on the beaches of warm countries. They should be the ones to pay the political price. "It is a bad decision for the interests of the country.

pledged to Ukraine's war effort. They are not alone, with recent polling in the US suggesting an increasing percentage of Americans think Washington is providing too much aid to Ukraine.

Little wonder then that the Ukrainian government's sweeping crackdown on corruption was swift and harsh. Raids were ordered on a wide range of officials on the national, regional and local levels. It even targeted one of Zelensky's former backers, the once-untouchable billionaire Ihor Kolomoisky, who earlier stood accused of bilking a major Ukrainian bank of billions of dollars. (Kolomoisky, who has previously denied any wrongdoing, has not publicly commented on the recent raid.) But as some Ukrainian commentators have noted, many officials were allowed to gracefully resign rather than face sacking and further punishment. Anastasia Bolshedvor, who has gained a large social media following as an unofficial government watchdog, questioned whether the shakeup - coming almost a year into the war - was a show or a genuine step in the war against corruption. Similarly, Yevhen Hlibovyt'sky, former political journalist and founder of the Kyiv-based think tank and consultancy, pro.mova, told me: "Zelensky's

fight with corruption would have been more convincing if it was started at his own stables and followed with the institutional changes." That said, he also added that no battle with corruption should be allowed to disrupt the war effort.

In the recent crackdown, Zelensky may also be opening

himself up to accusations of overreach. When a member of the Zelensky faction in Parliament was discovered sunning himself on a Thai beach while his country is in the midst of a war, the government responded by promptly booting the lawmaker from the ruling party. But it also took the extreme step of banning lawmakers from traveling overseas, and just at a time when they should be seen to be ambassadors for the country, amplifying Zelensky's call for more military aid. Odesa member of parliament, Oleksiy Goncharenko, went so far to call it an illegal move that violated the Ukrainian constitution. "The rights of MPs cannot be limited, even in the time of martial law," he told me.

"The decision was made in reaction to some MPs that were found on the beaches of warm countries. They should be the ones to pay the political price. "It is a bad decision for the interests of the country. Many of us are doing frontline work and building up support for Ukraine," he said, adding that he just came back from the US where he gave several talks at universities and met with senators and member of Congress, including Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer. Luckily for Goncharenko, the trip took place before the ban came into

effect.

Reports of corruption at the highest level of government are nothing new to most Ukrainians. But the new allegations come at a time when millions of them have fled Ukraine for safe haven abroad - and could act as a deterrent for them coming back anytime soon. Many young Ukrainians I've spoken to agree that the government should not see the war as a pass to suspend the battle against corruption - even with the economy in shambles. "I'm 100% against turning a blind eye against corruption and finding excuses such as the state of the economy or the war. We should continue investigating, prosecuting and fighting corruption," Olga Kearley, a 29-year-old Kyiv-based Ukrainian entrepreneur told me.

"I haven't stopped recycling because the war started. It's my fundamental belief and moral standard. As a country, we are fighting the outside demons, but at the same time, we should continue fighting our inner demons - and corruption is one of the big ones," she added. "We have a lot to rebuild. We expect a lot of transformation. It is the rebirth of our nation. It's the Ukraine that my generation wants to see. I do hope that all those young people that left will see that Ukraine is changing. They should come back and be part of it," Kearley said. Expecting Zelensky, especially during a time of war, to launch a full-scale fight against corruption would be naive. But with billions in aid flowing into the country and with millions in exile closely watching events back home, the administration has very little wiggle room cleaning house. At a minimum, Zelensky needs to respond to allegations of wrongdoing with the same determination that Ukrainian servicemen have demonstrated on the battlefield. This is an opportunity to create a nation where corruption is not tolerated, and where oligarchs no longer have a free hand to rape and pillage the economy.



Biden team shrugs off polls, targets key voters ahead of 2024 run

JOE Biden, his aides and his Democratic Jallies are shrugging off polls showing doubts about his age and leadership as they plot his expected re-election campaign, and point instead to the US president's flinty State of the Union speech to Congress this week as a sign of his political resiliency.

Biden, who turned 80 in November, is the oldest president to hold office. He and his Democratic Party are laying the groundwork for a campaign that would put him in office for a second, four-year term in 2025. Recent polls show aging leaders are a concern for Americans in general, and Biden's age in particular worries Democratic voters. Asked about the age concerns in a Noticias Telemundo interview that aired Thursday, Biden said "Well, that's not what I hear."

He added, "Look, do you know any polling that's accurate these days? You all told me that there was no way we were going to do well in this off-year election. I told you from the beginning we're going to do well." Biden's public approval rating was just 41% in a Reuters/Ipsos opinion poll that closed on Sunday. That is close to the lowest level of his presidency, though similar to where former President Donald Trump was at the same time in his administration. Biden aides and advisors Reuters spoke to in recent days reiterated the idea that polling is irrele-

Trevor Hunnicutt

vant. Their reasoning: there is more than a year to go before ballots are cast, and US political polls predicting a "red wave" of Republicans before the midterms were wrong.

Instead, Biden and his team are studying polls showing the favorability of Biden's message and the policies he is pushing, like higher taxes on companies and the rich, and lower insulin costs. They're targeting key subsets of voters, such as those who flipped from supporting Trump in 2016 to Biden in 2020. "I feel good about where we are. I feel good about the way things are, and I feel good about the reception I get," Biden said in the Telemundo interview. On Wednesday, Biden delivered a robust speech in the state of Wisconsin, which made such a flip in 2020, ribbing Republicans for heckling him over his remarks about some opposition party members' Social Security plans, while reiterating a pledge to work with them at the same time.

"People sent us a clear message: Fighting for the sake of fighting gets us nowhere. We are getting things done," he said. An estimated 23.4 million people watched the State of the Union, giving Biden one of his largest audiences of the year, and clips of an interchange between Biden and House Republicans circulating on social media may have drawn millions more viewers. How well he did depends on who you ask.

A CNN poll conducted with 552 US adults found that 72% regarded the speech positively. A Fox News-led focus group felt he didn't address crime or education adequately. In swing state of Nevada, independents and moderates approved of Biden's attacks on Republicans for threatening Social Security and Medicare benefits, and his pledge to cap insulin costs and make the wealthy pay their "fair share" in taxes, said Navigator Research, which hosted a small focus group. The left-leaning group's research has been used before by the White House. Overall, Biden's approval rating among the group rose from 31% to 52% during the speech, and six in ten liked the speech. His approval rating on handling of the economy rose from a net negative 38% to a positive 4%.

However, Nevada voters are still finding it hard to feel good about the economy when they see prices for eggs and milk still rising, said Bryan Bennett, an adviser to Navigator. "It is hard for people to reconcile the personal economic indicators with the broader, more positive ones," he said.

Attacking Republicans for threatening Social Security and Medicare is expected to be particularly salient in competitive states like New Hampshire, Pennsylvania and Florida with large proportions of elderly voters. Biden heads to Florida to talk about the issue on Thursday.

EU must be bold amid series of policy challenges

EUROPEAN summits are sometimes eminently forgettable, but this week's may be different because the EU is going through a far-reaching period of change as the one-year anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine fast approaches. There is growing acknowledgement across the continent that decisions taken in the coming months will define the longer-term economic and political character of the bloc. On the agenda on Thursday and Friday is not just the conflict, but also the massive new green industrial plan announced last week, plus migration policy.

On Ukraine, Brussels intends to mark the 12-month anniversary of the war on Feb. 24 with a big new 10th package of sanctions. In the words of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, it is going to be "a massive package again. The plan is to focus once more on technology that can and should not be used by Russia's war machine. In other words, we look deeper into components that were found, for example, in drones to make sure that there's zero availability for Russia of these technologies or (in) the drones' production, for example in Iran, that we are following up closely." This sanctions package, which may include capping the sale price of exports of refined petroleum products, will coincide with a doubling down of EU support for Ukraine, with overall pledged assistance from Brussels and its member states to Kyiv already amounting to nearly 50 billion (\$53 billion). The latest phase of this support includes military assistance of more than 3.6 billion under the European Peace

Andrew Hammond

Facility and the launch of the EU Military Assistance Mission to train an initial 30,000 Ukrainian soldiers in 2023.

Amid earlier fears that European and wider Western unity toward Ukraine could break down this winter, this underlines the new-found resolve within the alliance that must now continue into the spring as the war enters what could be a dangerous new phase. Part of this discussion involves the complex question of Ukraine's EU accession process. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky claims major progress has been made on reforms highlighted by the bloc, but EU leaders are keen to push back any discussions over a formal timeline for Kyiv joining the 27-member club. On the green industrial front, there is a growing sense in Brussels that Europe has only a limited window of opportunity to act in the face of the assertive industrial strategies of China and now the US thanks to its Inflation Reduction Act.

Amid significant disagreements within Europe on the plans, Von der Leyen is trying to get "buy-in" for a series of measures, including loosening state aid rules, to try to preserve the EU's competitive advantage on critical and emerging technologies. While the intra-bloc differences are real, including on state aid measures, the 27 member states and Brussels must now come together to forge a pathway forward, given the growing warnings that the European continent's industrial base could end up structurally uncompetitive, especially if high energy costs persist. While the final form of Europe's ultimate package is therefore not yet fixed in stone, the political imperative to act is growing.

This collective determination to try to restore a level playing field with the US and China to preserve Europe's economic attractiveness in the global green race must now be acted on.

Divisions will also come up across the bloc on migration policy, given the growing challenges from long-term migratory trends driven by climate change, conflict, famine and economic hardship. Manfred Weber, leader of the European People's Party in the European Parliament, has gone as far as saying that "we are sleepwalking into a new migration crisis. The reception capacities for migrants via the Balkan and Mediterranean routes are exhausted." The debate here is how best to balance controlling immigration - given the political damage and fall in public confidence that was caused by the perceived loss of control over Europe's borders in 2015 - with the economic and demographic imperative that many EU countries face amid growing labor shortages. These are hampering economic recovery from the pandemic slump and threaten to constrain growth over the long term. Take the example of Germany, where the falling birth rate and aging population means its economy requires some 400,000 extra workers a year. France also has hundreds of thousands of unfilled vacancies.

Amid predictable north-south and east-west divides on these issues, EU leaders must now find a pathway through the complexity of this policy landscape. From migration to Ukraine and the green new industrial deal, it is time for the EU to come together and walk the walk, not just talk the talk, by making bold, constructive decisions.

NATO's attractive vision of hope, stability and prosperity

MILITARY and political analysts are putting the war in Ukraine under the microscope of NATO enlargement. The argument put forward is that the US and NATO had given guarantees to Moscow in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union that the alliance would not expand any further. However, despite these guarantees, the transatlantic alliance did the opposite and added country after country, getting ever closer to the Russian border. This argument is predominantly repeated by analysts who oppose the continued support of Western countries to Ukraine and wish for a negotiated end to the hostilities. It is also an argument that indirectly gives a justification for Russia's actions in Ukraine as self-preservation or self-defense.

Whether the story of broken promises by the US and NATO are true or not, this storyline strips all the countries that joined the alliance of their independent and sovereign decision-making. NATO enlargement, or its blocking, becomes a chess game between Russia and the West, in which all other countries are pawns. Moreover, it removes the key element of sovereignty when applying to join NATO. In reality, analysts should ask why these countries chose to join NATO. And why today do we have Finland and Sweden applying? If we consider the Soviet era, one cannot say that

it left the best memories in the conscience of the people in Eastern and Central Europe. Let's face it, people wanted to go to the western side of the Berlin Wall. No one was trying to go east, except maybe the spies we see in movies. The USSR's tanks did not come to Prague in 1968 for peaceful reasons. The Prague Spring was violently suppressed by the USSR and Warsaw Pact members. This defunct alliance was an answer to NATO.

The post-Soviet era was chaos and ruin for Russia. It is undeniable that seeing country after country, some of which were former members of the Warsaw Pact, join NATO must have been a painful vision. Yet, once again, why did these countries decide to join NATO and not stay aligned with Moscow? The simple answer is that these countries felt threatened. As Russia was able to regroup and regain part of its past power under Vladimir Putin's leadership, financed by hydrocarbons, it did not offer a vision for these countries. On the opposite side, NATO and the EU do offer a vision. Moreover, NATO offers flexibility to its members. It adapts to the will of every country. For example, France, which left the alliance's integrated military command under Charles de Gaulle and rejoined under President Nicolas Sarkozy some 30 years later, has not committed its nuclear sub-

marines to the alliance. The current opposition from Türkiye to Sweden's accession is also proof that each member has a say and sometimes even makes it too transactional.

This is why we cannot view NATO enlargement as a chess game between stronger powers that disregards the will of nations. Today, the war in Ukraine has exacerbated this will and we are reaching the point of no return. Who would have thought that Finland, which historically refused to join NATO, would apply? Helsinki had previously made the strategic political decision to balance its relationship with Moscow while benefiting from the freedoms offered by the West. This meant never taking aggressive actions against Moscow or making declarations that could be perceived as such. Today, Prime Minister Sanna Marin issues threats and urges Russia to end the war in Ukraine. And this is the other reality. Despite Putin's capacity to rebuild Russia and project its power again, it is largely an asymmetric posture. And so, this weakening, which adds to the lack of vision, has made Russia less feared. Russia is no longer capable of coercing countries into following its own interest and it does not offer any broader vision to counter what NATO and the EU offer to countries: hope, stability and prosperity.

And so, within these conditions, the question is whether Russia will be downgraded from its superpower status. In reality, the invasion of Ukraine has enabled this possibility, especially with the initial subpar performance of its military. For many analysts, the only element that still keeps Russia in the superpower club is its nuclear arsenal.

Yet, if it uses it, it is game over for the entire globe. In fact, it will dig deeper into asymmetrical responses to keep its status. The Russian advances in Africa are a good symbol of this. Funny enough, unlike in Europe, where it lacked vision and lost influence, it is expressing a vision in Africa - one of freedom and independence from colonialist powers. NATO is more than just a military alliance, it is a capacity builder and ecosystem enabler for the greater good. There is no doubt that countries choose to join of their own free will and are not the pawns of the US in that matter. From collective defense to economic benefits within a flexible framework, there is no doubt that NATO offers great advantages to any country. Yet, the objective should always be to avoid being dragged into a global war and to act as a deterrent. Unfortunately, the current escalation in Ukraine could lead to a much broader conflict. This is why, while keeping the transatlantic alliance strong, there should be a path toward negotiations with Russia. A real reset.

Zelenskiy wants jets. The west should think very carefully before giving them to him

HEROIC rhetoric has its moment in every conflict. "We have freedom, give us wings to protect it," cried Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, in pleading support from the nations of Europe in Westminster Hall on Wednesday. He faces a renewed battle to drive Russian tanks off his land - all his land - in the spring. His cause is just and it is desperate. He now wants jets.

At such a time, war has all the best tunes. It ridicules argument, honours danger and jeers at caution. Over the past year, the western powers under Nato auspices have struggled to contain the battles in Ukraine from escalating into precisely what cold war theorists most feared. That is a destabilisation of the balance of power in Europe, leading to a widespread and catastrophic conflict. They have so far succeeded. Russia's outrageous bid to occupy and conquer all of Ukraine has been resisted. The line of contact with Russian forces has withdrawn into the Donbas region in the east, roughly the territory occupied by Russia with local support in 2014. Escalation has been avoided largely because western weapons have not deliberately been deployed on Russian soil. Nato has enabled Ukraine to put up a valiant resist-

ance. The reason has not been to preserve western security but rather out of respect for its cruelly assaulted sovereignty. It is not a respect the west has always shown, as in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya.

At some stage in any war, interests will diverge. Russia wishes to see western support for Ukraine as a Nato aggression, a view partly validated by the west's global economic sanctions and fierce ostracism of all things Russian. It sometimes seems as if London and Washington were eager to support Vladimir Putin's paranoia. At the same time, Ukraine has an interest in responding in kind. It demands that Russia be seen as a threat to all of Europe and the world. It rejects the danger of nuclear escalation as an idle threat. Emboldened by western weaponry, it now wants Russia driven out of all of Ukraine. Military experts say this would require a long-term and massive western commitment, possibly including manpower on the ground. It would end Nato's determination to avoid the war leading to any "kinetic conflict" with Russia. It would certainly split the alliance. None of this stops politicians such as Boris Johnson, with agendas of their own, from seeking headlines with much backslapping

Simon Jenkins

and Churchillian talk of "total victory".

Discussing peace at this juncture in a war meets a depressingly familiar response. Compromise is seen as capitulation. When you can bask in the applause of Westminster and Buckingham Palace, why risk humiliation around some Black Sea negotiating table? Both sides feel they can summon more resources, crucially western ones in the case of Kyiv. There is always scope for just "one more push". The only sensible way out of this conflict has degenerated to the near unmentionable. It is the re-establishment of some version of the 2021 border arrived at - and accepted by Kyiv and European representatives - under the Minsk agreement after 2014. We know that it proved a dead letter, and was monstrously overridden by Russia's subsequent invasion. But as in all wars, sooner or later some deal must be reached on the basis of some existing balance of power.

That is what should dominate the debate over Zelenskiy's request for new planes. Military experts explain that they cannot conceivably be in use by the coming spring, indeed possibly not this year. Ukrainian pilots cannot be

trained to fly them, nor ground facilities built to handle them. Jets cannot occupy territory and, as bombers, would be allowed only to bomb forces in Ukraine. They are of limited tactical use. This spring, anti-aircraft and anti-missile defences would be far more useful, as should be the arrival of western tanks. In other words, a supply of jets would be more an escalation of support than of military reinforcement. It might supposedly suggest to Putin that his war is not going to go away and he should sue for peace. Equally it might do the opposite. He, or any harder-liners who would displace him, might respond with a nuclear deployment or a savage air attack on Kyiv. This might escalate to the arrival of western pilots and attacks bases in Russia. Either way it would blatantly risk a lethal escalation without real help to Ukraine on the ground. It would certainly split western governments and people.

That is why the jets gamble cannot be worth it. Better by far to help Zelenskiy gain battlefield advantage in the coming spring as a basis for a sustained effort for peace. So far the west has kept an impressive degree of control over this appalling conflict. It cannot surrender that control at such a critical juncture.

The Guardian

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Weekly inflation up by 0.17 percent

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation, measured by Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed an increase of 0.17 percent for the combined consumption group during the week ended on February 09, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 228.17 points as compared to 227.79 points during the past week, according to PBS data. As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 34.83 percent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 is covering 17 urban centers and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs 17,732 witnessed a 0.06 percent decrease and went up to 233.61 points from last week's 233.76 points.

Meanwhile, the SPI for the consumption group from Rs 17,732-22,888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175; and above Rs 44,175 witnessed an increase of 0.02 percent, 0.10 percent, 0.14 percent and 0.22 percent respectively.

On the other hand decrease is observed in the prices of Onions (9.83%), Tomatoes (5.40%), Eggs

(3.40%), Wheat Flour (2.71%) and Sugar (0.31%)

The items which recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week (WoW) basis included onions (9.83%), tomatoes (5.40%), eggs (3.40%), wheat flour (2.71%) and sugar (0.31%), according to the data.

The commodities which recorded an increase in their average prices included potatoes (7.15%), chicken (6.94%), bananas (6.53%), vegetable ghee 1 kg (5.67%), rice basmati broken (3.80%), rice irri-6/9 (3.64%), vegetable ghee 2.5 kg (2.71%), cooking oil 5 kg (2.60%), pulse mash (2.42%) and garlic (2.20%), pulse moong (2.20%) LPG (3.06%) and

cigarettes (2.25%).

On a year-on-year (YoY) basis, the commodities that witnessed a decrease in prices included tomatoes (57.76%), chillies powdered (12.43%) and electricity for q1 (12.31%).

The commodities that witnessed an increase in prices on a YoY basis included, onions (507.98%), chicken (93.21%), diesel (81.41%), eggs (79.19%), rice basmati broken (68.92%), petrol (68.77%), rice irri-6/9 (68.26%), pulse moong (66.30%), tea packet (63.92%), bananas (61.88%), pulse gram (56.80%), bread (50.66%), lpg (50.41%), pulse mash (50.25%) and salt powdered (46.46%).



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar briefing the media on conclusion of talk with the IMF Mission at Finance Division.

Ambassador Nadir assures to identify business opportunities for Pakistan in Ukraine

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's Ambassador designate to Ukraine (Retd) Nadir Khan on Friday assured that he would work to identify new business opportunities for Pakistan in Ukraine and facilitate the business community in promoting trade with Ukrainian counterparts.

He said that lots of business and investment opportunities would be available in Ukraine during its reconstruction phase and stressed that the entrepreneurs and investors of Pakistan should be ready to capture them. He stated this while addressing the business community during his visit

to the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI). Nadir Khan said that Pakistan-Ukraine bilateral trade was less than US\$ 1 billion and the trade balance was highly in favour of Ukraine as Pakistan's imports were over US\$ 700 million and exports were around US\$ 70-80 million.

He stressed that the business community of Pakistan should make efforts to export more products to Ukraine to improve the trade balance, and assured of taking all possible measures to facilitate them in that regard.

ICCI President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that

Pakistan could export many products to Ukraine, including pharmaceuticals, surgical and medical equipment, textiles, cutlery, construction material, IT products, sports goods, leather products, fruits, and emphasised that the embassy of Pakistan in Ukraine should cooperate in promoting business linkages between the private sectors of both countries to explore new avenues of trade promotion.

He said that Pakistan needed to boost exports to improve its foreign exchange reserves, which had tumbled down to below US\$ 3 billion and urged the Commercial Sections of

Pakistan in foreign countries to identify the demand of Pakistani products in their respective markets to improve exports.

He said that direct air links between Pakistan and Ukraine were important to promote B2B and P2P relations between the two countries. Vice President of ICCI, Engineer Muhammad Azhar ul Islam Zafar said that Pakistani commercial counselors should be given annual export targets and their performance should be analyzed on the basis of those targets. He said that some commercial counselors should be taken from private sector, who could help in improving exports.

BOP - The first bank disbursing funds under PM Youth Loan Scheme

E.P. Report

LAHORE: The Bank of Punjab (BOP) becomes the first bank disbursing funds to Microfinance Providers for the Prime Minister's Youth Business & Agriculture Scheme (PMYB&ALS). The bank disbursed PKR 100 million to National Rural Support Program (NRSP) under Tier-1 of the scheme for lending to small businesses and farmers. BOP is offering both Shariah-compliant

and conventional financing solutions to ensure a wide range of aspirant borrowers can take advantage of the scheme.

Meanwhile, BOP is already leading in terms of disbursements and approvals under Tier-2 & Tier-3 among participating banks. The Government of Pakistan through State Bank of Pakistan has launched PMYB&ALS to promote entrepreneurship through subsidized financing to small businesses, agricul-

ture, and livestock sectors. The scheme envisages creating job opportunities and improve the economic situation in the country.

Speaking at the occasion, Mr. Zafar Masud (President & CEO - BOP) said, "We are a proud partner of the government for promoting entrepreneurship. We believe this is an effective tool for financial inclusion entrepreneurship. I hope to see more banks and financial institutions stepping forward to promote this initiative."

Shipping Activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Three ships, Express Athens, Vitus Bering, and Scirocco carrying Containers, Wheat Gasoline, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, Grain & Fertilizer Terminal, and FOTCO Oil Terminal respectively on Thursday. Meanwhile, two more ships, Aurelia and Coral Actinia with Palm oil and chemicals also arrived at the outer anchorage of Port Qasim on the same day.

A total of 08 ships were engaged at PAQ berths during the last 24 hours, out of them, two ships, gas carrier Al-Bidda and container vessel Express Athens left the port on Friday morning and another ship 'Chemroad Polaris' is expected to sail on today in the afternoon.

The cargo throughput of 107,984 tonnes comprising 87,890 tonnes imports cargo and 20,094 tonnes of export cargo including containerized cargo carried in 2,251 Containers (1,069 TEUs Imports and 1,182 TEUs export) was handled at the Port during the last 24 hours. Four ships APL California, MSC Federica, Global Falcon, and Sloban Hebe scheduled to load/offload Containers, Bitumen, and Palm oil are expected to take berths at Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal and Liquid Terminal respectively on Friday and three more container ships.

Planning ministry, PITB signs MoU to implement iPAS

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Planning Development and Special Initiatives and Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) Friday signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the implementation of the Intelligent Project Automation System (iPAS) solution for the Planning Ministry.

The MoU was signed by the Secretary Planning

Ministry Syed Zafar Ali Shah and Chairman PITB Faisal Yousaf at the ministry, said a press release issued here.

The event was attended by the officials of the Planning Ministry and PITB. Speaking on the occasion, Secretary Planning Syed Zafar Ali Shah, said that the MoU would improve workflow and enhance productivity, reduce operational risks,

and improve government businesses in the internal processes by implementing iPAS which ultimately would establish efficiency and transparency.

"This is a landmark and much needed initiative which will not only ease the work of officials but also cost-effective," said Zafar Ali Shah, while appreciating PITB for collaborating with the Planning Ministry.

Red Bull Campus Cricket: Celebration of 10 Year Legacy

E.P. Report

KARACHI: Red Bull Campus Cricket celebrates a decade of discovering the best cricket talent in Pakistan. After electrifying qualifiers in six different cities, National Finals are set to begin in the University of Punjab to decide who will be the Pakistan Champion.

To amp up the cricket fever, Red Bull Campus Cricket anthem was launched which celebrates the ten-year legacy of grooming raw cricket talent to future rising stars.

Red Bull Campus Cricket was launched in 2012 and the first edition included an all-Asian final with teams from Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Asia. Since its launch, the tournament is now being played in eight countries including India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, England, South Africa, UAE, Australia and Zimbabwe.

This tournament serves as a platform for discovering the best cricket talent at grassroot level. It provides an opportunity as a global platform, for university and college cricket to maximize their

potential.

Being a breeding ground for future cricket stars, some top names in cricket like Hussain Talat, Muhammad Hasnain, Rumman Raees, Danish Ali, Mir Hamza, and Saud Shakeel made their way to play in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) and in the national team.

Red Bull Campus Cricket qualifiers took place in Lahore, Multan, Karachi, Quetta, Peshawar and Islamabad. The six city champions were University Of Punjab, Bahauddin Zakariya University,

Jinnah Government College, University of Balochistan, City University of Science and Technology and COMSATS University.

Peshawar and Karachi champions, City University of Science and Technology and Jinnah Government College, respectively will go head-to-head on 5th February, to become the Pakistan Champion.

The winning team will get the opportunity to play a match with Peshawar Zalmi and attend a masterclass from their top players.

Asian markets follow Wall St down as rate hike fears persist

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian markets tracked another loss in New York on Friday as interest rate hike fears course through trading floors after last week's blockbuster jobs report.

While data in recent months has shown inflation is coming down, the employment figures showed the economy remained robust, leading several top Federal Reserve officials to warn much more work was needed to get prices under control.

Having spent January optimistic that the days of central bank tightening would soon come to an end, traders have been brought back down to earth this month as they contemplate borrowing costs going higher and staying there longer than expected.

Richmond Fed president Thomas Barkin added his voice to his colleagues this week in warning that the bank had to "stay the course" in lifting rates if it wanted to bring inflation down to its two percent target.

However, with borrowing costs going higher still -- and some warning it could go to a two-decade-high six percent -- fears are growing that the world's top economy will

tip into recession.

"Inflation most likely won't get conquered if the economy doesn't break," said OANDA's Edward Moya.

"Disinflation trends remain in place but it will be hard for them to continue with a strong labour market and as the economy keeps on growing. We've seen commodities and goods price declines, but core services remain tricky."

He added that the Fed would continue hiking until personal consumption expenditure -- the bank's preferred inflation gauge -- was trending sharply lower.

"And that might not happen until the summer," he said.

After Wall Street's retreat, most of Asia was in the red.

Hong Kong, Shanghai,

Sydney, Seoul, Singapore, Taipei and Jakarta sank, though a weaker yen helped Tokyo post morning gains.

Analysts said next week's consumer price index release will be a key data point, which could play a big role in the Fed's plans for future rate hikes.

"Whether or not the Fed has tightened financial conditions sufficiently to bring inflation down

to target over time is going to be the most significant debate in the market agenda through the first half of the year," said SPI Asset Management's Stephen Innes.

He added that "the fear is now that we could still be talking rate hikes in the third quarter".

- Key figures around 0230 GMT - Tokyo - Nikkei 225: UP 0.5 percent at 27,722.92 (break)

Hong Kong - Hang Seng Index: DOWN 1.1 percent at 21,385.06

Shanghai - Composite: DOWN 0.1 percent at 3,266.35

Euro/dollar: DOWN at \$1.0730 from \$1.0739 on Thursday

Pound/dollar: DOWN at \$1.2105 from \$1.2117

Euro/pound: UP at 88.66 pence from 88.60 pence

Dollar/yen: DOWN at 131.54 yen from 131.56 yen

West Texas Intermediate: DOWN 0.4 percent at \$77.74 per barrel

Brent North Sea crude: DOWN 0.3 percent at \$84.25 per barrel

New York - Dow: DOWN 0.7 percent at 33,699.88 (close)

London - FTSE 100: UP 0.3 percent at 7,911.15 (close)

'Turkey, Syria will recover from earthquakes tragedy to emerge stronger'

KARACHI (APP): Leaders of the business community of Pakistan on Friday expressed confidence that the Turkey and Syria will recover from the tragedy of earthquakes and will emerge stronger.

These views were expressed by President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Irfan Iqbal Sheikh and Vice President FPCCI Umar Masood-ur-Rehman during their visits to the Turkish and Syrian embassies, said a spokesperson of FPCCI.

They expressed condolences and sympathies during the visits to Turkish and Syrian embassies on tragic loss of lives and injury arising from a series of recent strong earthquakes.

They also met the ambassadors of Turkey and Syria as well, shared and recorded their thoughts and prayers for those who lost their loved ones during this difficult time and wished for the injured a speedy recovery.

The FPCCI President on behalf of the business community of Pakistan, assured full support and assistance in cash and relief items and said they stand with the people of Türkiye and Syria in this difficult time.



MULTAN: Labourers busy in unloading tomato bags from delivery truck at vegetable market.

Govt to train over 2,800 olive farmers during spring tree plantation drive

ISLAMABAD (APP): The government has set a target to impart training to over 2,800 olive farmers and stakeholders during the tree plantation campaign for the current season for encouraging and developing olive farming in potential areas across the country.

"The aim of the initiative is to ensure the production of nutrient-filled hygienic edible oil by enhancing domestic output as well as reduce the reliance on the imported commodity, which is putting pressure on foreign exchange reserves," said Dr Hassan Tariq, National Project Director Olive Cultivation Program in National Agriculture Research Center.

Talking to APP here on Friday, he said that during the current spring tree plantation drive about 47 training programmes would be organised in different areas to familiarise farmers with international best practices for olive cultivation.

Besides, the farmers would be

trained on orchard management, and value addition of the olive to enhance their farm income, whereas they would also be introduced to the latest marketing techniques, labelling and branding, he added.

Meanwhile, a national olive reference lab was also established for quality testing to ensure the safety and quality of the locally produced products including olive oil and other value-added products that would help to ensure a proper rate of return to growers. Another regional lab would also be established during the current year, Dr Tariq informed, adding that a national conference would also be organised during the next month, to be attended by growers, experts, academia, and industrialists.

Meanwhile, he said that over 1.2 million olive plants will be planted during the current spring tree plantation campaign across the country for strengthening the national efforts to enhance the output of domestic edible oil for reducing

reliance on the imported commodity and save much-needed foreign exchange.

In this regard, the olive plantation would be carried out over 8,900 acres across the country, besides the launch of a campaign on wild olive grafting across the four provinces, including Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir to attain oil for local consumption, he added.

So far, he said that olive plantation had been completed over 40,400 acres, and about 8,900 acres of land would be brought under the olive plantation during the current spring plantation campaign, which will help to expand the area under olive production. The government in collaboration with other stakeholders and provincial governments would graft over 2 million wild olive trees, Dr Hassan said, adding that wild olive trees standing over millions of acres were an untapped potential, which would be brought under olive production.



In brief

Guardiola responds

MANCHESTER (AP): As Manchester City's lawyers prepare for another battle to clear the club's name, manager Pep Guardiola said Friday the Premier League champions have already been condemned. City was accused on Monday of breaching a slew of financial regulations over a nine-year period. If found guilty, the club could face a fine, deduction of points or, in the most extreme case, expulsion from English soccer's top division. "My first thought is we are already being condemned," Guardiola said. "We are lucky we live in a marvellous country where everyone is innocent until proved guilty. We didn't have this opportunity. We are already sentenced." City already had a two-year ban from European club competitions overturned by the Court of Arbitration for Sport in 2020 after UEFA had ruled the club committed "serious breaches" of financial fair play regulations from 2012-16. The latest accusations came after a four-year investigation and, if upheld, represent one of the biggest scandals in the history of the Premier League. City has said it will prove its innocence, with Guardiola adamant he will remain as manager. "I am not moving from this seat. I can assure you, more than ever I want to stay," he said. "Sometimes I have doubts, seven years already is a long time. Now I don't want to go. Not because people say they lied to you Pep. They didn't lie to me." City is accused of about 80 breaches of financial rules and 30 more breaches relating to its alleged failure to cooperate with the investigation since December 2018.

Ronaldo scores 4 to pass 500 league goals

RIYADH (AFP): Cristiano Ronaldo scored all of Al Nassr's goals in a 4-0 rout of Al Wehda in the Saudi league on Thursday as he passed the 500 league goal mark in his club career. The 38-year-old Portuguese star now has 503 goals scored for five different teams stretched across five leagues. He hit three for Sporting Lisbon in his fledgling career, 103 for Manchester United over two spells, 311 for Real Madrid and 81 at Juventus. Ronaldo now has five for Al Nassr who he joined after the World Cup following his bitter divorce from United. On Thursday, he hit the 500 mark in the 21st minute with a left-footed strike. He made it 2-0 with his right foot just before the interval before his hat-trick arrived from the penalty spot eight minutes into the second half. It was his 61st career hat-trick. He added a fourth just after the hour mark when he was first to a rebound. Ronaldo had opened his account for his new employers last Friday with a stoppage-time penalty in a 2-2 away draw against Al Fateh. The five-time Ballon d'Or winner, who holds the all-time records for Champions League and international goals, is banking more than 400 million euros for his surprise move to Saudi, according to sources close to Al Nassr. The giant sum includes 200 million euros for promoting Saudi Arabia's expected joint bid to host the 2030 World Cup, the sources told AFP. Ronaldo has become a figurehead for the conservative kingdom's push to improve its reputation through sports -- a process that has drawn accusations of "sportswashing", or trying to sanitise its human rights record.

Afridi believes PSL will decide fate of Amir, Imad's National team comeback

KARACHI (INP): Former Pakistani cricket captain Shahid Afridi has given his thoughts on the potential return of two of the country's most famous cricketers, Mohammad Amir and Imad Wasim, to the national side.

During a recent interview with a local news channel, Afridi said that both players could make a case for themselves if they produce exceptional performances in the upcoming Pakistan Super League (PSL).

Amir, who retired from international cricket in 2020 after accusing the team management of mental torture, has seen speculation that he could reverse his decision following the recent change in leadership at the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB).

Similarly, Imad Wasim has been participating in

T20 leagues worldwide and has been the subject of rumors regarding a return to the national team.

Afridi stated that the PSL will be the perfect platform for both players to make their comeback, adding that it depends on their mindset and if they have any goals set for the tournament.

"I think that depends on your mindset if you have any goals set for the PSL. It depends if you want to stay average or compare yourself with the likes of Shaheen, Haris, and Naseem," he said. "Mohammad Amir has been playing cricket for a while; the same goes for Imad. Both of them would like to perform, given the opportunity. I think it [PSL] is the platform which you can use to make a comeback."

He also noted that the outcome of the PSL can tell a lot about the players and that they would like to perform given the opportunity. Regarding the poor performance of the Karachi Kings in the PSL, Afridi said that there could be multiple reasons for the team's struggles and that blaming the captain alone wouldn't necessarily be fair.

"I think a team's performance can tell you a lot, and I think there can be multiple reasons. It could be captaincy; it could be team management and planning from coaches. And if you are not performing, it means that errors are being made," he said.

He suggested that other factors, such as team management, coaching, and planning, could also play a role in a team's success or lack thereof.

FG Polo, Newage/MP breeze into final Century 99 Punjab Polo Cup

LAHORE (APP): FG Polo team and Newage Cables/Master Paints qualified for the main final of Century 99 Punjab Cup Polo Tournament after winning their respective semifinals played here at Lahore Polo Club on Friday.

Phenomenal performance of Raul Laplacette helped FG Polo beat BN Polo team by a narrow margin of 5-4½ in the first semifinal of the historic tournament. Raul Laplacette displayed outstanding polo skills and techniques and thrashed in three tremendous goals while Saqib Khan Khakwani also excelled with a contribution of a beautiful brace. For BN Polo, which had a half goal handicap advantage, Juan Maria Ruiz Guinazu and Roberto Iturrioz Arias thrashed in two goals each.

The first semifinal of the day went neck-and-neck and the slight half-goal lead that FG Polo took in the first chukker, remained intact till the final one, as both the teams kept on

launching attacks on each other's goal and also succeeded in converting goals but when the final bell was rung, FG won the crucial match by a close margin of 5-4½. John Fisher and Chris Hyde officiated the match as field umpires.

Simon Prada shone in Newage Cables/Master Paints' 5-2 triumph over Diamond Paints in the second semifinal of the day. Simon Prada was in sublime form and did the magic with mallet and polo pony and also contributed with three tremendous goals. His teammates Raja Temur Nadeem and Juan Cruz Greguol converted one goal each. From Team Diamond Paints, both the goals were struck by Ahmed Ali Tiwana.

Diamond Paints started the match by banging in a brace against one goal by Newage/Master Paints to take a 2-1 lead. This was all that Diamond Paints could gain from the match as after that, they couldn't score a single goal while Master Paints smashed in

two goals each in the second and fourth chukkers to win the encounter by 5-2. John Fisher and Chris Hyde supervised the match as field umpires.

In another match of the day, contested between Remounts and HN Polo for the place in the subsidiary final, the former outpaced the latter by 6-3. Manuel Sundblad emerged as hero of the match by hammering an impressive hat-trick of goals while Jota Chavanne banged in a brace and Ahmed Zubair Butt scored one goal. Haider Naseem scored the only goal for Remounts, which had a handicap advantage of two goals. John Fisher and Chris Hyde were the field umpires.

Now, the main final will be played between FG Polo and Newage Cables/Master Paints on Sunday (February 12) at Lahore Polo Club while the subsidiary final will be played between Remounts and Master Paints on the same day and same venue.

Karachi Kings' squad kick off preparations for PSL season 8

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): With the eighth edition of the Pakistan Super League now just few days away, Karachi Kings gear up for yet another exciting season as they held their first training session. Players stretched their arms before indulging in rigorous batting, fielding and bowling drills at Karachi's National Bank Cricket under the watch of head coach Johan Botha and assistant coach Michael Smith.

Australia's Ben Cutting, who arrived earlier on the same day, also participated in the first training session of the team alongside captain Imad Wasim and other local players of the Karachi Kings' squad.

During the session, multi-talented skipper, Imad, was also seen showcasing his skills with a football, a glimpse of which was also shared by the Karachi King's social media.

It is pertinent to mention here that the upcoming edition of PSL will be played across four venues from 13 February to 19 March.

The Multan and Karachi-leg matches will be held from 13-26 February, before action shifts to Lahore and Rawalpindi where 20 matches will be played from 26 February to 19 March. Karachi Kings, on the other hand, will play their first game on February 14 against Babar Azam-led Peshawar Zalmi at National Bank Cricket Arena in Karachi.

Wahab to take oath as Punjab minister after PSL 8

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) management committee chairman Najam Sethi requested Punjab's Caretaker Chief Minister (CM) Mohsin Naqvi to take oath from Wahab Riaz as sports minister after the Pakistan Super League (PSL 8).

Najam Sethi called Mohsin Naqvi and asked him to delay the oath taking ceremony of the cricketer, as the fast bowler will be representing Peshawar Zalmi in the mega event. The MC Chairman wanted Wahab Riaz to concentrate

on the league, where he is the only bowler to complete century of wickets.

The caretaker CM accepted the request of Najam Sethi and will take oath from the fast bowler after the PSL's eighth edition. Earlier, Babar Azam had joked in a podcast that he would keep the "Minister Wahab" tight during the PSL, as he will be captain of his side. Wahab Riaz has been appointed as Sports Minister in the Caretaker Cabinet of Punjab but he has not taken oath till now.



DHAKA: Mohammad Rizwan played a part in three dismissals, Comilla Victorians vs Rangpur Riders, BPL 2023.

National Ski and Snowboarding Championship officially Commenced in Malam Jabba



E.P. Report

SWAT: With the collaboration of Security Forces, the National Ski and Snowboarding Championship has commenced in Malam Jabba.

More than 100 players from all over Pakistan are participating in the Snow Festival organized on February 10 and 11. Apart from ski and snowboarding competitions, cultural and food stalls are also being organized.

is in the two-day National Ski and Snowboarding Championship.

On this occasion, a musical night and spectacular fireworks have also been organized for the tourists.

The National Skiing and Snowboarding Championship is held every year in Malam Jabba in which tourists from all over the world including Pakistan participate.

A large number of domestic and foreign tourists are expected to participate this year as well.

On this occasion, tourists and spectators said that holding such festivals and events in Swat Valley is a clear proof that these areas are peaceful.

They said that due to the efforts of the organizers, the organization of international level competitions in the area are continue throughout the year.

Volleyball trials under PM Youth Talent Hunt Programme to start from Feb 21

PESHAWAR (APP): The trials of volleyball (Boys) under the Prime Minister Youth Talent Hunt Programme will be held from February 21-22, at five different venues across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, namely Peshawar, Hazara, Mardan, Swat and Bannu.

This was stated by Higher education Commission (HEC) Coordinator for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and former international athlete Bahre Karam on Friday.

He said the online registration was closed on January 31 and "now the trials schedule has been announced wherein players between the ages 15 to 25 years would be able to take part." According to the schedule, the trials for Peshawar region will be held on February 21 and 22 at the University of Peshawar under the supervision of Directorate of Sports, University of Peshawar and University of Agricultural, Peshawar. The trials for Mardan Region will be held at board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Indoor Hall, Mardan from February 25-26.

He said the trials at Swat would be held at Government Postgraduate Jahanzeb College, Swat from March 2-3. Likewise, the trials for Hazara region players would be held from March 5-6 at Committee Ground Hariapur, while the trials for Bannu would be held from March 9-10 at Bannu Sports Complex, Bannu.

The preparations had been completed, he said, adding, Chairman of Higher Education Commission, Islamabad, Dr Mukhtar Ahmed, DG Sports (HEC) Javed Ali Memon, Head of Prime Minister's Programme Sheeza Fatima, Adviser to the Prime Minister Amir Muqam, Vice Chancellor of Peshawar University Prof. Dr M Idrees had extended every support to him.

He said, "Hockey trials for boys and girls have been postponed, and a new schedule will be announced." He also lauded Professor Dr Muhammad Idrees for his support in establishing volleyball academy. "The construction of a volleyball academy has been started in the premises of the Directorate of Sports University of Peshawar", he said.

Wapda retains National Women's Volleyball C'ship title

ISLAMABAD (APP): Defending Champions Wapda retained the National Women's Volleyball Championship title by defeating Pakistan Army in the final here at Hamidi Hall of Pakistan Sports Complex on Friday.

Wapda outplayed Pakistan Army in the final by 3-1 set with 24-26, 25-18, 25-14 and 25-20 points. Higher education Commission (HEC) downed Sindh by 3-0 (25-18, 25-10, 25-15) in the third-position match.

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Senator Khushbakht Shujaat, Chairman of Pakistan Volleyball Federation, Chaudhry Muhammad Yaqoob, President of Pakistan Volleyball Federation, Chaudhry Ifthikhar Ahmed, Chairperson, Women's Volleyball Development Committee, PVF Malika

Junaid and Madiha from Interwood attended the closing ceremony.

Speaking at the ceremony, Shaza Fatima Khawaja said sports were the top priority of the Federal government and all-out efforts were being made for the promotion and encouragement of games at all levels.

She lauded the women players who featured in the championship and said, "Women have been working hard in every field and proving their mettle. They (women) are no less than men in any field. The gov't will support volleyball including all sports at all levels," she underlined. Shaza Fatima said efforts were underway to encourage and promote women not only in sports but in every walk of life. "Support programs for sportspersons will be launched so that young girls can come forward from the grass-roots level,"

she informed.

Ch. Muhammad Yaqoob said all-out efforts were afoot to promote women's volleyball.

"Pakistan women's team would bag the top position in the South Asian Games," he added. "Pakistan will also try to qualify for the Olympics. We will emerge victorious in Asia in two years," he said.

Yaqoob also asked for the cooperate sector to come forward and support the games. "There is a need for the cooperate sector to help in promoting sports, as it is difficult for the government to do it single-handedly," he urged and thanked all the sponsors and congratulated the Wapda team. Malika Junaid thanked all sponsoring teams and guests and emphasised on organising women's volleyball events in the future to improve the game of female volleyball players in Pakistan.

Yuan, Cem move in ITF Pakistan Jrs Tennis C'ships boys' singles final

ISLAMABAD (APP): Yuan Lu of China and Cem Atlamis of Turkiye moved in the boys' singles final of ITF Pakistan Juniors Tennis Championships leg-1 here at PTF-SDA Tennis Complex on Friday.

A large number of foreign players (boys/girls) from Turkiye, Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Thailand, UK, Malaysia, Romania, Singapore, China, Poland, South Korea, Canada and Pakistan were participating in the event.

In the first boys' singles semifinal, Yuan Lu of China,

who came through the qualifying rounds, played outstanding tennis to beat Bugra Ozkoc of Turkiye and reached the finals.

In Boys Singles semifinals, Yuan Lu (CHN) beat Bugra Ozkoc (TUR) 6-2, 6-6, 6-1; Cem Atlamis (TUR) beat Mikhail Khodorchenko (RUS) 6-4, 6-2.

In Girls Singles semifinals, Zeynep Erbakan (TUR) beat Polina Zaytseva (RUS), Anastassiya Kim (KAZ) 6-2, 6-1; Taira Abildayeva (KAZ), Vlada Guryleva (RUS) beat Maia Visan (ROU), Jinshu Xia (CHN) 6-3, 6-1.

In Boys Doubles semifinals, Edward Kruppe

Murphy shines on debut, but Rohit's ton puts India on top

NAGPUR (Agencies): Skipper Rohit Sharma hit a brave 120 on a turning Nagpur pitch as India extended their lead to 144 despite Australian debutant Todd Murphy's five wickets in the opening Test.

India were 321-7 at stumps with all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja proving his worth for the second straight day of his international return with an unbeaten 66.

The 22-year-old Murphy took regular wickets with his off-spin in his attempt to check India's surge but Jadeja kept up the charge following Rohit's dismissal soon after tea.

Jadeja was batting alongside fellow left-hander Axar Patel, who hit 52, as the pair put on an unbeaten stand of 81 for the eighth wicket.

Rohit led from the front with his Ninth Test century to extend India's dominance after they dismissed Australia for 177 on day one of the four-Test series.

"It wasn't easy, he was made to work really hard and he showed a lot of good temperament," India's batting coach Vikram Rathour told reporters. "Rohit adapts real-

ly well and he is somebody who can change his game." The captain defied the spinners to reach his hundred with a boundary off Murphy in the second session.

He put on a key 61-run sixth-wicket stand with Jadeja, who stood firm after Rohit's departure to register a fifty after his five wickets in the Australian innings. Jadeja, who has three Test hundreds, did his trademark sword swish with the bat to mark his 18th half-century in the five-day format.

"Tried to embrace it" -

Murphy stood out for the tourists with remarkable control to knock off Indian stalwarts including Virat Kohli, caught behind for 12. "I think there's definitely nerves but there's also excitement about just being out there... and bowl to these sort of guys, some of the best players in the world," Murphy told reporters.

"Thankfully, today there's a few rewards, I didn't get too overawed by it and just tried to embrace it." Murphy, who claimed KL Rahul as his first Test wicket on Thursday, trapped Ravichandran Ashwin lbw

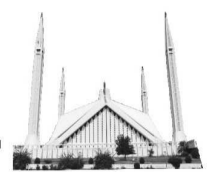
and got Cheteshwar Pujara caught at short fine leg in the first session.

Senior Australia spinner Nathan Lyon spoiled Twenty20 sensation Suryakumar Yadav's Test debut after he bowled the batsman on eight to put India in a spot at 168-5.

But Rohit, who started the day on his overnight 56 and smashed Pat Cummins and Lyon for a six each, and Jadeja soon swung back the momentum with a mix of caution and aggression.

Cummins took the second new ball after tea to send back Rohit bowled, one ball after he was dropped by Steve Smith at second slip. Murphy soon bagged his fifth as he trapped fellow debutant Srikanth Bharat Iw -- a decision that was given not out by the umpire but successfully reviewed by Australia.

Jadeja, who returned from a knee injury with a 5-47 on Thursday, soldiered on with Patel as they frustrated the opposition attack in the final hour of play. Axar smashed eight boundaries en route to his second Test fifty.



In brief

IRSA enhances water releases

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday enhanced water releases from various rim stations and it stood at 91,400 cusecs with an inflow of 52,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water inflow from Tarbela dam has increased to 45,000 cusecs with an inflow of 18,100 cusecs. The water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1485.74 feet and was 87.74 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Similarly, water discharge from Mangla dam has also increased to 25,000 cusecs against a water inflow of 12,900 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1128.35 feet, 78.35 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 51,900, 37,700, 32,400 and 7,500 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 12,100 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and zero cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

Irfan Cheema's solo show concludes

ISLAMABAD (APP): An exhibition of an eye-catching vibrant collection of still life by Irfan Cheema titled 'Florilegium' concluded here on Friday at Tanzara art Gallery. Irfan's still-life work has been favorably received by artists, collectors, and critics. He has regularly showcased his new paintings in solo shows and museum exhibitions in Pakistan, China, and more recently in the United Kingdom. In his own words, his work is a celebration of nature, life and heritage of places that he has visited, lived in, and loved. Though painting from an early age, oil painting became an important part of his daily routine. His paintings, which may all be described as beautiful, make references to beauty in their various guises and attributes such as nature and sensuality, the extravagance of motifs and richness of color, and yet there is an ever-prevailing sense of temporality characterizing his work. Set indoors, laid out on stone ledges usually with dark backgrounds of indefinable color and lit with morning light from a single source, his subject carefully placed along sweeping folds of intricately woven and richly hued shawls, are suspended in time and space, said the organisers. 'Florilegium' was a selection of work from 2022 and an expression of appreciation for the artist's garden in his Shanghai home that in his own words was a source of great joy and a site of quiet contemplation during a trying time of the year.

Kite flying poses serious threats

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Anti-Kite Flying Volunteers Association (AKFV) has raised the alarm on the dangers posed by the sport of kite flying and called for self-regulation among citizens to avoid hazardous activity. Talking to APP here on Friday, a representative of AKFV Yasir Farooq Usman said that kite flying posed serious risks, particularly to human lives and birds. He said, "The strings used for kite flying are made of strong and sharp materials that can cut the throats of unsuspecting people and birds." The kite flying season usually starts in February, and law enforcement agencies were making efforts to apprehend the kite sellers and illegal hoarders as the police could not prevent people from engaging in the sport, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Turkish Ambassador to Pakistan Mehmet Pacaci along with Pakistani Muslims perform funeral prayer at Faisal Mosque in Islamabad.

Japan provides \$12.7m for upgrading girls' primary schools in Sindh

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Government of Japan has agreed to provide new grant assistance worth around \$12.7 million (Rs. 3,510 million PKR) for upgrading girls' primary schools into elementary schools in rural Sindh.

Ambassador of Japan WADA Mitsuhiro, Chief Representative of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) KINOSHITA Yasumitsu, Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs Dr. Kazim Niaz, attended the signing ceremony for the assistance at the Ministry of Economic Affairs, said a news release issued here by Japan embassy in Pakistan on Friday. The project has been conceived keeping in view the fact that the number of middle, and elementary schools is much lower (2,162) than the primary schools (35,377) in rural Sindh.

This particular issue is also adversely affecting pri-

mary school students' retention and is the biggest cause of students' dropout from school. The net enrollment rate for lower-secondary education (grades 6-8) is 49% (boys 53%, girls 45%). Girls in government schools drop out drastically from primary education as middle or high schools are not available in close vicinity, particularly in rural Sindh.

According to Alif Alan, the accessibility distance hinders girls' education more (13 % dropout due to access) than boys (5 % dropout due to access).

The project aimed to improve access to girls' middle education by providing school facilities for female students in rural areas of Sindh Province.

This is the third grant aid through which Japan will be upgrading 20 new girls' primary schools into elementary schools, which brings the total number of schools provided with

Japan's assistance to 74.

The assistance contributes to improving the school enrollment rate and gender equality in the target areas, contributing to SDGs Goals 4 (Quality education) and 5 (Gender equality).

On the occasion, WADA Mitsuhiro said, "This project will also be implemented in the areas affected by the devastating flood last year. The project will contribute to the reconstruction efforts of the Pakistani people. And, it is my hope that girls educated in these schools will play an active role in various fields in Pakistan." Mr. KINOSHITA, while speaking at the event said "As some of the target districts of the project were affected by the flood last year, we hope that the new grant aid project will bring hope back to the brave and resilient girl students and keep them motivated so that they remain on track for "learning continuity", during the post floods recovery phase".

Stakeholders urge to set standards for driving schools

ISLAMABAD (APP): The stakeholders have urged to establish standards for driving schools to ensure quality training, in view of rising concerns about road safety.

Talking to APP here on Friday, a senior official of National Highways and Motorway Police on the condition of anonymity said, "Without proper regulations, there is a risk that individuals who receive their driver's education from unqualified or poorly equipped schools may not have the skills and knowledge necessary to drive safely on the roads."

He said, "Driving schools require various regulations including standards, training materials, instructors, and vehicles."

"The absence of standards can contribute to an increase in accidents and traffic violations" he added.

Additionally, he said, "The lack of regulations can also lead to corrupt individuals without proper qualifications or resources." He said, "These individuals may provide substandard training, putting both their students and other road users at risk."

To address the issues, many countries have established regulatory bodies to oversee the operations of driving schools, he said.

"These bodies are responsible for setting standards, conducting inspections and audits, and enforcing penalties for schools that violate regula-

tions," he added.

He said, "By regulating driving schools, it is possible to ensure that individuals receive a high-quality education that prepares them to drive safely on the roads." When contacted the driving school for the opinion, a representative of Muslim Motors & Driving School located in Sector G-9 Markaz raised concerns about individuals operating driving schools without proper qualifications and noted, "Some people are operating driving schools having a single car with a number written on it."

He said, "These individuals may provide substandard training, putting both their students and other road users at risk."

PM&DC exempts NLE for Pakistani graduates

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Medical & Dental Council has started working formally the day Bill was inked by the President of Pakistan. Taking up all the relevant matters and affairs PMDC started its registration Portal as a priority after making all necessary arrangements of transition from PMC to PMDC.

As promised by Federal Health Minister Abdul Qadir Patel, PM&DC has started issuing permanent Registration Certificates from 8th February 2023, to doctors who graduated from Pakistani Medical and Dental colleges, without the requirement of National Licensing Examination (NLE). As per previous law of PMC the local graduates had to appear and pass the NLE exam before getting their permanent registration. Previously as per PMC Law, NLE was undertaken from the doctors graduated from Pakistan's approved medical and dental colleges which was highly criticized by doctors community throughout the Country. In this regard several protests and demonstrations were held by different doctor forums and organizations at different levels and PTI Govt was appealed repeatedly to withdraw the said black law.

In this regard an interactive PM&DC online portal has been launched to facilitate doctors throughout the country. On the first day 1500 registration certificates have been issued. PM&DC has also started issuing good standing certificates and

renewals. PM&DC welcomes and informs all the local graduates, which are approximately more than 10,000 waiting for their permanent registration to apply online for registration. These graduates waited for quite a long time to get themselves registered but failed due to the rigid rules imposed by PMC.

Registrar PM&DC Dr. Suleman Ahmed said that one of the objectives of PM&DC is to make the registration portal in a way that is seamless to use, easy to navigate and must be user-friendly.

He added that PM&DC right after its promulgation ensured that the registration Portal should be accurate enough and must be able to secure storage of confidential information of doctors and to develop a system that provide a secure payment system for application fees and to develop a system for tracking and managing applications. He added, as per new Law of PM&DC Act 2022, exam for foreign graduates i.e. National Registration Examination (NRE) has been introduced for Pakistani graduates having undergraduate degrees from Foreign Institutions. Passing the said NRE shall be mandatory for obtaining a full registration. The NRE shall be substantially based on objective computer-based multiple-choice questions and a practical component.

He further added that we welcome the suggestions of medical fraternity throughout the country and that we extend full facilitation to reach out and address the grievances of every medical professional and facilitate to the fullest.

ANF recovers over 50 kg drugs, 2990 intoxicated tablets; arrests four

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in four countrywide operations managed to recover over 50 kg drugs, 2990 intoxicated tablets and arrested four accused including a woman, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday.

He informed that ANF acting on a tip-off conducted a raid in Karachi Federal-B area, Block-10 Naseerabad and managed to bust an international drug trafficking gang with the arrest of two alleged members including a woman. The gang was allegedly involved in drug trafficking to Gulf countries. ANF rounded up an accused namely Furqan Saeed Siddiqui and a woman on recovery of two watches prepared to smuggle drugs with 800 grams Ice drug. In another operation conducted at Islamabad International Airport, ANF recovered 2990 intoxicated tablets from the possession of a Manchester-bound passenger resident of Azad Kashmir going on flight no. PK-705.

In third operation at Bacha Khan International Airport, ANF recovered 62 Ice drug and 30 charras-filled capsules from the possession of a Doha-bound passenger going on flight no. QR-601.

Shazia expresses deep grief

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister and Chairperson BISP Shazia Marri Friday expressed deep grief and sorrow over the death of President's Award winning poet, literary person and play writer Amjad Islam Amjad.

In a statement, she paid rich tribute to the literary services of Amjad Islam Amjad. "Today, Pakistan has lost a great poet and writer" Shazia Marri added.

Amjad Islam Amjad is one of the great poets and writers of the present time. He has rendered valuable services in the field of art, Shazia lauded. She said that Amjad Islam Amjad's name will always be remembered in Urdu literature. "I pray to Allah Almighty for the high ranks in Jannah of the deceased" Shazia said. She prayed that Almighty Allah grant patience to the family to bear this irreparable loss.

Salik for minorities' engagement to plead Kashmir case before world

ISLAMABAD (APP): Former Federal Minister for Population Welfare and Convener World Minorities Alliance (WMA), Julius Salik, on Friday demanded the government of Pakistan to give an opportunity to the Hindu minorities of the country to plead the Kashmir case before the world for the just right to freedom of innocent Kashmiris.

Recalling his conscious shaking speech 26 years back on the floor of the National Assembly in 1996, J Salik told APP that it was better to give an opportunity to the Hindu minority representatives who could better influence the religious fanatic Hindutva leadership of India.

Commenting on the role of the Parliament, the WMA convener added that the Parliament was a supreme forum that read, made, and wrote history. "India has amicably propagated human rights issues internationally and Pakistan should also strive to make a counter-narrative to secure its position at the international forum," he added. He underlined that Pakistan had a genuine and fact-based narrative but its presentation needed further modification to counter that of India. "There are over 400 million Muslims in India who are part of the government and businesses but we failed to educate them on lobbying for the peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue," he added.

Police to improve data sharing mechanism to curb crime

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad police have decided to improve data sharing mechanism among all divisions in order to effectively curb crime and activities of anti-social elements.

The decision to this effect was made in a meeting presided over by Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan and attended among others by the CPO Operations, SSP

Operations, AIGs, all zonal DPOs, SDPOs and SHOs. The meeting decided to use modern technical resources to further improve the investigation, coordination and data sharing strategy at the division level.

The IGP directed all

police officials to maintain high vigilance in the city to eradicate crime and ensure an effective security and crackdown against drug traffickers and land grabbers.

The IGP reviewed the performance of the police stations and questioned every officer separately. He appreciated the officers who worked hard to secure the city and maintained the law and order situation in Islamabad.

Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan directed the officers to devise a comprehensive strategy to curb the crime in their respective areas, especially against those who were involved in heinous crime, adding that a massive crackdown should be continued against the drug peddlers and their handlers

who have been active in educational institutions.

The IGP directed all police officials to take effective steps to control crime and adopt professional as well as responsible attitudes to mitigate the sufferings of the people. He stressed that security of busy commercial centers and under-construction housing societies across the city should be strengthened, while Eagle squads to be further activated and their response time to be improved following the calls of Pucar 15.

He directed the police officials to implement the Police Order 2002 completely and every work should be done according to it.

Over 100,000 electric vehicles to bring in transportation system

ISLAMABAD, Nov 4 (APP): Around half a million electric motorcycles and rickshaws, along with more than 100,000 electric cars, buses and trucks will bring into the transportation system over the next five years under the Electric Vehicles (EVs) Policy 2020.

The EVs Policy 2020 has set the goal of cutting air pollution and curbing climate change, sources told APP here.

The EV Policy 2020 also focuses on the development of a nationwide charging infrastructure for electric vehicles.

Pakistan is also facing environmental issues due to multiple factors including transport, coal emissions, industrial emissions, etc.

Keeping in view the environmental issues world is moving towards environment-friendly technologies. Electric Vehicles (EVs) have the potential to solve critical challenges faced by Pakistan in the 21st century. Since EVs do not emit any

pollutants, the introduction of EVs will limit emissions in the transport sector to a large extent.

EVs have now become a reality in Pakistan. The number of EVs are continuously increasing in the country.

At the same time, the charging infrastructure is being deployed in different parts of the country to serve EVs.

NEPRA at its end has announced the tariff that the owners of the EV charging stations are going to charge for their services. The owners of the public EV charging stations are regarded as commercial consumers of category A-2, the power distribution companies (DISCOs) are to charge a single part Rs. 25.02/kWh tariff for both off-peak and peak, with zero fixed charges and waiver of monthly fuel cost adjustments. The owners of public EV charging stations are allowed a maximum cap of Rs. 50/kWh net of taxes to charge for their services.

Motorway police hit target 'zero crashes' in foggy weather

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) have achieved a remarkable achievement by successfully implementing their zero-accident policy during the foggy weather of 2022-23.

The use of modern technology and timely response to control accidents were key factors in ensuring the safe travel of passengers, said a statement issued by an NHMP spokesperson here on Friday.

Over the past 12 years, 23 pileup accidents have

occurred on the motorways during heavy fog. In the last two years, there were 9 accidents, resulting in the loss of 29 lives and 146 people being injured.

The financial loss from these accidents exceeded one crore rupees and 176 vehicles were damaged.

The NHMP, under the guidance of IG Khalid Mahmood, conducted a detailed observation of the various factors contributing to accidents during foggy conditions. The use of advanced thermal cameras allowed the safe

extraction of vehicles stuck in the fog.

Special briefings were held at toll plazas on a daily basis to guide passengers, and a fog journey planner was also released for their convenience.

To further ensure the safety of passengers, the NHMP utilized 130 helplines, electronic and social media, and FM-95 radio to inform the public about the timely opening and closing of the motorways. IG Khalid Mahmood's best strategy has helped to improve the overall experience of travellers.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Syrian Arab, Ramez Alraee called on Speaker National Assembly Raja Perviz Ashraf at Parliament House.

Haritan-Mazar Railway resumes

MAZAR E SHARIF (Agencies): The transportation of commodities via the Haritan-Mazar e Sharif railway began on Friday after a 10-day closure. After three-days of negotiations between the delegation of the Islamic Emirate, led by the acting head of the Afghanistan Railway Authority, and officials from Uzbekistan, an agreement was signed between the two sides that also laid out the reopening of the Haritan-Mazar e Sharif railway.

Relief effort for victims in Turkey

KABUL (Agencies): About 20 Afghan social and cultural institutions in Turkey have started a relief effort for the quake victims in the south and southeast of the country. According to representatives of these institutions, Afghans living in Turkey have gathered cash, food, clothing for the winter, and other necessities over the past three days from all across the country. This comes as the death toll from the devastating earthquake in Turkey and Syria passed 21,000 people.

US Deputy Envoy at UN tells Kabul to adhere to counterterrorism pledges



KABUL (TOLONews): Ambassador Richard Mills, Deputy Representative to the United Nations, at a UN Security Council meeting asked the current government of Afghanistan to adhere to its commitments to fight terrorism. "The international community denies safe haven for ISIS K, for Al Qaeda and its affiliates in Afghanistan --- we continue to press the Taliban to adhere to its counterterrorism commitments," Richard Mills said.

The UAE ambassador to the UN, Lana Zaki Nusseibeh, also expressed concerns. "In January alone, 10 attacks in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Syria by Daesh resulted in estimated 50 people killed and even more wounded," the UAE's envoy to UN said. Speaking at the meeting, representatives of

China and Russia to the UN also expressed their concerns about the return of Daesh in the region and said that the ability of global terrorist organizations is increasing. "Over the twenty years that the US and the NATO allies spent in Afghanistan, the terrorist threat only grew," said Deputy Permanent Representative Gennady Kuzmin at the UNSC. "Since the beginning of

2023, two vicious terrorist attacks occurred in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, and on January 30th, another suicide attack occurred at a mosque in Peshawar of Pakistan, all these attacks have caused heavy casualties and have sounded another alarm to us," Zhang Jun, China's permanent representative to the UN.

However, the Islamic Emirate assure all that it will never allow Afghanistan's territory to be used against other countries. "Security is ensured in Afghanistan. No rebel group is present or permitted to be active, either inside or outside of Afghanistan. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan does not allow anyone to use Afghan soil against anyone or to pose a threat to anyone," said Zabiullah Mujahid, the spokesman of the Islamic Emirate.

Previously, the Islamic Emirate said that the presence of the Daesh group in the Afghanistan is invisible and emphasized that many attacks of this group have been prevented.

The spokesman of the Islamic Emirate said that efforts are ongoing to suppress this group in various parts of the country.

Mujahid says all diplomatic institutions in Afghanistan are secure

KABUL (TOLONews): In response to the possibility that some embassies in Kabul may face Daesh threats, the Islamic Emirate said that there is no threat from Daesh and that the security of diplomatic institutions is ensured.

The Islamic Emirate's spokesperson, Zabiullah Mujahid, emphasized that no one will ever be allowed to harm diplomatic institutions in Afghanistan.

"All diplomatic institutions in Afghanistan are secure, and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan takes security of these institutions seriously. The threats are vague or fictitious, without any action, and Daesh is unable to threaten anybody and so far it has not achieved its goals anywhere," Mujahid said.

Previously, Bloomberg, citing statements from the United Nations, reported the possibility of Daesh threats to the embassies of China, India, and Iran in Kabul. According to Bloomberg, UN officials said that Daesh is trying to isolate the Islamic Emirate from the countries that are considered their allies.

"Islamic State militants have threatened to



target Chinese, Indian, and Iranian embassies in Afghanistan in an effort to isolate the Taliban from a handful of countries it counts as diplomatic allies," the report reads.

Following the takeover of the Islamic Emirate in the country, some countries, including Iran, China and India, have resumed their political representations in Afghanistan.

"If Daesh follows through on its threat, and if

the threatened embassies are attacked, an image will be produced in the world that the Taliban administration is not capable of providing protection for foreign embassies in Afghanistan," said Assadullah Nadim, a military analyst.

"The Taliban must bring about positive change in Afghanistan, otherwise the countries that have political interests in the geography of Afghanistan will try to reassert themselves in the

region from different angles and with different possibilities," said Javid Sangdil, international relations expert.

This comes as other countries have expressed their concern about the possibility of threats from terrorist groups in Afghanistan.

However, the current Afghan government has consistently underlined that Afghanistan would not pose a threat to other nations.

DABS: Uzbekistan's imported power returns to normal

KABUL (TOLONews): The country's power distributor, Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS), said that it has been three days since the electricity imported from Uzbekistan has returned to normal.

According to the DABS officials, Kabul residents now have nine hours of electricity in 24 hours.

"We don't have any problems right now; we have provided 9 hours of electricity for factories from 400 megawatts of electricity imported from Uzbekistan and our own domestic power output for nine hours and the work of industrialists is going on. We have also provided electricity for the citizens of Kabul for five hours during the day and four to five hours at night," Hekmatullah Akhundzada, director of Kabul DABS, said.

However, according to the Afghanistan Chamber



of Industry and Mines, industrial parks only have nine hours of electricity each day, which is insufficient to produce domestic goods.

"In the last month, the country's industries, especially in Kabul, were halted due to the lack of electricity and about 90% of our factories were stopped, but now 50% of them returned

to normal," Sakhi Ahmad Payman, the deputy of the Afghanistan Chamber of Industries and Mines, said.

"For the industrial process, eight to nine hours of power are insufficient. For the production process, at least normally, 18 to 20 hours of power are required. In an emergency, however, just 14 to 15 hours are needed,"

Mohammad Karim Azimi, executive director of the Kabul Chamber of Industries and Mines, said.

Some factory owners meanwhile said that the lack of sufficient electricity has caused the industrialists to face problems. They asked the Islamic Emirate to provide more electricity to the factory owners.

"The lack of sufficient electricity weakens the economic growth of industrialists and the residents of the country. The nation's economy will grow on its own if the government constructs a power supply and provides residential electricity," Khal Mohammad Tajik, a factory owner, said.

According to Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS), the industrial parks of Kabul need 160 megawatts of electricity, and DABS has now been able to provide 70 to 100 megawatts of electricity for the factories of Kabul.



KABUL (TOLONews): The UK House of Commons Defense Committee released a report on Afghanistan's withdrawal, in which it highlighted the Doha agreement and fall of the former Afghan government; the evacuation and relocation of eligible Afghans; mental health of veterans and learning lessons from Afghanistan. The report was chaired by the Conservative MP Tobias Ellwood.

The report said that several thousand eligible Afghans-- whose safety is by definition at risk in Afghanistan--still remain to be evacuated under the ARAP (Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy) over a year after the end of "Operation PIT-

TING," and it asked the government "to set out what action they are taking to ensure safe passage to the United Kingdom for these people."

The report cited that in addition to the 5,000 ARAP-eligible individuals, including their family members, who were relocated to the UK during "Operation PITTING", a further 6,600 individuals had been relocated under the scheme as of 3 November 2022. At this date, the report said that 72,269 applications were awaiting a decision.

According to the report, in the UK MOD's (Ministry of Defense) judgement, the vast majority of these were likely to be ineligible.

"The MOD judged that the vast majority of these

were likely to be ineligible. According to their estimates, approximately 4,600 ARAP-eligible Afghans (including dependents) had not yet been relocated to the UK. Some of these had successfully settled elsewhere and were not expected to take up the offer of relocation."

The report also expressed concerns over Afghanistan's situation, saying that the country faces "multiple interconnected crises, from governance, to the humanitarian situation, to the exclusion of women and girls from society." The reported quoted the words of one of a series of 'one-year-on' think pieces as:

"The plight of Afghans is worsening. The economic situation is dire, malnutrition rates are increasing, women's rights are being curtailed, there is continuing migration and internal displacement, and the health care system is crumbling." The report cited the UK's MOD's evidence about the Doha agreement, saying that it makes clear that the agreement limited options in relation to future presence in Afghanistan.

"The Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP, Secretary of State for Defense, told us that the UK played no part in the Doha Agreement and criticized the agreement for withdrawing coalition ISR (intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) and air support and, in doing so, removing from the battlefield," it said.

Kabul residents concerned by delayed release of Worn-Out Banknotes

KABUL (TOLONews): The residents of Kabul expressed concerns over the existence of worn-out banknotes in the markets, saying that the new printed banknotes--that recently arrived in the country--are being distributed to the government employees and that the common people do not have access to it.

Last month, the Central Bank announced that the process of distributing 100 million new banknotes to the country's commercial banks has begun.

The Central Bank said in a statement that the first tranche of 100 million new

banknotes--with denominations of 10, 20, 50 and 100--were distributed to banks, and worn-out banknotes were collected. The Central Bank urged the citizens to make a greater effort to preserve the banknotes.

"When we go to the banks, they do not give us the new banknotes, saying that the new banknotes are only dedicated to the government employees and are not for the common people, we call on the government to distribute these banknotes to the people, so both the common people and government employees can use it," said Ashqullah,

a resident of Kabul.

"I withdrew money from the bank yesterday. The banknotes were worn-out, when I asked for new banknotes, they said there are problems now, when the problems are over, we will distribute new banknotes," said Ghulam Farooq, a resident of Kabul.

"When I received my salary, half of it was new banknotes and half of it was worn-out. I am ok with it," said Javid, a traffic police officer.

The residents expressed concerns, saying that they are faced with severe challenges in their daily business.

"We don't have the new banknotes, our banknotes are worn-out. Many of them are invalid," said Abdul Karim, a resident of Kabul. "The banknotes are severely worn-out. Many of them are invalid. We don't even know if there are new banknotes," said Murad, a resident of Kabul.

This comes as the union of Money Exchangers of Sarai Shahzada said that the newly printed banknotes with denominations of 10, 20, 50 and 100 can solve the problems of the worn-out banknotes in the market. "There are large number denominations in the market and they are worn-out. I call on the Islamic Emirate and Da Afghanistan Bank to pay serious attention to this issue, so that the 500 and 1,000 denomination bills be injected into circulation," said Abdul Rahman Zirak, a spokesman for the Sarai Shahzada Money Exchanger. In November, a member of the Afghan Central Bank's supreme council, Shah Mehrabi, said that a contract was signed with Oberthur Fiduciaire for 390 million Afghani banknotes with a total face value of approximately 10 billion Afs, has been signed. Previously, Mehrabi had said that two batches of Afghani banknotes printed by the PWPW had arrived in Kabul.

80 Afghans killed in Turkey's quake, confirms Afghan Embassy

ATLANTA (Pajhwok): Eighty Afghan nationals were killed in Monday's earthquakes that rattled Turkey and Syria, the Afghanistan Embassy in Ankara confirmed on Friday.

The two successive strong earthquakes shook southeastern Turkey and western Syria, killing more than 16,000 people and wounding around 65,000 others in Turkey and 5,000 people in Syria.

Mohammad Mussadiq Faqiri, deputy of the Afghan embassy in Ankara, told Pajhwok Afghan News unfortunately 80 Afghans died in the tragedy. He added the dead Afghans were laid to rest in Turkey with the help of local residents. Faqiri said a delegation

comprising embassy diplomats, civil society activists and ordinary Afghans had been sent to the earthquake-hit areas

to collect accurate information about the Afghans.

Turkey's Anadolu news agency, quoting President Recep Tayyip Erdogan,

reported that 19,000 people have been killed and more than 70,000 people injured in the earthquakes.





KARACHI: Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is being presented with memento during the inauguration ceremony of Pakistan International Maritime Expo and Conference (PIMEC 2023).

SC raises questions over Imran's conduct

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Supreme Court Justice Mansoor Ali Shah has raised questions over the conduct of Chairman Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI) Imran Khan and his party during the hearing of a petition challenging the NAB amendments.

During hearing, Justice Shah inquired that if Imran and his party abstained from voting on the National Accountability Ordinance amendments. He wondered that what right a party does have to challenge the amendments in a court of law when it abstains from voting on it! He further inquired if it was sagacious on the part of a parliamentarian to leave his place empty in the parliament house.

He asked, "Is it an attempt to weaken the parliament if people bring matters to the courts which should have been resolved in the parliament." Justice Shah went on to say that if the PTI MNAs' resignations were not accepted, it meant that their membership was still intact. "An MNA is a trustee of the confidence of his constituents. Is it fair if the trustee of the constituents boycotts the parliament?"

the judge wondered.

The judge remarked how we could establish that the NAB amendments case was in public interest. He wondered if it was the job of three judges sitting here in the court to determine what was in public interest! He said it had not been elaborated which amendments to the NAO were in conflict with the basic rights. He remarked that Imran Khan's lawyers had been discussing only the Islamic clauses and basic structure of the constitution.

Federal government lawyer Makhdoom Ali Khan said that had Imran wanted, he could have defeated the NAB amendments in the assembly. Had all the PTI members attend the assembly, they would have been in majority, he added. At this, Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial remarked that the court would seek a reply from Imran Khan.

The CJF further asked if it was logical not to hear a case of public interest, if the conduct of a petitioner was not right. Every leader tries to refer to the constitution to declare his actions right, the chief justice said adding that boycotting the parliament was PTI's political strategy but it wasn't necessary that there should be some legal reason to this political strategy.

Chief Justice of Pakistan Bandial remarked that sometimes legal strategy seemed to be a political stupidity. He observed that it happened all over the world that parliaments were boycotted and the history of parliamentary boycott was even longer in the subcontinent.

Justice Ijazul Ahsan remarked that the petitioner challenged the NAB amendments in public interest. The questions on Imran's conduct could have only been raised, had he got personal benefit for it. But apparently it seems that the petitioner is not accruing any personal benefit from it, the judge observed. CJF Bandial remarked it seemed obvious that Imran knew that he could not have succeeded in the parliament and he came to the court.

Justice Mansoor Ali Shah expressed his bafflement if the court nullified the NAB law then tomorrow another petitioner would have come forward and challenge the legislation in the Supreme Court. The court adjourned the case till February 14.

FM to visit Germany on 17th

ISLAMABAD (INP): Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will embark on a three-day official visit to Germany from February 17-19. According to sources, the foreign minister is visiting Germany to attend Munich Security Conference starting from February 17.

The 59th edition of the security conference, which draws leaders from around the world, will be held February 17-19. FM Bilawal will give a speech at the conference and meet with foreign leaders. After attending the Munich Security Conference, FM Bilawal would then leave for Lithuania and Hungary to hold bilateral meetings with his counterparts, sources say. This would be his second visit to Germany since assuming office last year in April.

During his earlier stay in Berlin, Foreign Minister held delegation-level talks with his German counterpart. The two leaders reviewed the whole gamut of bilateral relations and discussed regional and international issues of common interest. Underscoring the high importance Pakistan attaches to its longstanding ties of amity and cooperation with Germany, the Foreign Minister reaffirmed keen desire to further strengthen the multifaceted bilateral cooperation, particularly in the fields of trade, investment, education and energy.

Afghan CG calls on KP CM

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Afghan Consul General at Peshawar, Hafiz Mohibullah called on the Caretaker Chief Minister KP Muhammad Azam Khan here on Friday. During the meeting they discussed matters of bilateral interest.

The Afghan Consul General Hafiz Mohibullah congratulated him on assuming charge as Caretaker Chief Minister and expressed good wishes for him. On this occasion, Afghan Consul General also expressed grief and sorrow over human casualties in Police Lines bomb explosion and condoled with the chief minister over the incident and offered fateha for the eternal peace of martyrs.

Fawad stresses political stability

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Fawad Chaudhry on Friday said ongoing economic crisis was an outcome of the political instability in the country.

Taking to Twitter, the former information minister said Pakistan could not reach a final agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to revive the loan programme stalled since September last. He said the foreign exchange reserves held by the SBP had slipped under \$3 billion. He said attempts were being made to create a Constitutional crisis in the country by delaying elections in Punjab and KP where the PTI dissolved assemblies last month to put pressure on the coalition government.

Uproar in Senate over CJP's 'incomplete parliament' remarks

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Senators belonging to various political parties voiced their objection on Friday to Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial's remarks made a day ago highlighting that Parliament was being kept "systematically incomplete".

During the senate meeting on Friday, PML-N's Irfan Siddiqui said the CJP had made the remarks in a case that "had no relation to elections". "He said the parliament was incomplete. He only called one prime minister honest, which I'm assuming was Muhammad Khan Junejo. Who gave him the privilege to call every prime minister from Liaquat Ali Khan to Imran Khan dishonest?"

He went on, "Whatever the judiciary will say, we will follow it. The judiciary has a parameter [but] it has started transgressing [into the legislative]. Our legislations are challenged." The PML-N senator called on the judiciary to "think while considering the laws" and to "not hit the Parliament on its back every day in this manner".

"What if we make such remarks about the judges that there was only one honest judge? How did he say that Parliament has become contro-

versal?" Asserting that the CJP was "neither the people's representative nor the Pakistan Army's", he asked the CJP to not "do such things that constitute an attack on Parliament's honour".

"This Parliament is the people's representative; let the representative do its job. Has Parliament or the prime minister ever created an obstacle in any judicial decision? "Do you think how you are ratifying martial law? You can even tell a uniformed person that he can contest elections in a uniform," the PML-N senator remarked.

"You mention the house in an unrelated case. If the judiciary will give a political statement outside its parameters, we are not being contemptuous." Moreover, Sadia Abbasi, another PML-N senator, said: "Remarks have come from the Supreme Court for the past two to three days. They should clarify what their stance is."

She added it was equivalent to violating Parliament's democracy. In response to the objections raised by the PML-N senators, the Senate's Opposition Leader and PTI member Dr Shahzad Waseem said: "The Parliament actually is incomplete;

elections were held in Sindh House. Punjab and KP assemblies have been dissolved." The PTI senator lamented: "The law says that in such a situation, elections should be held within 90 days. A caretaker setup is immediately established. [And now] it is being said that elections cannot be held within 90 days."

"If elections are not held, the chapter on the Constitution will be closed. Can the country bear any sort of instability? Waseem further took a jibe at the federal government: "There is talk of only two things these days — one is contempt and the other is honour. Criticism is now called contempt. Getting respect is in your own hands."

"Parliament really is incomplete. The way a major political party was made to leave Parliament. According to the Constitution, you have to announce a date for elections and set up a caretaker government. "A caretaker setup was established here but an election date has not been announced. A belief is being created that the election will not be held in 90 days." The PTI senator went on to warn that when elections are not held within 90 days, "the path to civil unrest is opened."

ECP suspension orders: LG member approaches PHC

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The suspension of Local Government representative by Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has been challenged at Peshawar High Court (PHC) seeking to declare it null and void because it is unconstitutional act, on Friday.

The writ petition filed Nowshera tehsil Mayor Ishaq Khattak while Nauman Kakakhel will argue the case before PHC and ECP as well as 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 paralysing / undermining 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 (the Chosen representative of people) 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 writ demanded interim relief by stating that this august Court may kindly be pleased to suspend the Impugned Notification Dated 03-02-2023, till final disposal of the instant writ petition.

Palestinian dies in Israeli custody

WEST BANK (Agencies): A Palestinian prisoner, who was rushed to a hospital after falling into a coma on Thursday night, has died in Israeli custody with two years of his 12-year sentence left. Ahmad Abu Ali, 48, was announced dead on Friday morning at the Israeli Soroka hospital in the southern Naqab area (Negev). Abu Ali was suffering from diseases including chronic heart problems and diabetes, according to the Palestinian Prisoners' Society (PPS).

The Palestinian prisoner movement announced "a state of alert" and several protest actions on Friday morning in response to Abu Ali's death. These included returning all meals for one day, as well as shutting down the prison sections and refusing to cooperate with prison authorities during three days of mourning. Abu Ali, a father of nine, was transferred to the hospital suddenly on Thursday night after he fell into a coma in his cell, the PPS told Al Jazeera.

The prisoner group said he died as a result of medical negligence by Israeli prison authorities, holding Israel responsible for his death. His health problems were "accompanied by the deliberate procrastination of the prison administration in providing him with the necessary treatment and in conducting medical examinations for him and following up on his health status until this led to his death today," the PPS said in a statement. It said that Abu Ali had health problems prior to being imprisoned in 2012, but that these had "seriously deteriorated" during his time behind bars due to the "general policy of medical negligence".

"There is no proper care in prison," Aman Sarahneh, spokesperson for the PPS, said. "He was not taken to hospital for follow-ups in a regular manner — which is something that all sick prisoners face. They have to wait months and sometimes years for dire medical check-ups and surgeries, and sometimes those are only carried out after pressure from the prisoners themselves or their lawyers," she told Al Jazeera. The Palestinian Authority's (PA) Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs said in a statement it "condemns the crime of killing the prisoner Ahmad Abu Ali".

"It is inconceivable that the international silence should continue in the face of these systematic crimes," the commission said. Tensions inside Israeli prisons have been high in recent weeks, and have threatened to stir up an already-fragile situation on the ground in the occupied Palestinian territories. Collective punishment measures were imposed for more than a week on at least 100 detainees across a number of prisons, including individual and collective solitary confinement, raids and searches of rooms, beatings, confiscation of all electrical devices, and bans on canteen access and family visits.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan called no Afghan Consul General Hafiz Muhibullah.

8th Multinational maritime exercise Aman-2023 kicks off

F.P. Report

KARACHI: A remarkable and vibrant Flags Hoisting Ceremony was held at Pakistan Navy Dockyard, Karachi, to formally commence the proceedings of 8th Multinational Maritime Exercise AMAN-23. A large number of senior military representatives from participating countries, observers, diplomats and Pakistan Navy officials attended the ceremony.

The opening of the Exercise was marked with simultaneous hoisting of flags of all the participating nations of AMAN-23. The Message of Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi was read during the ceremony. In his message, the Naval Chief warmly welcomed the participants of Exercise AMAN-23. The Admiral underscored that the AMAN Exercise is a regular feature that involves regional and extra-regional navies to create a secure and favorable

maritime environment for smooth and unhindered maritime activities in the region. The Naval Chief in his message further underlined that Pakistan Navy has been a forerunner in its quest for promoting collaborative maritime security in the region besides generating the camaraderie as highlighted under the Exercise motto "Together for Peace". The Admiral emphasized that this bond will continue to grow and bring us even closer to the cherished goals of realizing regional peace and shared prosperity.

Speaking on the occasion, Commander Pakistan Fleet, Vice Admiral Ovais Ahmed Bilgrami warmly welcomed all the participants and thanked them for their wholehearted participation in the Exercise. He sought their cooperation in achieving the Exercise objectives and hoped that the Exercise would prove mutually rewarding for all. He also acknowledged the flags of participating

countries from across the globe fluttering together as an embodiment of the Exercise motto, Together for Peace.

AMAN-23, the 8th Exercise of the AMAN series is being held from 10-14 February 2023. The exercise is one of the major events of Pakistan Navy held biennially to signify the commitment towards making seas safer for positive human activities while inviting regional and extra-regional navies.

This year the AMAN Exercise is being attended by more than 50 countries with their ships, aircraft, Special Operation Forces and a large number of observers. Besides, another mega event of PIMEC commenced at Karachi Expo Center, a protruding initiative of Pakistan Navy under the patronage Ministry of Maritime Affairs aimed to raise awareness amongst national stakeholders and international fraternity about the huge untapped potential of Pakistan's Blue Economy.

Gen Bajwa concedes he was behind 'regime change': Imran

LAHORE (Agencies): Former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan Friday said that former army chief General (ret'd) Qamar Javed Bajwa had accepted that he was behind the "regime change" move that led to his government's removal.

Khan had earlier blamed the United States for overthrowing his PTI administration, later he turned the guns towards the ex-army chief, and then he also claimed that Punjab caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi was also involved in the "regime change" operation.

In an interview with Voice of America (Urdu), the ex-premier said: "General Bajwa told the journalist with much pride how he had our government ousted due to economic policies and other matters." He added, "People were already aware of who was behind overthrowing the PTI regime. However, General Bajwa has accepted and clarified that he was behind our government's ouster."

Imran Khan — who became the first prime minister to be ousted through a no-confidence vote in April last year — said that at present the establishment and

the Pakistan Democratic Movement-led coalition government are on "one page". Khan was referring to a recent column published in a local newspaper, in which a journalist wrote about his meeting with the ex-army chief, where Gen (ret'd) Bajwa spoke about his time in the office and interactions with the PTI chief. In the column, the journalist wrote that Khan wanted the former COAS to save his government, however, Gen (ret'd) Bajwa did not do so as he feared that the PTI "was dangerous for the country and if it remains in power, the country would not survive".

Alvi for efforts to prevent mental health issues

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has called for making joint efforts towards the prevention and treatment of mental health disorders in the country as it was one of the most neglected fields in Pakistan. He added that 24% of the population in Pakistan was under mental stress and anxiety according to a survey conducted by the National Commission for Human Rights in August 2022.

The President stated that 60-80% of the college students were under stress, which was a major concern that needed to be addressed by providing counselling and guidance to college students. He further said that the Government was developing a helpline to advise and educate the people about the issues related to mental health and well-being.

The President expressed these views while chairing a virtual meeting on mental

health, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today. Chief Executive of the British Asian Trust (BAT), Mr. Richard Hawkes, and Chair of the British-Pakistani Psychiatrists Association (BPPA), Dr Shahid Latif, joined the meeting via video link. The representatives of the Caretech Foundation, Global Institute of Human Development, and members of the British-Pakistani Psychiatric Association and Pakistani diaspora in the UK also participated in the meeting virtually.

Addressing the participants, the President highlighted the need for collaborative networking between mental health professionals working in and outside Pakistan as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to increase the accessibility and affordability of mental healthcare in Pakistan. He regretted that due to the acute shortage of mental health professionals and lack of resources and awareness

about mental disorders in Pakistan, the majority of psychiatric patients either went untreated or consulted traditional faith and religious healers. He said that there were almost 2000 mental health professionals in Pakistan who were unable to provide proper treatment and counselling to 24% of the population suffering from some form of mental issue.

The President said that the availability of cutting-edge and quality healthcare to the masses could be ensured by working together to build standardized systems. He informed that existing helplines/chatbots would be integrated into a single national mental health helpline/chatbots, which would be launched in the form of a one-year pilot project. He emphasised the need for launching an awareness campaign regarding mental health to educate the people about the importance of counselling and treatment.