

Alleged facilitator arrested

KARACHI (NN): In a significant progress in the investigation into Friday's attack at KPO – the office of the AIG Karachi, police arrested an alleged facilitator of the attackers. Three terrorists were killed and four people, including two policemen and a Sindh Rangers sub-inspector embraced martyrdom in the joint operation of Sindh police and Rangers at KPO – the heavily-guarded KPO situated in the heart of the provincial metropolis.

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PM Shehbaz reviews facilities for poor patients at PKLI

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday chaired a meeting to review the facilities for modern and free medical treatment to poor people at Pakistan Kidney and Liver Institute (PKLI), here.

While talking to the participants of the meeting, the PM said the Hepatitis Prevention and Treatment Programme earlier initiated by PKLI should be immediately handed over to the institute again.

He said the focus should be on reforming the system for free-of-charge treatment to poor people in the PKLI and 50 per cent of patients should be provided free treatment.

He directed that a fund should be instituted for the free-of-charge treatment of needy patients and an amount should be allocated for this purpose. Chairman Board of Governors of PKLI Dr Saeed Akhtar briefed the prime minister about the performance of the institute.

It was told that work was being done to enhance the capacity of PKLI for carrying out complicated surgeries. The meeting was also apprised that at present 41 per cent of the patients were being treated without any charges, and more than 95 per cent of the patients were successfully treated. Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Raza Naqvi, Chief Secretary Punjab Zahid Akhtar Zaman, Secretary Health Punjab Ahmed Javed Qazi, Mujeeb ur Rehman Shami, and others attended the meeting.

PM for more coordination over relief assistance to Turkiye, Syria: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz

Sharif on Sunday said that for the purpose of coordination, all relief assistance to the earthquake-affected people of Turkiye and Syria should be dispatched through National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). The prime minister lauded the humanitarian and charity organizations for their ongoing relief work in the quake-hit areas of Turkiye and said that Pakistani humanitarian organizations were in the forefront to support their affected brethren and sisters in these countries.

The prime minister was chairing a high-level meeting to review the ongoing relief activities on part of Pakistan, in the quake hit Turkiye and Syria. The meeting was attended by representatives of Edhi, Saylani and Al-Khidmat Foundation, Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal, PM's Special Assistant Syed Tariq Fatemi, ambassadors of Pakistan to Turkiye and Syria and other high officials, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The prime minister, during the meeting, observed that relief assistance to these countries should be sent in accordance with the requirements of the earthquake-affected people and stressed upon ensuring of quality relief goods.

The prime minister also constituted a sub-committee to be headed by the minister for planning. The committee would be tasked to share information among the government and humanitarian organizations over the dispatch of relief goods.

The prime minister said through

exchange of real-time information, the quake victims of Turkiye and Syria could be supported in a well-organized manner.

The meeting was apprised of the details of the relief assistance sent to these two countries through NDMA.

Chairman NDMA Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik informed the meeting that under prime minister's previous directive, the cost and preparation time for tents had been decided in consultation with the tent manufacturing industries.

By the end of next month, the government of Pakistan would send 1,00,000 winterized tents to Turkiye. These tents were being prepared keeping in view the weather requirements and in consultation with the Turkish Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD).

Faisal Edhi of Edhi Foundation, Maulana Bashir Farooqi of Saylani Trust and Abdul Shakoor of Al Khidmat Foundation briefed the meeting about the details of relief consignments sent to the quake-affected countries which included tents, medicines, edible items, blankets and warm clothes. Besides, medical teams had also been sent to these countries. The prime minister appreciated the working of the charity organizations and directed NDMA to keep constant coordination with them.

He also directed for further strengthening of supply chain of the relief items and asked for submission of a comprehensive mechanism for the next month in this regard.



LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a review meeting on Pakistan kidney and Liver Institute.

Imran urges judiciary to take notice over audio leaks

LAHORE (NNI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan urged on Sunday the judiciary to take notice over the audio leaks, saying taping conversation was a violation of basic rights.

Addressing a speech via video link flanked by Ms Rashid, Mr Khan stressed the need for the implementation of the law in connection with the leaked audio tapes, saying, "There exists a law in the country regarding the audio tape." Lamenting that Ms Rashid audio tape was leaked. Mr Khan said as per the law, nobody's audio could be recorded, adding merely on the court's order, audio could be recorded. Mr Khan recalled four months ago, the petition was filed in the Supreme Court (SC) regarding the audio tape.

Meanwhile, Ms Rashid lamented the evidence regarding the assassi-

nation attempt on Mr Khan was not being presented.

She said, "The former CCPO was the JIT's convener over the assassination attempt on the PTI chief. The PDM had disappeared along with the evidence in connection with the Wazirabad incident".

Ms Yasmin said, "As per the Fair Trial Act, nobody's phone could be taped." On Sunday, PTI chairman said the PTI and its workers would defend the sanctity of judiciary at any cost. The former prime minister held a meeting with PTI leader Shabbaz Gill, in which the two discussed the political situation of the country and the party's course of action. Mr Khan underscored the dire need for elections, saying the country had been going through an economic turmoil and the delay in elections was a violation of the constitution.

"The imported government has been targeting the judiciary to hide the violation of constitution on their account," said PTI chairman.

Mr Khan criticised the government for "creating further difficulties for people by putting an end to public welfare projects including the health card service". He said they [the rulers] cannot even face the public after the record breaking inflation as the poor were facing severe economic hardships.

Shabbaz Gill said the party workers stand with the PTI's ideology. He said, "I request to give at least ten per cent tickets to ideological youth of the party from youth wing, ISF, and social media wing in the upcoming election." He informed Imran Khan the workers who have stood with the party through thick and thin should be preferred over the electable ones.

Turkey earthquake

Rescue effort ends in all but two areas

HATAY (Agencies): Turkey has ended rescue efforts in all but two provinces, almost two weeks after a massive earthquake killed tens of thousands of people, the country's disaster agency said. Searches will continue in Kahramanmaraş and Hatay, the agency's chief said. However, hopes of finding anyone else alive in the rubble are fading fast.

Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has arrived in Turkey and announced \$100m (£83m) in humanitarian aid. The epicentre of the 7.8-magnitude earthquake on 6 February was in Kahramanmaraş. More than 44,000 people are confirmed to have lost their lives in south-eastern Turkey and northern Syria.

The death toll is expected to climb, with about 345,000 apartments in Turkey known to have been destroyed and many people still missing. Neither Turkey nor Syria have said how many people are still unaccounted for.

"In many of our provinces, search and rescue efforts have been completed," the disaster agency's chief, Yunus Sezer, told reporters in Ankara. He said search and rescue efforts were continuing at around 40 buildings in the two provinces, but he expected this number to fall by Sunday evening.

Rescue workers pulled at least three people from the rubble on Friday, more than 11 days after they were trapped when the earthquake hit. Mr Blinken has arrived in Turkey to show support,

despite the trip being planned before the quake. It is his first trip to Turkey since he took office more than two years ago.

The new aid "will be moving soon. Sadly, it's less about search and rescue but long-term recovery. This is going to be a long-term effort", he told reporters. He added that getting aid into Syria was "very, very challenging".

He will travel to Hatay to see humanitarian efforts before travelling to meet President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Monday. The pair are expected to discuss issues including Turkey's refusal to ratify Sweden and Finland's Nato membership applications.

Int'l Red Cross head visits Türkiye's quake zone to monitor humanitarian aid: Türkiye on Sunday hosted the head of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), who was visiting earthquake-hit areas in the country to examine the humanitarian assistance activities carried out by the Turkish Red Crescent.

Visiting the southern provinces of Gaziantep and Kahramanmaraş, Secretary-General Jagan Chapagain voiced his support and solidarity with Türkiye in a meeting with Kerem Kinik, the head of the Turkish Red Crescent, or Kızılay, in Kahramanmaraş province, the IFRC said in a statement. "The scale of the damage and destruction is absolutely unimaginable," Chapagain said, calling the level of

destruction, and the damage "heartbreaking."

On Kızılay's efforts on the ground, he said the organization "swung into action immediately in the middle of this destruction."

"Thousands of volunteers and staff were mobilized on day 1 all over the earthquake-affected areas to bring food. Because that was a really immediate need. And now they are expending their services of shelter, health, water, sanitation and protection."

Thanking the volunteers and staff of Kızılay for their dedication and commitment, he said: "I also know that many of them have lost some of their family members. But their commitment is not shaking. They are still here." Chapagain also said that the IFRC was extending its support to Kızılay, which, he underlined was a "very strong National Society with a huge capacity."

For his part, Kinik said three daily meals were being served to 2.5 million people impacted by the earthquakes, adding that the urgent need for blood donations had been resolved in the first days of the disaster thanks to "the intense support of our citizens." Kızılay provided blood and blood products needed by hospitals in the quake-hit region and called on people to donate blood, with voluntary donations to the Red Crescent on the first day surpassing 40,000 units, it said in a separate statement the day after the earthquakes struck

Constitution being abrogated on the pretext of election date: President

ISLAMABAD (NNI): President Dr Arif Alvi has said the Constitution of Pakistan is being abrogated on the pretext of seeking date for elections, so he had to write a letter.

In an interview, Alvi said instead of finding loopholes in the Constitution it should be respected, advising the government not to create deadlock in conducting elections while setting the provisions of the constitution aside.

He said it appeared that the country currently has not a coalition government but a technocrat setup that is getting some support from [unknown quarters].

In response to a question, Alvi said PTI Chairman Imran Khan should be questioned about the extension of retired general Qamar Javed Bajwa, adding he [Alvi] had no discussion with the sitting army chief about Imran Khan's letters. The PTI chief also didn't discuss with him the allegations against Asif Ali Zardari. Alvi cautioned that country's situation would worsen with the arrest of Imran Khan. "I cannot take any action against the governors on the issue of delay in the election."

It should be noted that President Alvi wrote a second letter to the Chief Election Commissioner for consultation on the election while expressing his displeasure with the Election Commission for not responding to the letter.

Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah censured President Dr Arif Alvi, asking him to respect his constitutional stature as he has nothing to do with the date for elections.

In a statement, he said Alvi should act as the president of Pakistan and not as Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's spokesperson.

The PML-N leader stated that the former prime minister, prior to this, made the president, speaker, deputy speaker and governors do unconstitutional things. He said Alvi was intruding into the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) domain, regretting that Khan was pressurising the electoral body while using the office of the president. The minister said that President Alvi was an accomplice in PTI's foreign funding case.

CM KP convened meeting for assessment of security situation

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan has convened an important meeting on Tuesday for assessment of security situation across the province in the context of upcoming general elections.

The relevant authorities will give a detailed briefing to the Chief Minister on the overall security situation of the province. It merits a mention here that Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had sent a letter to the care-

taker Chief Minister a few days back seeking security assessment for holding general elections in the province.

In order to look into the matter and apprise the governor accordingly, the Chief Minister has convened a meeting on Tuesday wherein he will be briefed about the security situation. After assessing the security situation in the meeting, Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will be apprised of the situation accordingly.

Meanwhile, Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan on Sunday directed police officers to arrest the killers of Maulana Ejaz Haqani who was killed in Masho Khel.

In a message, the Chief Minister expressed deep sorrow and grief over the murder and said that the culprits involved in this inhumane act would be brought into justice at all cost.

He also extended heartfelt sympathy to the bereaved family members and prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace.

Bilawal raises terrorism issue at Munich Security Conference

MUNICH (NNI): Minister for External Affairs Bilawal Bhutto said if Afghanistan did not prevent her land to be used by terrorists, it could lead to the spread of a wave of terrorism from Pakistan to other countries.

Addressing the Munich security conference, attended by heads of state and government and ministers of defense and foreign affairs, he said the spread of terrorism through Afghanistan was the most pressing issue adding a large number of terrorists belonging to other creeds were also present in the world. "The Afghan administration's non-serious attitude toward terrorism is concerning", he added.

Mr Zardari held meetings with foreign ministers and leaders of

different countries at the Munich Security Council in Germany and discussed matters of mutual interest. The minister met his Saudi counterpart Faisal Bin Farhan Al Saud and the two pledged to increase cooperation of their countries in diverse fields.

Bilawal said Pakistan highly valued its brotherly relations with Saudi Arabia. He also held a meeting with Foreign Minister of Finland Pekka Haavisto.

The two sides agreed to take forward relations in sectors of education, trade and climate change.

Bilawal welcomed the decision of Finland to re-open its embassy in Islamabad. The minister met with the Vice President and Foreign Minister of Jordan Ayman Al

Safadi and they agreed to expand bilateral ties and high level contacts between Pakistan and Jordan.

He also met with the Foreign Minister of Malta Dr Ian Borg and they expressed their determination to promote relations in areas of information technology, health, tourism and start-ups through the Joint Technical Commission.

He had a meeting with chief of the International Crisis Group Dr Comfort Ero and they concurred to adopt a coordinated strategy to resolve issues facing humanity.

The minister also held discussions with US Senator Lindsey Graham and other members of Congress and they talked about issues of climate change and the challenges faced by humanity.

Suicide bomber arrested

QUETTA (INP): The female 'suicide bomber' arrested by Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) in Quetta was portrayed as a missing person by the Baloch Liberation Front (BLF). According to details, the propaganda used by the BLF to portray Mahal as a missing person has been exposed. Mahal Baloch was used by and forced to support BLF's militant wing.



Association
welcomes acting
MD SNGPL



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sui Northern Executive Officers Association welcomes the decision of Board of Directors regarding appointing Mr. Amer Tufail as Acting Managing Director of SNGPL.

It is an honor to welcome Mr. Amir Tufail worthy Managing Director on this honourable leadership position of SNGPL serving the nation through largest integrated gas distribution and transmission network in the country.

With his versatile experience and dedication, we'll accomplish amazing things together.

We are excited to have him to lead the way as we work together to achieve goals and overcome challenges together in the past. The decision of assigning key posts of management to the senior & experienced fellows depicts the true aim of Managing Director towards the growth of organization.

The long awaited issue of annual increment of officers has been promptly addressed by the new management which has highly induced motivation among all employees of the organisation.

Moreover, finalisation of Annual Appraisals Reports and pending promotions will certainly reduce the demotivation and unrest among the employees.

We congratulate worthy Managing Director on his new assignment of leading the company towards growth and prosperity and we feel honor to give him full confidence while executing the same.

Police recovered two goats stolen from Uthal

KARACHI (PPI): Uthal police claimed to have recovered two goats stolen from Uthal area of Balochistan province on Sunday.

Two alleged accused were also arrested on the charge of stealing goats. In compliance with the directives of higher authorities, staff of Police Station, Hub under the supervision of Station House Officer, Hub, Muhammad Amin Sasoli recovered two goats, which had been stolen from Hub, from the possession of two alleged accused namely Mithal and Ismail, resident of Sindh in an operation conducted in Hub.

First Information Report (FIR) was lodged against the alleged accused at Police Station, Hub. Further investigation was being conducted by the Investigating Staff of Police Station, Hub.

Sharjeel reacts to Sheikh Rasheed's statement

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that Sheikh Rashid is a black spot on the vibrant city of Rawalpindi. Shaikh Rasheed wants to keep himself relevant in the political scenario of the country by hurling baseless and fabricated blames on former president Asif Ali Zardari.

The minister while reacting to Shaikh Rasheed's statement, former President Asif Ali Zardari never believes in politics of revenge and had even pardoned his worst opponents who subjected him and his family to the worst political revenge.

The provincial minister said that Pakistan People's Party had always remained the target of extremism. President Asif Ali Zardari cannot even

think of using extremists element against Imran Khan. He added that if Sheikh Rasheed has evidence, he should produced it in the court of law. He said that Sheikh Rasheed is habitual making such insane talks on tv screens to gain attention of masses. Shaikh Rasheed gives new prediction and dates after every fortnight that never proved correct.

The minister expressed that Sheikh Rasheed consider jails his in law's but he could not spend four nights in lock-up and came out after begging apologies. Provincial Information Minister remarked that Sheikh Rasheed had enjoyed the important ministries for four years in PTI rule by making Imran Khan fool. 'He is looking for a new victim before the upcoming elections', the minister concluded.

Caretaker CM reviews healthcare facilities

LAHORE (APP):Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi presided over a meeting at the CM Office and discussed the programme to provide quality health facilities to people of the province.

While directing the authorities concerned to bring further improvement in the healthcare facilities, he underscored that patients should be provided quality treatment facilities in the government hospitals as getting quality and free treatment is the right of every needy patient.

Mohsin Naqvi said that matters pertaining to treatment and provision of other essential facilities should be improved at the earliest in the government hospitals. He emphasised that the Punjab government would continue to strive for bringing further improvement in the healthcare system. The facilities being provided in the government hospitals of Punjab were also reviewed during the meeting. The participants put forth their recommendations to improve treatment facilities and services in the government hospitals. Provincial Minister for Specialized Health Care & Medical Education (SHC&ME) Doctor Javed Akram, Chairman P&D, Secretary SHC&ME, Secretary Finance, CEO Punjab Health Initiative Management Company (PHIMC) and officials concerned attended the meeting.

Caretaker CM takes notice of 2 kids death: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi took notice of recovery of two children bodies from a pool in Hafizabad and sought a report from the Inspector General of Police in this regard.

He ordered to investigate the matter from every aspect and bring facts to light. Mohsin Naqvi expressed his heartfelt sympathy and condolences with the parents of the deceased children.

Caretaker CM orders crackdown on drug-peddlers: Caretaker Chief Minister

Punjab Mohsin Naqvi has ordered for launching a joint crackdown on drug-peddlers to save the new generation from the curse.

He chaired a meeting at the CM Office in which a strategy to stop buying and peddling narcotics along with saving the new generation from the scourge of narcotics. It was decided in the meeting to conduct random screening of students in the educational institutions. Mohsin Naqvi directed CCPO, Secretary Higher Education, Secretary Primary & Secondary Healthcare, Commissioner Lahore division to carry out a comprehensive planning with regard to screening of students. He said that effective steps would be undertaken under a joint strategy in order to save the new generation from the scourge of narcotics.

Mohsin Naqvi highlighted that a joint collaboration between concerned institutions of Punjab government and Anti-Narcotics Force will further be improved. He ordered for taking effective steps in order to prevent ICE addiction and asserted that action should be taken to stop the drug supply chain and its online availability.

Mohsin Naqvi outlined that strict action would be taken forthwith to save educational institutions from the curse of narcotics. He underscored that it was national and social responsibility to save the new generation from narcotics addiction.

Caretaker Provincial Ministers Amir Mir, SM Tanvir, Inspector General of Police, Additional IG Special Branch, Brigadier Rashid of Narcotics Control Punjab, CCPO, Secretaries of Higher Education, Specialized Healthcare & Medical Education, School Education, Primary & Secondary Healthcare, Excise, Taxation & Narcotics Control, Social Welfare, Inspector General Prisons and officials concerned attended the meeting.

Caretaker Minister Industries visits BoIT headquarters

F.P. Report

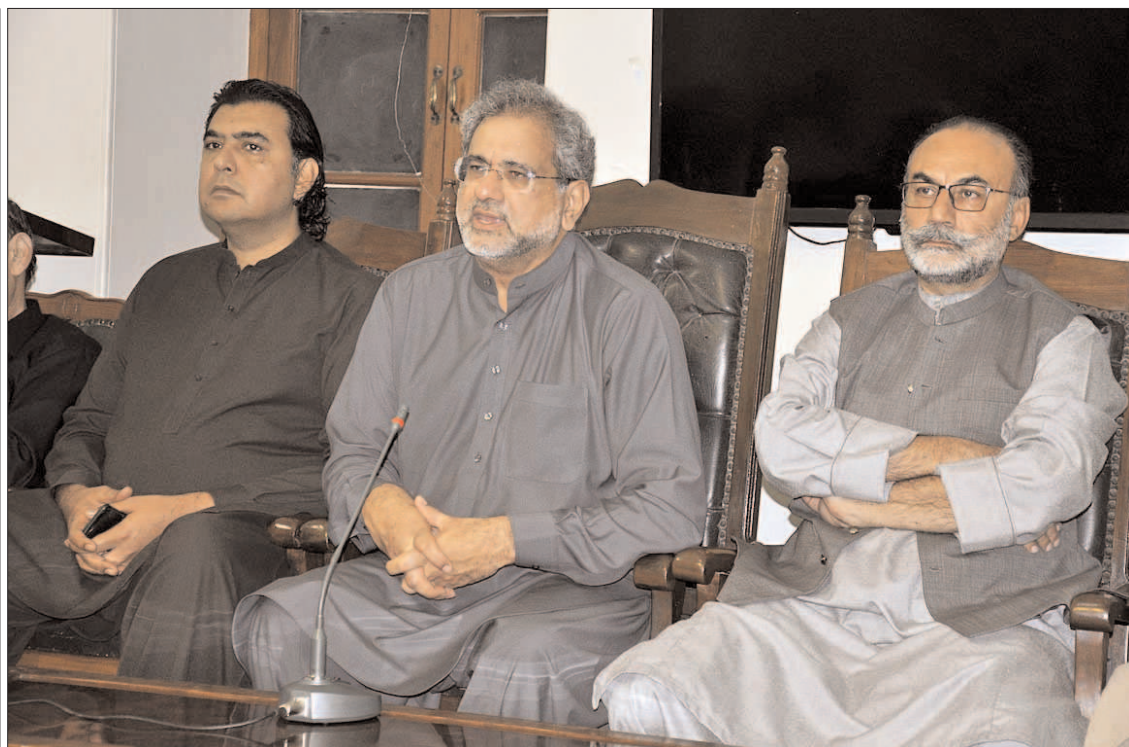
PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment and Trade (BoIT) has given final touches to the plan of establishing an export processing zone for copper mining and processing in North Waziristan, for which fifteen hundred acres of mining land has been acquired through the provincial government. Over 11,000 tonnes of copper will be mined and processed daily from this zone.

It was revealed during a briefing given to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Industries, Commerce and Technical Education Adnan Jalil during his visit of the BoIT headquarters in Peshawar.

Adnan Jalil while eulogizing the overall performance of the Board, also expressed his satisfaction over the establishment of special industrial zones and industrial estates in the province as well as opening the new doors for billions of dollars of private investment in the numerous sectors of

tourism, science and technology, IT, agriculture, livestock, infrastructure, mines, minerals and energy. He assured full support on behalf of his provincial government in this regard. He further appreciated the board's 14 km cable car project from Kumrat to MadakLasht, an attractive tourist destination of Dir Upper, which will provide employment to 35,500 people with a private investment of Rs 25 billion while the adjacent skiing, walking tracks and hotel industry, would increase its international attraction, he added.

Adnan Jalil also praised the role of the Board in attracting investment for the establishment of eleven different industrial units including steel, ceramics, solar energy, oil extraction and solvation, chemicals, beverages and electric cables and wires in different parts of the province. He expressed the hope that the Board will fulfill its onerous responsibilities for industrial development of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including the merged districts.



KARACHI: PML-N leader Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Haji Lashkari Raisani and Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar addressing a press conference at Press Club.

Irregularities in appointment & promotions in KP's health sector

Ishaq Khan

PESHAWAR: Despite tall claims of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) of bringing positive change in the health sector after ruling the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) for almost ten years, the Young Doctors Associations (YDA), employees and patients raised some serious questions about the irregularities in the well-known health institutions of the province.

From the past few days, social media users and YDA members started a trend of asking the former health Tahir Saleem Jhagra regarding the irregularities in health institutes and blaming the previous government for destroying the health sector with their experiments. The PTI led provincial government introduced Medical Teaching Institutions Reforms Act, passed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly in 2015. The MTI 2015 Act was first enforced in Peshawar's Lady Reading Hospital (LRH) and later in Khyber Teaching Hospital (KTH) and Hayatabad Medical Complex (HMC), currently the law covers 11 hospitals and their affiliated medical colleges in Dera Ismail Khan, Bannu, Abbottabad, Swat, Nowshera, Mardan and Swabi districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The MTI Act was meant to bring positive reforms in the health sector in the better interest of the masses in getting quality treatment in the gov-

ernment health institutions but unfortunately some of the ill-minded people used the act for fulfillment of their own wishes. Despite the availability of qualified employees in HMC and Khyber Girls Medical College (KGMC), the BoG HMC awarded the high posts to some of their favorite persons, The Frontier Post learnt.

According to the information available on KGMC website, currently Prof Amin ul Haq is working as Professor, Chairman Department of Biochemistry, Associate DEAN KGMC, Director PGMED, Chairman Disciplinary Committee, Chairman Faculty Promotion Committee and Chairman Procurement Committee, despite that he was retired in 2019.

Amin ul Haq was reappointed illegally after the retirement on the post of professor as he was only a MBBS, M.Phil holder which is against the rules and regulations, but one can clearly see that the rules were ignored and twisted for the favorite employee. The sources informed that Amin ul Haq (MBBS, M. Phil) is likely to be reappointed for the fifth consecutive time this year despite that the two qualified PHDs are available in the KGMC Department of Biochemistry including Dr Nabila Sher and Dr Kalsoom Tariq, waiting for their promotions and rights in this regard.

Some of the appointments in HMC and KGMC raised serious questions about the MTI rules and regulations

as it is only for the juniors? Or only for the lower grades employees, when will the action be taken against those who are not eligible but still enjoying the perks and privileges and looting the rights of the qualified staff?

The appointment of Amin ul Haq was also used as an excuse for appointing the retired employees only for administrative purposes not for academic purposes.

On the condition of anonymity, the source said that if a person is himself not eligible for the occupied position then how he can decide the appointments and promotions of other employees. Sources claimed that the promotion committee under the chairmanship of Amin ul Haq, promoted more than 100 employees illegally by bypassing the policy board of Nousherwan Burki.

All the promotions were rejected by the finance department and disowned all the perks and privileges in this regard. The Finance department informed the HMC that it is their own decisions and declared it illegal as per the rules. It is worthy to be mentioned that not a single example of such promotions could be seen in other MTIs of the province as it is unique case in its own way.

The social media users and employees of these institutions demanded from the concerned authorities to investigate the irregularities in KGMC and HMC on the name of promotions and reappointment.

ANF seizes over 1093 kg drugs in 16 operations; arrests 14

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan has seized over 1093 kg of drugs and 586.8 litres of prohibited chemicals, arrested 14 accused including two women and impounded three vehicles while conducting 16 counter-narcotics operations across the country during the last 48 hours, said an ANF spokesman here on Sunday.

He informed that ANF conducted a raid near Islamabad Tarnol Toll Plaza and recovered 43.2 kg charras and seven kg opium from secret cavities of a pick-up vehicle besides arresting two accused. ANF in another operation near Islamabad Motorway Toll Plaza managed to recover 16 kg heroin, 7.2 kg opium and 7.2 kg charras from secret cavities of a car and rounded up two accused including a woman.

ANF in the third operation recov-

ered 820 grams of heroin from the possession of a Riyadh-bound passenger, a resident of Bajaur Agency at Islamabad International Airport.

In the fourth operation near Islamabad Motorway Toll Plaza, ANF recovered 2.4 kg charras from the possession of an accused resident of Nowshera. In the fifth operation, 489 grams of heroin was recovered at Lahore International Airport from the possession of a Bahrain-bound passenger resident of Kohistan.

In the sixth operation, ANF and FC conducted a raid in Khyber and recovered 29 kg charras from Pak-Afghan border area. In another operation on Karachi Super-Highway, ANF seized one kg crystal heroin and 900 grams of Ice drug from the possession of a woman resident of Multan.

In the eighth operation near

Gwadar and recovered 25 kg charras, 10 kg heroin and 150 kg Ice drug.

ANF conducted a raid in the Chaman area and managed to recover 586.8 litres of prohibited chemicals while in another raid in the Quetta-Hazarganj area, ANF also recovered 105 kg charras which were concealed in secret cavities of a car.

In the eleventh operation, ANF seized 490 kg charras from an abandoned house. The spokesman further informed that ANF also recovered 90 heroin-filled capsules from the possession of a Doha-bound passenger resident of Faisalabad going on flight no PK-287. In an operation at Bacha Khan International Airport, ANF recovered nine charras-filled capsules from the possession of a Sarjahn-bound passenger resident of Bannu going on flight no PK-257.

'President can't announce PA election date'

LAHORE (APP): The president can only announce elections for the National Assembly and the schedule for the provincial assemblies' elections can be issued only by governors.

This was claimed by Pakistan People's Party Central Punjab Acting President Rana Farooq Saeed in a statement, issued here on Sunday. He said that Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rashid Ahmad was instigating President Arif Alvi for an unconstitutional step of announcing the provincial assemblies' elections. He said a single-seater politician should stop issuing directions to the Election Commission.

He said the resident of Lal Haveli was speaking without taking into account the legal realities. He appealed to courts to take notice of the unconstitutional and instigating statements of Sheikh Rashid. He said that the PPP workers would not allow and spare anybody over use of dirty language against party chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari.

He said that the PUC was

Ashrafi appeals to all stakeholders for bringing political, economic stability

LAHORE (APP): Special Representative to the Prime Minister for Interfaith Harmony and Middle East Affairs Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi has appealed to all stakeholders to play their role for bringing about political and economic stability in the country.

He was addressing a press conference along with Maulana Asadullah Farooq, Allam Zubair Abid, Maulana Tahir Akeel Awan, Allama Tahirul Hassan, Maulana Aslam Sadique and others at the Lahore Press Club, here on Sunday.

Ashrafi, who is also the chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC), said that the current challenging situation of the country was demanding from all political and religious parties to reach consensus on a way out to steer the country out of crises. He asked all stakeholders to create a congenial environment and sit together at a table to remove their differences and put the country on the road to progress.

He said that the PUC was

playing its role for inter-sect and inter-faith harmony across the globe, adding that it would continue its efforts to establish the system of Khilafat-e-Rashida in the country, as it was based on justice and equality.

Ashrafi said that elections would prove useless if political parties did not introduce electoral reforms and make it mandatory for all contesting parties to accept the results of elections openheartedly. He raised the question that what would be the solution if someone did not accept the mandate of any winning party in the elections after spending of huge funds on the process.

People had no money and they were already overburdened due to inflation and the International Monetary Fund's conditions, he said.

The chairman announced that the PUC had decided not to contest elections until and unless the misuse of money was strictly prohibited in it, but it would extend full support to their like-minded people who would

fight the elections in their respective constituencies across the country.

Terming Nankana Sahib incident disappointing, he said they should also devise a mechanism to deal with increasing polarisation and extremism in society. If someone was accused of desecration of the Holy Quran or blasphemy of the Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), he should be punished by a court of law, he asserted, adding that nobody would be given free hand to be complainant, judge and executioner.

He complained that as the holy month of Ramadan was approaching, the price of daily-use items had started rising in the country which was totally against the law and Shariah. He said there was a religious decree issued by all schools of thought that those who were involved in hoarding of public-use items for the sake of extra profit, were earning Haram money.



LAHORE: Children enjoy on merry-go-round as a large number of people visiting Greater Iqbal Park to spend their holiday.

Investment friendly initiatives attracting massive response

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KP-EZDMC) Javed Iqbal Khattak has said that initiatives taken by the company for attracting domestic and foreign investment is receiving massive response and 298 new industrial units are under construction in different economic zones of the province.

Talking to APP, he said that the aims and objectives of the company are to put the province on the track of rapid industrial growth and generate employment opportunities for local youth.

He said that due to the availability of natural resources and geographical advantage of neighbourhood with export market of Afghanistan, the industrial sector of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is attracting robust investment in industrial.

He said that work on ten more economic zones was in progress in the province, which is receiving acclamation not only within the country rather also from Chinese and overseas Pakistanis investors. Javed Iqbal Khattak said that industrial plots in all newly established zones have already been sold out, saying they are expanding the existing zones to create space for more investors.

He said that a crucial project amongst the newly established economic zones is the Rashakai prioritized Special Economic Zone, which is being established under China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and has become the only such zone that has become operational.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KP-EZDMC) Javed Iqbal Khattak said that 18 companies including domestic and Chinese enterprises are establishing their industrial units in the Rashakai Special Economic Zone. Furthermore, he said that big groups from across Pakistan are also investing in it.

Similarly, he said that another Special Economic Zone has been established on 434 acres land at Hattar (Haripur) wherein 7 units have already become operational, while 35 more are under construction.

He said that keeping in view the natural resources available in the province, the company has also started work on establishing three sector specific economic zones including one Marble City (Buner), Salt & Gypsum City (Karak) and for Marble & Granite at Mohmand. He said that these factors are negating the impression of weak industrial growth in the province. He said that KP has an edge over other provinces as the export market of Afghanistan is at its doorstep. He said that the prospects of energy availability in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are also better than other provinces, which is highly essential for investment in the industrial sector.

He invited all Pakistanis to make investment in KP by establishing industrial units here and assured the provision of all facilities including security, electricity, gas and water through one-window operation to them.

He termed the availability of cheap and hard labour another advantage of the province and said that it is not only economical than other parts of the country rather also more than most of our neighbouring countries.

He said that all facilities to investors are offered through one-window operation and for this purpose Investors' Facilitation Centres (IFCs) have been established at all economic zones of the province wherein all issues including the issuance of no objection certificates (NoCs) are issued to them.

The CEO KP Economic Zones, who has over 25 years experience in the promotion of SMEs, also stressed the need for investment in the agriculture sector to prevent the wastage of agricultural produce, saying the province has huge potential for the establishment of processing units.

He recalled that even during the period of Corona pandemic when all industrial units were closed only food and pharmaceutical units were operational and earning profit. He was of the view that the margin of profit in these two sectors is also higher than others.

He said that by the promotion of investment in the agricultural sector, we can also encourage the farming community that their product is utilized in best manner and benefits are pass-on to them.

He said that through putting trust in our natural endowments and its value-addition, we can also export them.



PESHAWAR: Delegation of High Court Bar Association Abbottabad meeting Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam.

GHA setups Hindko bookstall

PESHAWAR (APP): Gandhara Hindko Academy (GHA), Peshawar has set up a bookstall in the ongoing three-day 'Mother Languages Literature Festival' arranged by Indus Cultural Forum (ICF) in collaboration with Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) at Islamabad.

Talking to APP on Sunday, General Secretary GHA Peshawar Muhammad Ziaud Din said more than 2,000 books of Hindko language literature and other local languages of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were presented before the audience of the festival.

The participants of the festival took a keen interest in the books and paid tribute to living legends who had dedicated their lives to the promotion and protection of their mother languages, he added.

Zia said Pakistan has a rich cultural tradition and linguistic diversity of over 70 local languages and expressed his ownership for the promotion of diversity and cultural manifestation of all mother languages of Pakistan.

Minister inspects facilities in prison

PESHAWAR (APP): Caretaker Minister for Communications and Works (C&W) Muhammad Ali Shah visited the District Prison in Saidu Sharif, Swat, the other day, said an official handout issued here on Sunday.

On the occasion of the visit, the Jail Superintendent gave a detailed briefing to the caretaker minister on the facilities and other matters in the prison.

He visited different sections, met with the prisoners, went to the Juvenile Correction School, met the inmates, visited the technical training center, and inspected the wards and OPD in the prison hospital.

He also visited the kitchen, checked the menu, and evaluated the quality of the food.

On the occasion of the visit, the prisoners highlighted their issues before the caretaker minister and informed him about the slow progress in court cases, on which the minister issued orders to the jail superintendent to hold a special Darbar in this regard.

On the occasion of the prison visit, the caretaker minister for C&W, Muhammad Ali Shah, said that the prisoners did not complain about the prison facilities, which is a good thing, while the problems related to the cases of the prisoners will be resolved.

P&D Deptt accords approval to 31 projects

PESHAWAR (APP): The Sustainable Development Unit (SDU) of the Planning & Development (P&D) Department has accorded approval to 31 projects of worth Rs.300 million.

These projects would be implemented under the auspices of the Pakistan Community Support Project in districts Khyber, Nowshera and some specified localities of the provincial capital Peshawar, said a press release issued here on Sunday.

The projects were given approval during a meeting of the Sub Projects Review & Approval Committee that met here with the Director General (DG), SDU Adil Saeed Safi in the chair.

The projects include the construction of four farm to market access roads, cementing of 7 streets including access drainage system, 11 schemes of drinking water, flood protection walls and 11 welfare projects including the restoration of a girls' school and restoration.

These projects have been initiated on the recommendation of the local organizations and would be implemented through the local community.

Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) is providing financial assistance in completion of community support projects in Khyber, Nowshera and 4-kilometer corridor in Peshawar and prioritized projects in 160 villages from wherein the power transmission line of KASA-1000 is passing.

So far 160 sub-projects and 25 good oriented projects have been approved with the support of PCSP, which are passing under the different phases of completion.

Minister convened an important meeting

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan has convened an important meeting on Tuesday for assessment of security situation across the province in the context of upcoming general elections. The relevant authorities will give a detailed briefing to the Chief Minister on the overall security situation of the province. It merits a mention here that Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had sent a letter to the caretaker Chief Minister a few days back seeking security assessment for holding general elections in the province. In order to look into the matter and apprise the governor accordingly, the Chief Minister has convened a meeting on Tuesday wherein he will be briefed about the security situation. After assessing the security situation in the meeting, Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will be apprised of the situation accordingly.

DCPS declares 460 drugs substandard, 150 spurious

PESHAWAR (APP): Director Drugs Dr Abbass on Sunday said that the Directorate General Drugs Control and Pharmacy Services (DCPS), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has declared 610 medicines against the medical standard.

He said that on the directives of Director General DCPS, the performance report of the Directorate for the year 2022 was issued on the other day.

According to the report, the teams of DCPS inspected 14,803 medical stores among which 2,449 stocks of medicines were seized during the same period.

Furthermore, the samples of a total of 10,351 medicines throughout the province were examined among which 460 drugs were declared substandard while 150 medicines were declared spurious.

FIRs have been lodged against 35 persons over violating the drug act while 375 medical stores were sealed during the last year.

Similarly, a total of 2,156 cases were lodged in Drug Courts out of which 488 were decided.

Directorate General Drugs Control and Pharmacy Services (DCPS) also imposed fines of Rs120 million during the same period, the report added.

Guard kills school teacher

PESHAWAR (APP): Professor Bashir, a teacher of Islamia Collegiate School was killed by the School guard here on Sunday, following a bitter debate between the two. The University Police team, upon receiving the information, rushed to the spot and found him dead.

Professor Bashir was a teacher of English Department in Islamia College.

Spring vacations announced

PESHAWAR (APP): Islamia College Peshawar announced spring vacations on Sunday from February 20 to February 25.

According to a notification issued here, all co-curricular and extra-curricular activities including tests, interviews etc were postponed and will be rescheduled accordingly.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister Adnan Jalil chairing briefing of Board of Investment & Trade during his visit of BoIT HQs.



PESHAWAR: Provincial president PPP Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha presiding over a meeting of provincial cabinet. — F.P. phot by Ghulam Murtaza

Showcasing KP's archaeology treasures through social media imperative to attract foreign investment, bolstering economy

PESHAWAR (APP): Malaika Bibi, an 10-year-old girl student was overjoyed after visiting the world lone Gandhara Art Peshawar Museum where about 30,000 rare antiquities and artifacts including the complete life story of Lord Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, were kept preserved.

Arrived with his father from Nowshera district to the Peshawar Museum located on Sher Shah Suri Road in cantonment, the archaeology lover along with family members took keen interest in the ancient antiquities and artifacts of the Gandhara civilization, weapons of British army and swords of the freedom fighters displayed there.

"Today my dream to see all the Gandhara masterpieces practically at Peshawar Museum came true. I am very impressed after seeing/hearing about the complete life story of Lord Buddha," she told APP after making a selfie with Lord Buddha's statue with a big smile.

Peshawar Museum was constructed some 150 years back where over 30,000 rare antiquities, artifacts, coins, swords, guns and other antiquities including 16,000 properly showcased and around 14,000 artifacts were lying in cupboards, attracting tourists from across the world.

Malaika along with her father and brothers were overwhelmed after seeing the ancient dresses of Waziristan tribes, primitive cooking plates and jewelry besides muzzleloader guns mostly used by British army, swords of freedom fighters and punch marked coins.

They went around the two-storey building, an amalgamation of British and Mughal architectures, which was originally consisted of a main hall and two side aisles on ground and first floor, surmounted by four elegant cupolas and small pinnacle on all corners and commended the rehabilitation and conserved works of KP government.

"Peshawar Museum was the identity of Peshawar and its proper projection through digital and social media can bring economic lurals for the country," she said.

"It is the only Museum in the world where the complete life story of the Founder of Buddhism, Lord Bhudda was preserved in the form of panels and statues," said Bakht Zada Khan, research officer, archaeology and museums department while talking to APP.

He said its main hall constructed in 1906 in memory of Queen Victoria where the complete life story of Lord Bhudda, Buddha Gallery with statues of Lord Bhudda and Buddha Savatta Gallery having princely life of Lord Bhudda draw domestic and foreign tourists in droves.

Bakht Zada said the museums' antiquities help archaeologists to explore the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa history in its authentic perspective.

"The Sangaro cave's excavations Mian Khan, Mardan conducted by the renowned archeologist Ahmad Hasan Dhani and Farid Khan in 1963 had revealed the presence of people's remains in the Middle Paleolithic period (9,000 to 27,000) years before present in KP."

He said these people were living in stone-made caves, who fulfilled their food mostly from hunting of birds and animals. The discoveries of primitive rocks, bones and hunting tools dating back of Mesolithic or Middle Stone Age (10,000 to 8,600 years before present) during excavations at Khanpur in Haripur district and Sangaro Cave signified presence of humans' life in Swat and Dir where every stone speaks.

He said people started making clay and stones made pots, crockery and others related utensils for kitchen during the Neolithic period or commonly known as new stone-age dating back some 8,000 years before as evident from excavations of historic Mehar Gharh in Balochistan of the Indus Civilization, Rehman Dheri DI Khan and Sheri Khan Tarkai Swabi.

"The graves of Aryans invaders were also discovered at Aligram Swat, Sangota Chitral and Timergara Dir Lower dating back to the Dark Ages period of around 2,000 BC."

The Gandhara civilization has gained roots in the province after Persians conquered it in 6th century BC and made it one of the provinces of the Achaemenid Empire, he said.

He said reading and writing in Swat, Dir,

Mardan, Charsadda, Peshawar and Malakand, famous for Gandhara civilization, were started as evidence of the inscriptions mostly made on stones by Iranians. In 327 BC, Alexander the Great invaded the subcontinent through Khyber Pass and faced tough resistance while trying to subdue Youafzai tribesmen at Swat and Kunar valleys.

Alexander also resided in Taxila where he met a bold young man named Chandragupta Maurya, who was an exiled prince of Magadha in eastern India and Maurya decided to forge an empire in Alexander's footsteps.

However, his dream remained unfulfilled after the death of Alexander.

Later, Alexander's general Seleucus established rule in India's territories. The Indo-Greeks, a group of about 39 kings and queens laid the foundation of its own culture and introduced Greek art style which still existed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa besides promoting Buddhism.

In 1001 AD, Mahmud Ghaznavi had defeated Jayapala, the last Hindu Shahi King and subsequently Islam spread in

subcontinent including KP. In 1505, he said Zaeheeruddin Babar, the founder of the Mughal Empire had entered the subcontinent through Khyber Pass and took today's Kohat, Bannu districts before defeating the last Lodhi King and becoming Emperor of Delhi.

Ahmad Shah Abdali had launched several campaigns from Peshawar into many places across India. However, Abdali's reign (1747 - 1772) was temporarily interrupted when the Marathas invaded in early 1750s, but he succeeded to regain control over KP in 1761. Later the province came under control of Sikhs in 1818 under the command of Maharaja Ranjit Singh after he took over Peshawar in 1923.

"The Aziz Dheri Swabi archaeological discoveries dates back to early Kushan Period talked about the importance of main stupa."

He said this site was a rich Buddhist settlement in stucco art and relics as well as antiquities excavated and restored was displayed at Hund Museum, Swabi.

Bakht Zada said the international magazine "Archaeology", a publication of the Archaeological

Institute of America has issued a list of the top 10 best archaeological discoveries of the world including the Buddhist Apsidal temple at Bazira Barikot in Swat in 2022.

He said Swat ancient's monuments, Sehri Behlol, Sawal Dher, Jamal Ghari in Mardan and Havalian Buddhists Monastery in Haripur's control was taken over by the KP Government after the 18th Constitutional Amendment.

A museum was constructed near historical site at Hund Swabi from where Alexander the Great had crossed Indus River in 327 BC. Hund is also famous for Mehmood Ghaznavi's invasion in 998, which marked beginning of Islamic era in the region.

He said construction of two new museums in DI Khan and Abbottabad were almost completed where ancient antiquities depicting the area's culture would be put on display besides two more museums in Kohat and Haripur were in pipeline.

Following completion of these four new museums, the number of museums would increase to 16 in KP where 10 new museums were already established

including three in Peshawar, one each at Charsadda, Mardan, Lower Dir, Swat, Bannu and two in Chitral.

Cultural Heritage Trail project had been completed in Peshawar under which about 500 meters long trail from ancient Ghanta Ghar to Gor Gathri was renovated including 85 centuries-old buildings and houses besides architectural wonder Sethi House constructed in 1880.

About 1868 ancient houses, monuments and religious places were placed in the protected list including Amlokdara, Barikot, Stupa in Saidu Sharif, Bhudkada, Godara and Panar in Swat besides a monument at Chacha Younas Park in Peshawar.

First ever KP Antique Act 2016 has been passed, which empowered the archaeology department to protect and conserve historical buildings and countering the menace of smuggling of antiquities and artifacts.

The experts underscored the need for proper protection of these archaeology wonders of Pakistan through social and digital media besides special documents to attract foreign investment.



In brief

Two killed, 10 others injured

UMERKOT (PPI): Two persons were killed and 10 others injured due to collision between a car and a rickshaw on Sunday. Rescue officials said the car occupants were pilgrims who were on their way back after attending the Shiv Mela, which is held at the Mahadev Mandir every year, when their car collided with a rickshaw near Dargah Numa Noshah. Two people were killed in the accident, while 10 others were injured. The deceased have been identified as Sunil Meghwar and Narayan Koli. The rescue and police reached the spot as soon as the accident was reported. The rescue officials further said the bodies and the injured were shifted to the DHQ Hospital Umerkot. Two injured were later referred to a hospital in Hyderabad by the doctors. Officials said the accident was a result of the over-speeding. The car driver fled after the tragic incident.

Earthquake rattles Kharan

KHARAN (INP): A minor earthquake rattled Kharan, the district of Balochistan on Sunday morning. The quake was felt in different areas of Kharan and other adjoining areas at 11am. The tremor's magnitude was recorded at 3.2 on the Richter scale. According to the United States Geological Survey (USGS) the epicenter of the earthquake was 29 kilometers southwest of Balochistan and took place at a depth of 10 kilometers. There are no reports of damage and casualties.

Man injured in botched robbery

MULTAN (INP): A man was shot and injured after he tried to stop a robbery bid, near City Park Shah Rukn-e-Alam Colony, on Sunday morning. According to Rescue 1122, two armed persons intercepted a citizen and started looting him. In the meantime, Muhammad Arshad son of Muhammad Ishfaq reached the site and tried to stop the robbers, who retaliated by firing at him and wounding him. The victim is said to be the nephew of the person who was being robbed. The police concerned are investigating the incident.

Police arrest 3 car thieves

FAISALABAD (PPI): Police on Sunday arrested three suspects involved in stealing a car after an encounter near Nawalty Pull in Faisalabad. Police said the suspects were trying to flee after they stole a car. The police, along with the car's owner, chased them and injured one in crossfire with the thieves. Police arrested the three including the injured, while one managed to flee.

Man murdered by nephew

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): A man was reportedly killed by his nephew over a land dispute in Khangarh city, on Sunday. According to Rescue officials, the control room received a call in which the caller said that there was a brawl over land dispute and one person was injured. The on site Rescue staff said that a 70-year-old man was attacked by his nephew, near Mohallah Qadriabad, Khangarh city District Muzaaffargarh. The victim, identified as Muhammad Ibrahim s/o Gul Muhammad, died on the spot due to excessive bleeding.

Villagers foil dacoity bid

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): Villagers foiled a dacoity bid as six armed dacoits forcibly entered into a house and started looting at Shiekhpur village in Khangarh.

Muqam says PTI destroyed country's economy



F.P. Report

SWAT: Adviser to Prime Minister Engineer Amir Muqam has said that gas projects approved before 2018, on which the PTI government had stopped progress, had been resumed. He congratulated the people of the concerned areas. The advisor further said that the major achievements of PTI are theft, destroying the country's economy and halting the

three major projects of Malakand, which include Chakdara Kalam Expressway, Chakdara, Dir, Chitral Expressway and Khwaza Khela Besham Expressway.

Engineer Amir Muqam said that the closure of approved gas projects is also amongst the achievements of PTI.

The advisor further said that PML-N, under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif, will bring the country out

of all crises.

He said that the problems faced by Pakistan today are the results of Imran's four years of incompetence.

Adviser to the Prime Minister, Engineer Amir Muqam, expressed these views while addressing public gatherings at various places in Swat, including Taligram, Asir, Alaabad, Dkorak, Gali Bagh, Alamganj, Gashkor, Bandai and Khawaza Khela.

29th Syndicate meeting decides KKKUK matters



F.P. Report

KARAK: The Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak 29th Syndicate meeting decided various academic and administrative matters of the university in its meeting held.

The University, Vice Chancellor Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak Prof. Dr. Johar Ali presided the Syndicate meeting. It was also attended by HEC Nominee and Vice Chancellor FATA University Prof. Dr. Muhammad Jahanzeb Khan, Dean Qurtaba University Peshawar Prof. Dr. Muhammad Riaz, Registrar Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak Muhammad Rashad Khattak, Treasurer Hafiz Ismail Khan, Director QEC Muhammad Shah Din, Deputy Director Audit Farid Jalal, Deputy Registrar Meetings Abdus Salam, HoD Computer Science and Bioinformatics Dr. Muhammad Inam ul Haq, Lecturer Management Sciences Dr. Abdul Latif, Additional Secretary Establishment Department Khyber Pakht-

unkhwa Muhammad Ayaz, Additional Secretary Finance Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Kamran Khan, Deputy Secretary Higher Education Archives and Libraries Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Azhar Zahoor, Principal GPGC Karak Muhammad Ajmal Khan and Principal Girls Post Graduate College KDA Karak Mrs. Falak Naz.

VC Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak welcomed Deputy Director Audit Mr. Farid Jalal and Principal GPGC Karak M. Ajmal Khan for their membership of the Syndicate.

Earlier, HEC nominee and Vice Chancellor FATA University Prof. Dr. Muhammad Jahanzeb Khan presented words of appreciation for the Vice Chancellor Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak Prof. Dr. Johar Ali for running the University's business in an amicable way. He lauded his role in framing detail Rules and Regulations for the University which will also assist the other Universities as well. Other

members Dr. Muhammad Riaz, Muhammad Rashad Khattak, Muhammad Ayaz Khan, Abdus Salam, Dr. Abdul Latif and Treasurer Hafiz Ismail Khan also lauded the role of Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Johar Ali on account of his consistency and steadiness in discharging various functions of the University. Hafiz Ismail Khan also applauded the efforts of Prof. Dr. Johar Ali in developing infrastructure of the University in critical times.

The Syndicate disposed of TTS Teachers appointment evaluation criteria about Securing/Completing research projects and constituted committees in some cases to resolve it according to the Statutes and Rules of the University.

VC Prof. Dr. Johar Ali in his address to the 29th Syndicate thanked members of the Syndicate for showing trust in his Vice Chancellorship and reiterated that he will always concentrate his focus on the University matters irrespective of personal likes and dislikes.

KDA, Wildlife rescue injured leopard found

MANSEHRA (APP): Kagan Development Authority (KDA) and Wildlife department officials on Sunday rescued an injured leopard on the Kagan Highway and transferred it to Dhodial Pheasantry, Mansehra for treatment.

Range Officer Wildlife Farhan Tariq, while talking to the media, said the leopard was allegedly hit by a vehicle as it sustained injuries on the legs and back. After a complete examination, the leopard was transferred to the pheasantry for further medical assistance, he added.

According to Range Officer, the age of this male leopard was more than one year. Dr Ayaz of Dhodial Pheasantry told APP that the leopard was stable in their custody and "we have provided him with initial treatment and kept him in the cage." He further said the leopard was fainting with pain when it was brought into the pheasantry "but now it is in aggressive mode after getting initial treatment and stabilization".

This was the second incident of leopard injury during the last two and a half months on Kagan Highway. In the first incident, an injured cheetah was recovered by both KDA and the wildlife department. It was shifted to Dhodial, too but the cheetah could not survive and succumbed to injuries unfortunately.

Dr Ayaz informed the media that every effort was

made to save the cheetah's life, but due to a critical head injury, it went into a coma. It was about four to five years of age.

He said the head injury of the cheetah showed that it fell from a high hill while chasing its prey and received critical injuries. "We have found no signs of torture on its body." Later, the dead body of the cheetah was shifted to Abbottabad for postmortem.

Chicken price hits high in Mansehra

Before the start of the Ramadan and tourism season in the Hazara division Sunday the poultry prices touched new heights at 455 rupees per kg while the chicken meat price remained at 780 rupees per kg. According to the details, like in other parts of the country, the price of chicken and its products are increasing continuously for the last few months in the Hazara region, today it has touched a new height of 455 rupees per kg.

As a result of the unprecedented price hike the number of buyers has also reduced to one-third, poultry retailers informed the media about the price and said that keeping in view of the current situation it was expected that the price of poultry meat would exceed 1000 rupees per kg during the holy month of Ramadan. On the other side, the buying power of the masses reduced after passing each day which also affected the poultry

market. In the wake of the current price hike profiteers of the district Mansehra started charging the price of LPG 30 to 90 rupees per kg extra, after the announcement of a mini fiscal budget the price of LPG was 266 rupees per KG but in the district, Mansehra profiteers are charging minimum 290 rupees per kg.

Livestock farmers advised to adopt modern techniques for increasing milk yield

D.I.KHAN (APP): The livestock farmers should adopt the modern techniques of farming to increase their milk yield and to compete in the market, said a livestock expert. Talking to APP, District Director Livestock Department Dr Anwaar said the survival of small farmers was becoming difficult as they were hesitant in adopting modern ways of farming.

He was of the view that either the farmer himself should be a technical person or he should "take guidance and help of our department." The livestock department was providing free of charge services to the farmers, including treatment, vaccination, and improvement of breeds. Besides, he said, the farmers could also contact us to take guidance about reducing their cost of production and feeding. Dr Anwaar mentioned that the production of milk was about Rs 95 per liter for small farmers while the big farmers were producing the milk at around Rs 65 per liter, "and the selling price in the district is Rs 120 per liter."

In these circumstances, he said, the survival of farmers who were doing paid labour based farming became difficult. He pointed out that the recent floods in the area also badly affected the milk production in the district which reduced to 90,000 liters per day from 140,000 liters per day. Dr Anwaar said the farmers should focus on improving their breeds, hay, and silage by providing a suitable environment to their cattle, which would help increase the milk yield. Besides, he said, the farmers should remain in regular contact with the livestock department to take guidance on different diseases and vaccinations.



BAHAWALPUR: Governor Punjab Engineer Balighur Rehman distributing trophies and certificates among position holder students during prize distribution ceremony of Annual Sports Day at Sadiq Public School Bahawalpur.

Govt taking steps for promotion of education

BAHAWALPUR (INP): Punjab Governor Engineer Baligh-ur-Rehman has said that coalition government is taking effective steps for the promotion of education in the underdeveloped areas of South Punjab.

He said this while addressing the ceremony held at the 69th Foundation Day of Sadiq Public School in Bahawalpur on Sunday. He urged students to work hard in order to make Pakistan a developed Country.

Earlier, during a meeting with Sindh Governor Kamran Khan in Lahore today, the Governor discussed political situation in the country. They expressed resolve to protect Pakistan from the menace of terrorism through collective efforts.

Bodies of 2 missing kids recovered in Hafizabad

HAFIZABAD (INP): The dead bodies of two children who were kidnapped from Hafizabad ten days ago were recovered from an area pond on Sunday. As per details, two cousins Faizan and Abu Bakar who were about 5 or 6 years old were abducted from Mohallah Hassan Town in Hafizabad ten days ago.

However, their bodies were spotted in a pond today. Police reached the place and recovered their bodies. Police believed that the boys were murdered and then their bodies were thrown into the pond. The recovery of dead bodies has created a sense of fear among the residents of the area. Man dies of dacoits' firing in Karachi.

In another incident, a man died by the firing of dacoits in Shah Latif area of Karachi on Sunday. The dead was identified as Mehboob. Police said that the deceased put up resistance during a dacoity bid. Upon which, the dacoits opened fire on him. A bullet pierced through his chest, killing him on the spot.

Mehboob was an employee of a private company and he belonged to Mirpur Khas.

Narowal Wildlife Dept's negligence claims life of another rare deer

NAROWAL (INP): Another rare sambar deer, who

entered Pakistani territory from India, died due to alleged negligence and incompetence of Narowal Wildlife Department administration. The rare deer had crossed into Pakistan's Chak Amru Village.

As the rare deer entered the border area, people captured it and for five hours ill-treated the animal to claim their ownership which caused the deer to suffer a heart attack and die. A doctor said that if the deer is given an injection to slow his heart-

beat, his life can be saved.

This is the sixth rare deer that has died in a short span of one month after crossing into Pakistan from the Indian border area. It was learnt that these rare deer crossed the border from India into Pakistan through the border villages of Pindi, Sanesan, Jattar, Pindi Bori, and Chak Amru.

According to citizens, these rare animals die due to lack of awareness among people living in border areas about this rare breed. They were of the view that the wildlife department

should put up banners and posters to create awareness among people living in the border areas in order to protect rare animals.

They bemoaned the fact that Wildlife Department employees draw hefty salaries but they do not do any work and confine themselves in their homes, adding that their alleged negligence is resulting in the death of precious animals. Citizens also appealed to the Chief Minister of Punjab to take immediate notice of the negligence and incompetence of Wild Department.

DPO Sialkot transfers SHOs

SIALKOT (APP): District Police Officer (DPO) Sialkot Syed Zeeshan Raza has transferred station house officers (SHOs) in the district and posted them at different police stations (PS).

According to a spokesperson, the DPO transferred Fahad Bin Fida from Phalora police station as SHO Civil Lines, Sub-Inspector Teheesen Mohsin from Civil Lines to SHO Police Lines, Sub-Inspector Muhammad Awaish from Additional SHO City Daska police station to Additional SHO Hajipura police station, Sub-Inspector Badar Munir from SHO Hajipura police station to Police Lines, Sub-Inspector Altaf Ishaq from Additional SHO Sialkot police station to Additional SHO Neikapur police station, Sub-Inspector Fiaz Ahmed from SHO Neikapur police station to Police Lines, Sub-Inspector Shafaqat Ali from Police Line to SHO Rangpura police station, Sub-Inspector Abdul Rehman from SHO Rang Pura police station to Police Line, Inspector Muhammad Iqbal Khan from Police Line to SHO Cantt police station, Sub-Inspector Jahazeb Ahmed Khan from SHO Cantt police station to SHO Ugoki

police station, Sub-Inspector Muhammad Imran from Police Line to SHO Motra police station,

Sub-Inspector Amir Ali from SHO Muradpur to Police Lines, Inspector Fiaz Ahmed from SHO Motra police station to SHO Muradpur police station, Sub-Inspector Javed Yaqoob from Police Line to SHO Head Marala police station, Sub-Inspector Muhammad Yousaf from SHO Headmarala police station to Police Line, Police Line, Sub-Inspector Ghuman Murtaza from Police Line to SHO Kotli Loharan police station, Sub-Inspector Nadeem Munawar from SHO Kotli Loharan police station to Police Line, Sub-Inspector Akram Shehbaz from Police Line to SHO Said Ameer police Station, Sub-Inspector Sheraz Tariq from SHO Kotli Said Ameer to Police Line, Sub-Inspector Shehbaz Raza from Ugoki police station to SHO Phuklian police station, Sub-Inspector Mubashir Maqsood from SHO Phuklian to Police Line, Sub-Inspector Saddique Salik from Ugoki police station to SHO City Pasrur police station, Sub-Inspector Khurum Shezad from SHO City Pasrur police station to Police Line, Sub-Inspector

Adnan Ahmed from DIB Cell Sialkot to SHO Sialkot Pasrur police station, Sub-Inspector Muhammad Shabbir from SHO Sialkot Pasrur police station to SHO Sambrial police station, Inspector Liaqat Ali from SHO Sambrial police station to SHO Qilla Kalarwala police station, Sub-Inspector Asghar Ali from Police Line to SHO Phalora police station, Sub-Inspector Naeem Ashraf from SHO Phalora police station to Police Line, Sub-Inspector Irshad Ahmed from SHO Sialkot Daska police station to SHO City Daska police station, Sub-Inspector Jamsheed Akhtar from SHO Begowala police station to SHO Sialkot Daska police station, Inspector Muhammad Amad from SHO Ugoki police station to SHO Bombanwala police station, Sub-Inspector Tanveer Kousar from Sambrial police station to SHO Airport police station, Sub-Inspector Muhammad Ali from SHO Airport police station to Police Lines, Sub-Inspector Salah-ud-Din from Motra police station to SHO Begowala, Sub-Inspector Saheeb Arshad from Civil Line to SHO Sabzipir police station, Sub-Inspector Imran Aslam from SHO Sabzipir police station to Police Lines.

Tree plantation sole solution to climate change

F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: Superintendent of Hazara Motorway Police (E-35) Syed Saqib Shah Sunday said that climate change is catastrophic and has ravaged many regions, and plantation is the only way to cope with this issue. He expressed these views while addressing a plantation drive ceremony after planting a sapling at the sector Line Headquarters.

Syed Saqib Shah emphasized the importance of taking an active part in the drive by the individual and playing their role. He said that in Pakistan the devastating floods of 2022 are a grim reminder of the destructive consequences of climate change.

SP Motorway police said that NHMP in collaboration with the forest department will carry out extensive plantation of indigenous trees alongside Hazara Motorway which will help to stabilize the slopes against land sliding.

He underscored that it is the responsibility of every citizen to make Pakistan



greener for future generations and said that the Hazara division, with its rich flora and vegetation, is famous for its lush green valleys, which attract tourists from all over the world, thus it is, therefore, the responsibility of its inhabitants to maintain its greenery and beauty.

He said, "planting trees is a form of charity (Sadqa-e-Jariya), and everyone must

plant at least a tree as a token of gratitude to their motherland. He said that the oxygen we breathe today is the result of the trees planted years ago." "It is our duty to provide clean and safe air for future generations, in conclusion, quoting a proverb he said, adding, If you want to leave a mark in this world, you need to plant a tree or write a book before you depart, he said."



China, EU should strengthen cooperation: senior diplomat

MUNICH (Xinhua/APP): Faced with a world of change and disorder, China and Europe should strengthen cooperation to inject more stability into the world, Wang Yi, a senior Chinese diplomat, said on Saturday.

Wang, director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, made the remarks when meeting with the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell during the 59th Munich Security Conference.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, said that China and the EU are partners, not rivals, and their consensus far outweighs their differences. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and the EU. Both sides should remain committed to the partnership, respect each other's core interests, cherish the fruits of cooperation, and usher in an even better next two decades, he

noted.

China has successfully pulled through a pandemic and is ready to fully restart exchanges with Europe and the rest of the world, Wang said.

He suggested that the two sides may actively prepare for a new China-EU leaders' meeting, make full use of high-level dialogue mechanisms in various fields, and bring bilateral exchanges back to pre-epidemic levels as soon as possible.

The essence of China-EU economic and trade relations is complementary and mutually beneficial. Both sides should maintain openness and cooperation, resist decoupling, and work together to maintain the stability of the global production and supply chain, Wang said.

Wang expressed the hope that the EU and its members abide by the one-China principle and maintain the political foundation of China-EU relations.

Borrell said that the European side has always been promoting EU-China relations in a mature and can-

did manner, stressing that the EU firmly upholds the one-China policy, recognizes the government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legal government representing the whole of China, supports China's efforts to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and will translate the principle into the political relations between the EU and China.

The EU hopes to strengthen high-level exchanges with China and promote cooperation in various fields, which benefits not only Europe and China but also the entire world, Borrell said.

The EU side is willing to work with China to prepare for the next meeting between EU and Chinese leadership for in-depth exchanges of views on issues of common interest, said Borrell. On the Ukraine crisis, Wang stressed that the Chinese side adheres to promoting peace talks and is willing to strengthen communication with the EU, making consistent efforts toward a political settlement.

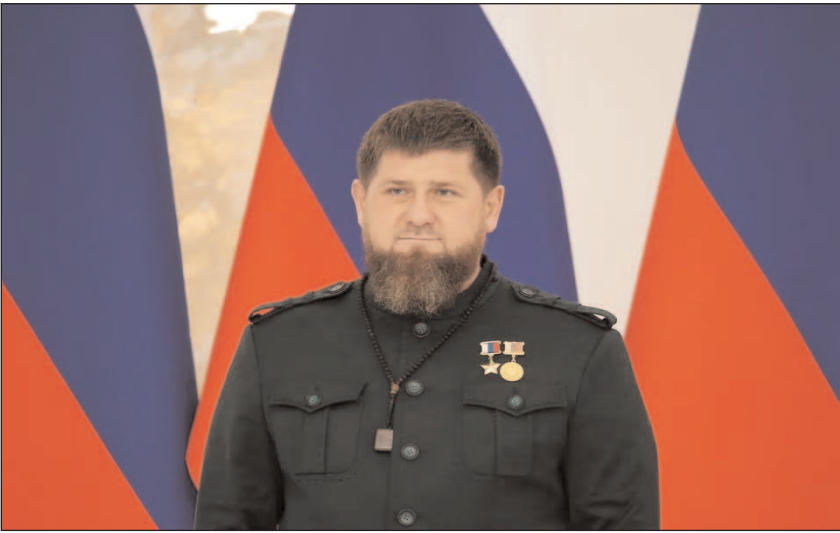
Kadyrov: one day I plan my own mercenary group

MOSCOW (Reuters): Ramzan Kadyrov, the ally of President Vladimir Putin who leads Chechnya, said on Sunday that he one day planned to set up his own private military company in the style of Yevgeny Prigozhin of Wagner Group of mercenaries.

The rise of Wagner and other mercenary forces outside the traditional Russian military command structures has raised concerns among Western diplomats that such groups could one day pose a threat to stability in Russia.

In a post on Telegram, Kadyrov said Wagner, which has been fighting alongside Russian troops in Ukraine, had achieved "impressive results" and that private military companies were a necessity.

"We can say confidently that Wagner has shown its mettle in military terms and drawn a line under discussions about whether or not such private military companies are needed," said Kadyrov, who has led the Chechen Republic since 2007. "When my service to the state is completed, I seriously plan to compete with our dear brother Yevgeny Prigozhin and



create a private military company. I think it will all work out," said Kadyrov, 46.

Kadyrov and Prigozhin both lead forces in Ukraine largely autonomously of Russia's military command and are staunch allies of Putin, but they have also spoken out in public against the military leadership.

The Wagner Group played an increasingly prominent role in Russia's war in Ukraine, spearheading a months-long assault on the Donetsk region town of Bakhmut.

Kadyrov, the son of former Chechen President

Akhmad Kadyrov who was assassinated in a 2004 bombing in Grozny, has formed a tacit alliance with Prigozhin, amplifying each other's criticism of Russia's military top brass and calling for more vigorous prosecution of the conflict.

Prigozhin, who spent the final decade of the Soviet Union in prison for robbery and fraud, was for years an associate of Putin.

His catering group swept up government contracts, earning him the nickname of "Putin's Chef", while he deployed Wagner mercenaries to

fight alongside Russian servicemen in Syria and to conflicts across Africa to advance Russia's geopolitical interests. After years of denials, he last year admitted his links to Wagner and said he had interfered in U.S. elections. Mounting evidence suggests the Kremlin has moved to curb what it sees as Prigozhin's excessive political clout, ordering him to halt his public criticism of the defence ministry while advising state media to stop mentioning him or Wagner by name.

Kadyrov said such groups were "both needed and necessary".

In Old Cairo, residents reconnect with their heritage

CAIRO (AFP/APP): For most of their lives, children from historic Cairo's Al-Khalifa district only saw the mausoleums, mosques and madrasa schools that pepper their neighbourhood from outside heavy bronze doors.

In one of the world's oldest Islamic cities, communities were becoming increasingly separated from the centuries-old buildings they lived alongside -- prompting architect and heritage management expert May al-Ibrashy to launch a programme to "foster a sense of ownership over this heritage".

Believing a sense of belonging is integral to protecting heritage, her "participatory conservation initiative" has included bringing the young through those once-closed doors.

"The first time we opened a heritage monu-

ment to children, they were ecstatic," Ibrashy said.

"Every day they had passed in front of this historic site, but had never been allowed inside".

The Athar Lina initiative, whose name means "the monument is ours" in Arabic, has carried out workshops, tours and summer camps in the Egyptian capital since 2012.

After years of slowly earning the neighbourhood's trust with the children's programme -- including play dates in the famous ninth-century mosque of Ibn Tulun, one of the oldest in Africa -- Athar Lina expanded the workshops to include adults.

In one of the first buildings Athar Lina renovated at the community's request -- an unfinished mosque that is now the Al-Khalifa Community Centre -- the

sound of children playing echoes off ancient stone, while their mothers learn traditional embroidery skills. On the outskirts of the sprawling megacity of Cairo, ancient tombs, pyramids and temples hug the edge of the desert.

But the iconic domes and minarets of Islamic Cairo -- listed on the UN's World Heritage List for its "absolutely unquestionable historical, archaeological and urban importance" -- are embedded into the labyrinthine alleys of tight-knit working-class neighbourhoods.

However, since the 1980s, the authorities increasingly protected monuments by keeping "them under lock and key", said conservation and cultural heritage expert Omniya Abdel Barr.

"This idea is rooted in 19th-century beliefs that Egyptians don't deserve their heritage, that you have to erect fences or else they'll ruin it", she added.

Experts worried younger generations were growing alienated from their heritage.

"We noticed that the older generations knew a lot more about the monuments and had a much deeper connection to them, because they had all these childhood memories that today's children didn't," Ibrashy said, speaking from the Athar Lina office rooftop, framed by twin 14th-century minarets.

Abdel Barr said that supporting "living heritage" projects -- such as creating childhood memories and organising community events -- helps "make people feel like they belong to these spaces". That, she argues, "is a better conservation strategy".

Six charged after 18 people found dead in truck in Bulgaria

SOFIA (Agencies): Bulgarian prosecutors have charged six people with human trafficking after 18 Afghans were found dead inside a truck dumped on a dirt road near the capital Sofia.

Prosecutors said the truck was abandoned near the village of Lokorsko after the driver and his companion found that many of the 52 migrants in the truck were dizzy and some had already died. The migrants were in hidden compartments of the truck which were isolated with foil. The truck driver and his companion were also charged over the deaths, prosecutors said.

Despite strong and prolonged banging on the cabin, the driver refused to stop the truck earlier, the head of the National Investigative Service and deputy chief prosecutor Borislav Sarafov told reporters. The deaths have shocked Bulgaria, in what is one of the worst incidents of its kind on the overland

route across the Balkans into Europe.

Thousands of people fleeing war and poverty in the Middle East, Africa and Asia make the journey and Bulgaria has been trying to cope with an increased inflow of migrants from neighboring Turkey in the past year.

Since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in August 2021, that country has plunged into an economic and humanitarian crisis. According to a recent report from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), an estimated 28.3 million -- roughly two thirds of Afghanistan's population -- are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance to survive. Last month, a Taliban official said that at least 157 people had died in the country's bitter winter. Charges dropped against Afghan soldier who was detained seeking asylum at US border with Mexico

The 18 victims died of a combination of lack of oxygen in an enclosed space and difficulty breathing as they had been crammed into the truck "like in a tin can," Sarafov said.

"The victims died slowly and painfully," he added.

"This case shows an extreme callousness and demonstrates that migrants are seen only as goods that should be shipped from one place to another, irrespective of whether they are alive or dead," he said.

The other 34 migrants, who were rushed to hospitals on Friday, remain in stable condition, officials said. Five of those charged are in custody, while one of the suspected traffickers, who had managed to flee the country, is being sought with an European arrest warrant. Prosecutors said the ring had trafficked migrants from the border with Turkey across Bulgaria to Serbia, from where they continued their journey mainly to Britain, Germany and France.

Romanian doctors investigated

BUCHAREST (Monitoring Desk): Romanian prosecutors said they have opened a criminal investigation into five doctors suspected of reusing hundreds of medical implants extracted from dead patients.

One of the five doctors, who was working at a hospital in the eastern Romanian city of Iasi, has been taken into custody pending the investigation on charges of abuse of power and bribe taking, prosecutors said in a statement.

They said the unnamed doctor oversaw a network of four other physicians who provided him with cardiac implants extracted from deceased patients without prior approval from them or their families.

Prosecutors allege the doctor performed 238 surgeries over seven years from 2017, illegally using implants extracted from dead patients or of unknown provenance and putting his patients at risk of serious complications or death.

Concerns and impatience over mining the world's seabeds

UNITED NATIONS, United States (AFP/APP): The prospect of large-scale mining to extract valuable minerals from the depths of the Pacific Ocean, once a distant vision, has grown more real, raising alarms among the oceans' most fervent defenders.

"I think this is a real and imminent risk," Emma Wilson of the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition, an umbrella organization of environmental groups and scientific bodies, told AFP.

"There are plenty of stakeholders that are flagging the significant environmental risks."

And the long-awaited treaty to protect the high seas, even if it is adopted in negotiations resuming on Monday, is unlikely to alleviate risks anytime soon: it will not take effect immediately and will have to come to terms with the International Seabed Authority (ISA). That agency, estab-

lished under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, has 167 member states.

It has authority over the ocean floors outside of member states' Exclusive Economic Zones (which extend up to 200 nautical miles, or 370 kilometers, from coastlines).

But conservation groups say the ISA has two glaringly contradictory missions: protecting the sea floors under the high seas while organizing the activities of industries eager to mine untapped resources on the ocean floor. For now, some 30 research centers and enterprises have been approved to explore -- but not exploit -- limited areas. Mining activities are not supposed to begin before negotiators adopt a mining code, already under discussion for nearly a decade.

But the small Pacific island nation of Nauru, impatient with the plodding pace of progress,

made waves in June 2021 by invoking a clause allowing it to demand relevant rules be adopted within two years.

Once that deadline is reached, the government could request a mining contract for Nori (Nauru Ocean Resources), a subsidiary of Canada's The Metals Company.

Nauru has offered what it called a "good faith" promise to hold off until after an ISA assembly in July, in hopes it will adopt a mining code.

"The only thing we need is rules and regulations in place so that people are all responsible actors," Nauru's ambassador to the ISA Margo Deieye told AFP.

But it is "very unlikely" that a code will be agreed by July, said Praadeep Singh, a sea law expert at the Research Institute for Sustainability, in Potsdam, Germany.

"There's just too many items on the list that still need to be resolved," he

Former US President Jimmy Carter to receive hospice care

NEW YORK (Reuters): Former US President Jimmy Carter will end medical treatment and enter hospice care at his Georgia home, his foundation announced on Saturday.

The Carter Center said Mr Carter had decided to "spend his remaining time at home with his family," but did not say what had prompted the decision.

Mr Carter, 98, has suffered from recent health issues, including a melanoma that spread to his liver and brain.

The country's oldest living leader, he served one term in office from 1977-81. During his tenure as president Mr Carter faced a spate of foreign policy challenges and the Democrat was defeated in his re-election bid by

Ronald Reagan.

"He has the full support of his family and his medical team. The Carter family asks for privacy during this time and is grateful for the concern shown by his many admirers," the Carter Center said in a statement on Saturday. Terminally ill patients may seek hospice care instead of going through further medical treatment. The priority is not to provide further treatment, but to provide comfort towards the end of a patient's life. Mr Carter's grandson, Jason Carter, a former Georgia state senator, tweeted that he visited "both of my grandparents yesterday." "They are at peace and - as always - their home is full of love. Thank you all for your kind words," he said. In 2021,

Mr Carter and his wife Roslyn celebrated their 75th wedding anniversary. They have four children together.

Born in Georgia in 1924, Mr Carter entered politics in the 1960s when he was elected as state senator, before becoming the state's governor in 1971.

Five years later he defeated the sitting Republican President Gerald Ford to become the 39th commander-in-chief.

But problems quickly mounted for Mr Carter as president. At home, an oil crisis produced high inflation and unemployment, and he struggled to persuade Americans to accept the required austerity measures. The high-point of the Carter years was the signing of the Camp David Accords in 1978 in which

Egypt formally recognised the state of Israel. He also signed a treaty returning control of the Panama Canal to Panama.

But in 1979 the last Shah of Iran was overthrown and 66 Americans were taken hostage in Tehran in the aftermath. Mr Carter cut off diplomatic relations with Iran in response and introduced a trade embargo.

However, the public did not believe he was being tough enough and his popularity slumped as the US hostages were held for 444 days. His approval ratings took a further hit after an attempt to rescue the hostages failed and eight US military members were killed. Iran then delayed the release of the hostages until after Ronald Reagan was sworn in.

Near misses raise fresh questions for US air regulator

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): US air safety regulators are facing fresh questions following recent near crashes at American airports, further challenging an aviation industry ramp-up in response to rising travel demand. The Federal Aviation Administration is already facing questions after the agency in January ordered a temporary grounding of planes nationally for the first time since 9/11 due to problems with a safety alert system.

At a Senate hearing earlier this week, acting FAA chief Billy Nolen was presented with a simulation video of a February 4 incident at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport in which a FedEx cargo plane nearly collided with a Southwest Airlines passenger jet that was about to take off.

Nolen said the incident

remains under investigation, adding that "we'll go where the facts take us."

There have been at least two other near misses that have garnered national attention in recent weeks.

On January 13, an American Airlines jet taking off from New York's JFK International Airport en route for London crossed a runway without air traffic control clearance and got within 1,400 feet (427 meters) of a Delta Air Lines jet heading to the Dominican Republic, according to a preliminary report by the National Transportation Safety Board. The NTSB on Tuesday announced a probe into a third episode, a December 18 United Airlines flight that lost altitude after departing from Hawaii, before recovering and traveling safely.

The flight got to within 800 feet of crashing into the Pacific Ocean, according to

media reports, which came out weeks after the incident. No one was injured in any of the three events.

But several lawmakers have flagged the issues in recent hearings in Capitol Hill, with House Transportation Chairman Representative Sam Graves saying the JFK near miss shows US aviation is "in need of urgent attention."

The incidents come as the FAA also faces scrutiny following the January 11 temporary grounding of planes, which was caused by problems with the Notice to Air Missions (NOTAM) system.

Nolen told the Senate panel Wednesday that the agency had made changes to prevent another outage, but that a meaningful system upgrade wouldn't be ready before 2025.

Mike Stengel, a senior associate at AeroDynamic

Plane crashes on Philippine volcano, search underway for survivors

MANILA (AFP/APP): Rescuers struggled on Sunday to reach the slopes of an active volcano in the central Philippines where a small plane is believed to have crashed, officials said, with the fate of those on board still unconfirmed.

The Cessna 340 aircraft with four on board went missing shortly after departing for Manila from Bicol International Airport in Albay province, several kilometres from Mayon volcano, on Saturday.

Manila-based Energy Development Corporation

said the missing plane belonged to the company and it was seeking to confirm if the wreckage spotted on Sunday in "very steep terrain and high altitude of about 6,000 feet" was theirs.

Two of the four passengers on board the missing plane were Australian, Bicol police said, adding rescue teams with sniffer dogs had been deployed to find the crash site.

"The problem is the weather is bad and it hampers the visibility of the ground search," Civil

Aviation Authority of the Philippines spokesman Eric Apolonio told AFP.

Albay disaster officer Cedric Daep said a Cessna aircraft had been seen 300 to 350 metres (984 feet to 1,148 feet) from the crater. But he warned the rumbling volcano could erupt at any time, which was complicating rescue efforts.

"There might be a sudden ash explosion and we could be added to the casualties," Daep told local radio DZBB.

An aerial search will continue Monday to locate

the missing people.

"We are not discounting the possibility that they could still be alive," Daep said. Another Cessna plane went missing last month, on January 24, in the northern province of Isabela. That plane's wreckage has still not been found, Apolonio said.

In a separate incident, two Philippine air force aviators were killed in a training exercise last month when their SF260 Marchetti plane crashed into a rice paddy in Bataan province, near Manila.

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JALIL AFRIDI
Managing Editor

Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at
Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town,
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Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001
Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

“USA and Canada Toll Free Number 415-3704551

Women’s needs in Pakistan

The Sindh government has launched a state-of-the-art Pink People's Bus Service in the province's second-largest city Hyderabad. The dedicated service has been launched to particularly accommodate the long-standing travel needs of women in mega industrial hubs in the province. This was the third initiative of its kind as Pink People's Bus Service was already operating in Karachi and Sukkar over the past few months.

Women are an important segment of modern society and play a highly crucial role in the domestic, social, political, and national life of nations around the globe. As mothers, teachers, politicians, business leaders as well as entrepreneurs, women have a pivotal role in nation building from raising children to positively contributing to the growth of their homes, and social uplift through daycare and schooling of kids along with participation in other leadership activities. At the same time, women have an overwhelming contribution to industries, businesses as well as modern research in Science and Technology.

Women in Pakistan had always played a vital role in all domains of public life including homemaking, social work, Academics, politics, and sports, as well as military and service. However, working women and girls students had always faced multiple problems relating to their work, and travel through public transport in a male dominant society in the country. Usually, there is no separate compartment or a little space for women in public transport, while female passengers often face maltreatment, bullying, and coercion, by transporters, co-passengers, and the common public during their travel from home to workplace/school and back. Being voiceless, with no legal protection, and no attention from public representatives, women across the country were forced to endure mental depression and maltreatment in society. Meanwhile visiting the market, and traveling by train, bus, or taxi had been a painful experience for Pakistani females in all parts of the country.

The PPP-led Sindh government has initiated multiple mass transit projects in Karachi, Hyderabad, and Sukkar over the past few months. The launching of a dedicated female bus service in major cities is an adorable decision of the Sindh government which was a long-standing demand of working women and students across the country. This endeavor will provide affordable, tension-free, and luxurious travel to women travelers on major routes in their cities.

Presently, our society faces various social and justice issues relating to women as they feel insecure at home and outside, including their workplace, during travel, in markets as well as educational institutions because of bias, uncultured and vicious behavior of their male colleagues, relatives, and neighbors. Over the years, the absence of the law, poor investigations, and no prosecution of the culprits had turned the criminals into sanguinary creatures, while denial of share in inheritance, kidnappings, rape, assassination, and acid throwing on girls/women are common in our society. At the same time, reducing space for women/girls in the name of religion, culture, and sometimes safety/security is another phenomenon that squeezed free space for women in the country.

Although, the government has worked a lot to empower women still there is room for improvement in the legal framework, social code, and institutional ethics to provide them with equal rights, and access to justice as well as a conducive and secure environment to prosper and live a happy life in their nation.

China succeeding in diplomatic push to win over Europe

Matthew Fulco

Call it a comeback: Despite its agnosticism about Russia's invasion of Ukraine, China is making diplomatic inroads in Europe from Berlin to Paris to Rome.

It could not have been easier for Chinese leader Xi Jinping. All the Communist Party general secretary had to do was muzzle his “wolf-warrior” diplomats, whose overt jingoistic zeal had run its course, scrap the draconian “zero-COVID” policy and announce China was open for business again.

Though China's truculence under Xi's leadership has worn on Europe, a cold war between the two sides has been and will remain unlikely. After all, Brussels and Beijing do not compete ideologically or militarily like the U.S. and China.

Even the less-dire concept of decoupling has never resonated in Europe, which bristles at American-style confrontation with the largest importer of its goods. “China cannot be out, China must be in. This is the difference of view we have between the U.S. and Europe,” French finance minister Bruno Le Maire said at Davos last month.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen had a slightly different take. Europe should “focus on de-risking rather than decoupling,” she said.

For Germany, the de-risking bar has been set low. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz visited China

in November with a heavy-weight business delegation in tow, telegraphing to Xi that Berlin remains focused on commercial ties.

Scholz argued that he had secured a diplomatic win because Xi expressed his opposition to the use of nuclear weapons in the Russia-Ukraine war.

In reality, China was the biggest winner. Xi managed to both please Scholz and avoid directly criticizing his close ally, Vladimir Putin. By calling on the international community to “reject the threat of nuclear weapons and advocate against a nuclear war to prevent a crisis on the Eurasian continent,” Xi reminded Putin not to cross the Rubicon — which would harm China's interests — while reserving judgment about Moscow's responsibility for the wider conflict.

During his Beijing visit, the first by a European leader since Xi's return to the world stage, Scholz told Chinese Premier Li Keqiang the two countries “were no friends of decoupling.” Data from Germany's statistics office corroborate that claim: Trade between China and Germany expanded 21% annually in 2022 to 298 billion (\$320 billion). Germany remains dependent on China for rare-earth metals used in the semiconductors, batteries and magnets of electric cars, an industry on which it has bet

heavily.

German businesses, meanwhile, invested a record 10 billion in China in the first half of 2022. This money talks more clearly than German politicians calling for reducing their country's dependency on China.

French President Emmanuel Macron could be the second European leader to meet Xi after Scholz. Macron reportedly plans to visit China by April and discuss energy, trade and the Russia-Ukraine War. One can only hope the French president will have more success convincing Xi to mediate an end to the conflict than he did trying to persuade Putin not to instigate it.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni could beat Macron to the punch. She has accepted an invitation to China that Xi extended to her when they met in Bali at APEC last November. Her agenda will be mostly commercial — she wants to boost Italian exports to China, Italy's largest trading partner in Asia — while Xi's will be more political. The Chinese leader told her at APEC that he hopes Rome will encourage the EU to pursue an “independent and positive” China policy.

While Meloni has previously been critical of China, voiced support for Taiwan and vowed not to

renew Italy's membership in Beijing's embattled Belt and Road Initiative, she has moderated her tone since being elected as prime minister.

In Central and Eastern Europe, China faces a less receptive audience. States that suffered behind the Iron Curtain, which have more skin in the game of the Russia-Ukraine war than Europe's wealthy West, are agast at Beijing's refusal to condemn Moscow's wanton aggression. Unencumbered by economic dependency on China, they are moving closer to the United States and in some cases Taiwan as well.

China has tried to make an example out of Lithuania, killing the monkey to scare the chickens, as the Communist Party would say. To punish Lithuania for its overtures to Taiwan, which include allowing a de facto embassy with the name “Taiwanese Representative Office” to open in the capital of Vilnius, China has downgraded diplomatic ties and banned most imports from the tiny Baltic country.

Lithuania can shrug off Beijing's pressure because their economic relationship is negligible. Vilnius has more to gain from greater trade with the U.S. and Taiwan. To that end, it signed a \$600 million export credit agreement

with Washington in late 2021. In early 2022, Taiwan announced a \$1 billion credit program that will fund joint projects with Lithuanian companies in six business categories.

At the same time, China's bullying of Lithuania has failed to sow disunity in the EU. Brussels has instead launched a World Trade Organization case against China and provided a 130 million support package for Vilnius.

The Czech Republic looks like it will be the next domino to fall. Czech President-elect Petr Pavel spoke with Taiwan's leader, Tsai Ing-wen, by telephone in January, prompting a harsh rebuke from China. “He has persisted in stepping on China's red line, seriously interfering in China's domestic affairs and hurting the feelings of the Chinese people,” Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said in a statement.

Of the call, Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala said in a statement, “As a sovereign country we decide ourselves who we have calls with and who we will meet.”

China has yet to sanction Prague, though these are early days. This time Beijing may tread carefully though, cognizant that such bellicosity could backfire and destabilize its ties with the EU.

For now, China is relying on coercive diplomacy. Fu Cong, China's EU

ambassador, recently warned the bloc its growing engagement with Taiwan constituted a violation of the “One China” principle and is a “red line” for Beijing. Fu told the EU not to sign an investment agreement with Taiwan. The complexity of the endeavor, which would require unanimous approval from the bloc's 27 members, means Beijing will get its way.

Individual EU states will be harder for China to control, especially those most threatened by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. For these nations, standing up to authoritarian expansionism is a matter of survival — unlike Beijing's deeply emotional but decidedly nonexistential obsession with Taiwan.

By aligning with Moscow, China has made clear it stands with despotism.

While the Beijing-Moscow axis does not sit well with Western Europe, the EU's largest economies feel they must prioritize a stable relationship with Beijing to protect their commercial interests and they still hold out hope that China will help bring an end to the Russia-Ukraine war acceptable to Kiev and the West.

That was always wishful thinking. At this point it seems closer to fantasy — especially after Fu told the EU that the “security concerns of both sides” in the war should be addressed.

How to finance our collective global survival

Mia Amor Mottley and Svenja Schulze

We must face, and act on, an inconvenient truth. The impact of human activities on Earth's geology and ecosystems is threatening the foundations of life on our planet and decades of progress in human development. We are acting counter

not generate headlines but has become a chronic burden for the world's poorest communities.

These global challenges are also deepening economic inequality between and within countries and exacerbating social exclusion. This not only defies the

security, promotes sustainability and absorbs shocks. To achieve it, the international community could begin by making a handful of practical changes this year, starting at the Spring Meetings of the

positive cross-border spillovers. But we will need new and stronger incentives — both analytical and financial — to promote national investment in global public goods, and to support countries in their

ing special drawing rights (SDRs, the IMF's reserve asset) to boost the capital stock of international financial institutions. The IMF's new Resilience and Sustainability Trust is based on this premise and represents a promising first step toward maximizing the

warming will hurtle past 1.5 degrees Celsius, triggering cascading effects.

Finally, we urge all lenders and borrowers — including the development banks and private-sector creditors — to include or accept natural-disaster and pandemic clauses in financ-

We know that for every \$1 invested in sustainability and resilience today, there are \$4-7 in savings down the line. But to usher in a new paradigm of resilience and sustainability, we must incorporate these principles into operational, lending and debt-sustainability models with appropriate incentives and accounting standards. Many reforms and investments can have positive cross-border spillovers. But we will need new and stronger incentives — both analytical and financial — to promote national investment in global public goods, and to support countries in their conservation efforts. We also need to explore all our options for boosting multilateral development banks’ financing capacity. The key, here, is to leverage existing capital while preserving these institutions’ AAA ratings and countercyclical lending capacity. As the G20 Capital Adequacy Review showed, multilateral development banks can increase their risk appetite and boost financing volumes by lowering their minimum equity ratios. Similarly, we welcome proposals calling for an issuance of non-voting hybrid capital to boost lending at still-lower concessional rates — to be provided either by a shareholder “coalition of the willing” or through sales to private investors.

to the goals of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — a future that guarantees a decent life for all. Our survival and continued prosperity demand structural change and immediate action.

Scientists warn that breaching planetary boundaries will trigger tipping points, leading to irreversible damage and a catastrophic decline of natural systems. Collapsing fish stocks, melting permafrost, rising antimicrobial resistance and the loss of tropical rainforests are just a few examples of trends that are undermining the foundation of development. While large-scale, acute disasters tend to attract the most attention, the continuing depletion of valuable natural assets (including aquifers, air and soil) does

Sustainable Development Agenda's principle of leaving no one behind; it also impedes the poverty reduction that comes from inclusive economic growth, undermines the social contract in rich and poor countries alike, and threatens global security.

No country alone can tackle these transboundary problems. Moreover, they are increasingly correlated with other risks, such as massive supply-chain disruptions. All these issues are born of an economic system that has turned out to be more fragile than many thought. Whereas properly functioning systems are able to manage and absorb risks, our current system is doing the opposite.

The world needs a global system that engenders

International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

First, as part of the World Bank's “evolution” (which shareholders called for in October 2022), we need to modernize its mission by elevating sustainability and resilience as core institutional goals, and by strengthening its analysis and operations to address new transboundary challenges.

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We also need to explore our options for re-channel-

effectiveness of SDR allocations. But, given the challenges, the size of the trust is currently too small. We also call on multilateral development banks and development finance institutions to propose additional options — as the African and Inter-American Development Banks have already begun to do. Either way, multilateral development banks must do far more to leverage their balance sheets.

Separately, multilateral development banks must also use their balance sheets to catalyze private investment in the transition to low-carbon energy, transportation and agriculture throughout the developing world. Without efforts to lower the cost of capital of these investments at sufficient scale, global

ing instruments. These provisions are present-value neutral, on net, and they offer valuable support to countries by allowing them to ensure sufficient liquidity when they need it most.

The scientific consensus about climate change and biodiversity loss is overwhelming. But we urgently need to translate this understanding into a new economic paradigm in international financial institutions. At this year's Spring Meetings, the World Bank and its shareholders must recognize that the provision of global public goods is essential to broadening the fight against poverty. In the face of an existential climate crisis, the only path forward is through sustainability and resilience. We must modernize our institutions accordingly.

Nicola Sturgeon and the defeat of the secessionists

Dr. Azeem Ibrahim

Secession has many forms in many countries. But secessionists are more alike than they are different. They have similar goals. They pursue the same objectives. They use the same rhetoric. And they often have common heroes. One of them is the first minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, who heads the devolved Scottish government.

Now Sturgeon has announced her intention to resign her post. And secessionists across the world have lost a leader and a figurehead.

Before her fall from grace in recent weeks, Sturgeon was a powerhouse. She was one of the most recognizable forces in British politics and the dominant political personality in Scotland. Her campaign for Scottish independence never faltered, even in the face of a referendum which her campaign

lost decisively in 2014; and a series of legal and technical hurdles — including a bruising defeat in the British Supreme Court last year — which seemed to put a final nail in the proposal's coffin.

Sturgeon was an excellent communicator. Her communications team outnumbered and outmusled the journalists who covered Scottish politics. Sturgeon brilliantly used press conferences to undermine the UK government and to condemn the politicians in London.

Sturgeon's opponents accused her of a politics of stunts rather than of government. But her stunts worked. Sturgeon was repeatedly reelected to devolved office, and her party, the Scottish Nationalists, or SNP, tended to sweep the Scottish seats in the UK Parliament during her time in power.

Sturgeon pursued inter-

national fame and attention, visiting American talk-show sofas and the international stage at events such as the COP climate conferences. She was determined to pretend, even though she was a devolved official, that she was in effect a national leader with an international profile, worthy of any global stage.

This pretense was not accurate, but it achieved her objectives; she was an inspiration to other nationalists and secessionist parties across Europe. From Catalonia's nationalists to the Northern League in Italy, to the Russian state, which supports many secessionist movements across democratic Europe, Sturgeon was admired and widely copied.

But like those campaigns, Sturgeon's party ran into trouble. The rhetoric of independence can only take

a party so far.

Sturgeon was in office for eight years and her party as a whole has been in government for most of this century. The SNP ran into trouble throughout this tenure as power exposed many of the shortcomings of nationalism.

Sturgeon and her party campaigned largely for a single policy: Secession. But if secessionist parties, no matter how many times they are re-elected, run into constitutional brick walls — and cannot put into practice their chosen policy or slogan — they begin to run into difficulties. This is something that dogged Sturgeon.

In government, she could not rely on the old familiar slogans and the prejudices that they stirred up. Her party had difficulty with education, public health, economic growth,

the rate of alcohol-induced and drug-related deaths in the country — and many other intractable social problems for which a campaign for independence is not necessarily the answer.

Sturgeon herself lost her political career on another social issue: Transgenderism, and the question of whether criminals whose birth certificates say that they are male should be able to “transition” and be housed as women in women's jails. Sturgeon said that they should; the public and her party said they should not. She lost.

To say that Scottish secession has lost a powerful force in Sturgeon is an understatement. Her possible successors have lived in her shadow for almost a decade. Many of them lack name-recognition not only across the rest of the UK, but also in Scotland itself. An election approaches in

Scotland, and for the first time in a long time, the SNP may not win it.

The same is true for nationalists and secessionists across Europe. In general, they have few examples of where parties in their mold have governed and governed successfully for a long time. For a while, Sturgeon was that example. Now her career has ended ignominiously, they have lost an emblem and a standard bearer.

Separatism in general has few success stories. For years, Sturgeon was held up to be the exception that proves it can be done. But she failed in her decades-long campaign for secession, and failed in the end to hold her office. This is a salutary lesson for separatists across Europe: That they face the same political problems as other parties, and having a single answer does not necessarily solve them.

The tragedy of earthquake and the power of humanity

In the midst of a period in world history that is characterized by fragmentation and discord, it takes a tragedy of the magnitude of the earthquake in Türkiye and Syria to unite us in a common understanding of what is really important for all of us, as human beings and as societies, but equally in our relations with other nations and their people. In an era of 24-hour news and constant social media feed, we watch in horror a disaster that has already claimed more than 45,000 lives and left many more injured, causing unimaginable devastation as it unfolds before our eyes like a horror movie, but in this case it is real life and real suffering.

We hold our breath as we watch rescue teams pull survivors out of the rubble, be it a child, a pregnant woman or an elderly person, and for a split second our hearts are filled with joy and gratitude toward those brave women and men for their dedication under such dangerous conditions, and with the hope of miraculously finding more survivors.

Suddenly people around the world are united in pain in the face of immeasurable suffering. Old differences, even enmities, are put aside, and instead our humanity is pouring out. Rescue teams rush in from far and wide, and millions of people are opening their wallets and donating whatever they can in support of international organizations that deliver humanitarian

aid. Dozens of countries dispatched rescue teams and other forms of aid immediately after the earthquake hit, and billions of dollars have already been pledged by the international community for the eventual rebuilding process, although due to the political conditions in Syria that country has benefited less from the outpouring of both material and spiritual generosity.

While the very humane response of being deeply touched by this disaster and wanting to help is moving and should be taken as a most natural response that is only to be expected, it also begs the question: Why is this sense of camaraderie, deep empathy, altruism and international cooperation prompted in the face of certain events and not others, especially if those others are man-made, and why doesn't that same reaction last? There is something about the random nature and the ferocity of natural disasters, and the fact that they are clearly no one's fault, that unites us in grief but also in wishing to support the victims in any way we can, be it by donating money, food, blankets, clothing or tents, or rushing to the scene to rescue, comfort, and eventually help rebuild these devastated communities.

This response deserves respect, even admiration, but should be extended beyond such cruel disasters, as a norm for other issues that could save mil-

Yossi Mekelberg

lions more lives and improve the quality of even more, but instead countries and societies fall into the trap of believing that in cooperating on such issues they are compromising their national interests, and in supporting others they deprive themselves of resources, while being unable to see the bigger picture and acknowledge that mutual support means the sum is bigger than its parts.

It is one of the greatest challenges of our times to completely demolish the Hobbesian "state of nature" idea that humanity's natural condition is a state of war, a view that has been taking hold of our way of thinking and consequently dictates that we see others as potential threats and enemies rather than friends and allies. In dealing with the big challenges that pose a threat to our survival, we instead need to translate Jean-Jacques Rousseau's "social contract" into a global contract, in which collaboration according to an agreed set of rules ensures our physical survival and improves our standard of living and wellbeing.

While natural disasters, because they appear suddenly with little warning and great destructive force, lead us to focus our attention on taking actions that limit their consequences, inexplicably, crucial existential issues such as the climate change crisis, wars and conflicts, or

the need for political, social and economic development, hardly manage to prompt such actions.

To a certain extent this discrepancy can be attributed to our attention span, especially with the 24-hour news cycle and the social media stream, but this would be to oversimplify and overlook much deeper flaws in us as human beings and as part of the state-based system.

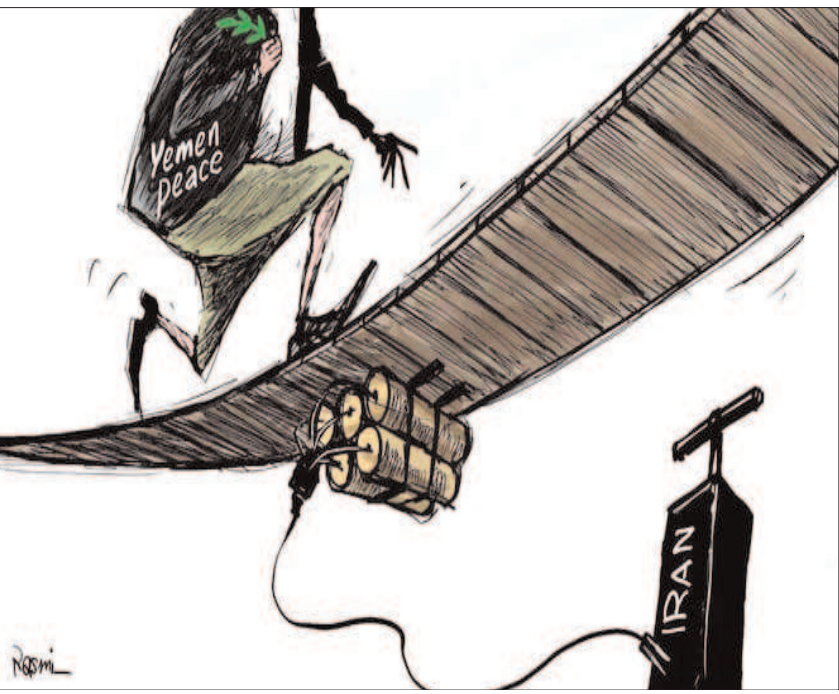
We are driven partly by instincts, but to a much greater extent by education, socialization and indoctrination, to be less trusting and more suspicious of one another, and to prioritize ourselves, even when there is a room for cooperation or generosity toward the "other." It takes a disaster on the scale of the Turkish and Syrian earthquake to arouse our empathy, and to show with it a readiness to forego those distrustful traits in favor of the greater good.

Couldn't this fleeting, even though genuine, outburst of care and support and clear vision on how to improve things while mobilizing different segments of society and resources for a worthy cause, be applied to other areas of our lives? We are witnessing this to an extent in the war in Ukraine, but while most of the world sides with Ukraine against the Russian aggressor, it remains a divisive issue that a year later is still unnecessarily spilling the

blood of thousands of innocent people. But since it is a man-made disaster, instead of finding common ground and stopping it, reconstructing, rehabilitating and aiding recovery from its traumatic effects, the conflict is being fueled not only by the aggressor, but also by those who support it.

Similarly, while there is agreement in principle on how to address global warming, and despite a looming disaster of a magnitude that might bring humankind to extinction, the implementation of these agreements suffers from partisan and parochial interests. By establishing a united front in dealing with global warming, with a sense of purpose and the allocation of adequate resources, disasters on an even bigger scale than the earthquake in Türkiye and Syria could be averted, but this would require putting aside vested interests, something that is far beyond the current state of affairs.

It seems that when it comes to disasters inflicted by our own doing, although they are preventable, we are reluctant to apply the same logic, empathy and selflessness as we show when natural disasters hit us. For this approach to change before it is too late, we need to rethink both the way we perceive what it means to be part of humanity as a whole, and also how it needs to be preserved, and accordingly build the institutions and tools to facilitate this.



Space alliance on the horizon as arms race heats up

For more than 40 years, the US Air Force never had to shoot down any aircraft or objects over North America. Over the last two weeks, however, it has shot down four. As the topic burst onto social media, the conversation moved away from the possibility of other countries being involved and went on to fantasize about an alien invasion.

The initial silence of the Air Force was understandable as the operation was still unfolding. Yet, none of the exchanges on social media were speculating about whether it was, for example, Russia that was involved, especially with the object in Alaska, but were instead in a frenzy that these UFOs were potentially our first contact with extraterrestrial beings.

Obviously, it was not aliens. Rather, it is the start of a new age of astropolitics. The geopolitical tensions witnessed on Earth are now being launched into space. Space was, until recently, an area of collaboration among nations. It is now shifting

Khaled Abou Zahr

Low Earth orbit satellites are at a maximum of 2,000 km, but can range down to 160 km.

Space is obviously more than just an area for surveillance and military operations. The infrastructure that is being put in place is also empowering a great number of new commercial applications. For example, all the apps on your mobile phone that require geolocation are enabled by this infrastructure. Also, new satellites are empowering activities on Earth that can support, for example, mobility, insurance and agriculture. The capacity to track assets via the internet of things is also something to consider. And, so, space is becoming just like Earth — an area for commercial competition as well as military confrontation.

Nevertheless, space is not an unregulated area; there are rules that both governments and the growing private commercial enterprises need to respect. However, there is no real

Navigation Satellite System or Global Positioning System. The impact would be catastrophic and losses in the billions. These satellite networks, along with the communications networks, are now the backbone of not only surveillance but also commercial activities.

And this is why the risk of more and more spacecraft or flying objects becoming weaponized is now increasing. Assets in space have become a potential target in any confrontation. And there will be an increase in anti-satellite weapons, which is why Russia destroyed one of its own satellites in 2021, shortly before the war in Ukraine started. This came as tensions were growing and cooperation on the International Space Station was brought into doubt. Indeed, the stratospheric balloon that was destroyed above US territory could be weaponized instead of being for surveillance. This puts forward the need to create redundant networks, as well as to protect assets

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One now understands why countries are looking to maintain their sovereignty regarding space activities, from launch capacity to managing and developing their own space assets. It is an extremely costly and challenging task. Yet, to understand better the risks and why countries need to be prepared for these new scenarios, just imagine if a malevolent actor destroyed the Global Navigation Satellite System or Global Positioning System. The impact would be catastrophic and losses in the billions. These satellite networks, along with the communications networks, are now the backbone of not only surveillance but also commercial activities.

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toward an extension of the confrontations witnessed on Earth. And so what is valid on Earth is becoming valid in space. This means that friends and foes alike are starting to maneuver. Yet, in space, there is no East or West and no demarcation lines.

One may ask why is space important? The first answer is that, on the purely intelligence and military side, satellites provide valuable information and actionable insights. It includes navigation, communications and the detection of military assets on Earth, as well as in the skies and in space. The first object visible to the US was a case in point, as it was allegedly a surveillance balloon that could gather key information. And so today, beyond radars, there is a full array of assets that support these activities. As a quick recap, stratospheric surveillance balloons can fly at an altitude of between about 20 km and 45 km.

way of enforcing the regulations against a rogue actor. Many analysts expect that these tensions will become clearer once settlements start being founded on the moon. Indeed, unlike in orbit, on the moon there will be a sense of borders as well as of property. It will also be on a first come, first served basis. In order to avoid this and to build on the Outer Space Treaty, the US launched the Artemis Accords to promote collaboration and transparency for activities on the moon.

One now understands why countries are looking to maintain their sovereignty regarding space activities, from launch capacity to managing and developing their own space assets. It is an extremely costly and challenging task. Yet, to understand better the risks and why countries need to be prepared for these new scenarios, just imagine if a malevolent actor destroyed the Global

and people on Earth and in space. There must also be the capacity to retaliate in the case of an attack on these assets.

Last Wednesday, 16 Allies with NATO, together with invitees Finland and Sweden, launched a new initiative to gather and use data from space. It will provide intelligence, surveillance and essential support to NATO's military missions and operations. Called Alliance Persistent Surveillance from Space, it is an important element in the implementation of NATO's Overarching Space Policy, which was adopted in 2019. If it only includes surveillance today, there might be a need to develop a space military alliance to protect against rogue actors. And as people on social media focused on aliens last week, they can, just as in the movies, imagine that this potential space alliance will protect the Earth against an alien invasion.

North Africa's untapped clean energy potential

Last year, Europe's "sudden" pivot to North Africa to shore up its energy security and shift its reliance away from Russia have accelerated investments in the sub-region's oil and gas sector and also re-energized partnerships traditionally dominated by security, migration and lop-sided bilateral trade.

In this era of convergent shocks both at home and abroad, however, centering North Africa's energy development around Europe's short-to-medium term energy needs will only exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, while slowing the transition toward clean energy sources. Additionally, this part of the world is already deeply fragmented, with very limited intra-regional trade, which means the continued focus on expanding the sub-region's oil and gas exporting capacity will only widen existing gaps within and among countries that are yet to fully integrate.

Instead, Europe — a chief importer of North Africa's hydrocarbons — must strive to accelerate the sub-region's energy development as well as commit to harnessing its abundant clean energy potential in solar, wind and green hydrogen. Investing heavily in existing capacities, and building the necessary infrastructure, will drive domestic development that will lower energy costs and lead to clean energy (and its derivatives) becoming a major export commodity to buyers in Europe, Sub-Saharan

Africa and elsewhere on the Eurasian continent seeking uninterrupted low-carbon energy imports in a post-oil world.

However, getting to that eventuality will be easier said than done.

Currently, more than 90 percent of North Africa's energy supplies come from fossil fuels and other non-renewables, while renewables account for only about 5 percent. Four of the six North African countries burn natural gas to generate power, while Morocco and Mauritania rely on coal and oil, respectively. Put simply, with such non-diversified, fossil-fuel-dependent energy supply structures, countries in the sub-region are highly vulnerable to external shocks, and consistently lack sufficient capacity to absorb them.

The economies of net importers of fossil fuels such as Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia are frequently exposed to sharp price increases, in addition to the burden of fossil fuel imports on their foreign currency reserves. Net exporters, on the other hand, are not just vulnerable to sustained price drops. Their tendency to heavily subsidize fossil fuel industries to make it seemingly "cheap" to, for instance, generate power using domestically produced supplies, shrinks fiscal space for investing in critical sectors such as health care and education.

Renewable energy continues to occupy a marginal role in North Africa, though its capacity has more or less doubled in the

Hafed Al-Ghwel

past five years. It is a puzzling reality given the fact that North Africa is one of the few sub-regions in the world with the highest clean energy potential. With generous support and targeted investments, North Africa could become the world's foremost producer of clean energy, capitalizing on vast swaths of uninhabited land, solar radiation intensity, offshore wind capacity, existing pipeline networks, and transmission capacities.

In terms of solar radiation, for instance, the sheer size of the Sahara and the amount of sunshine it receives every year translates to a huge solar energy potential. If it were possible to convert all the solar radiation that hits the Sahara into energy, it would produce enough electricity to power not just North Africa itself and Europe, but the entire world many times over. A number of promising projects are seeking to tap into this potential, with one megaproject planning to install as many as 12 million solar panels over 500 wind turbines in Morocco to provide up to 8 percent of the UK's electricity.

Such clean energy megaprojects scattered across North Africa and linked to Europe's electricity grids are no longer just a pipe dream. Morocco is already "exporting the Sun" to Europe via Spain, and Egypt is examining proposals to do the same via Greece. Algeria has the largest wind energy potential, capable of producing

more than 7,000 gigawatts if fully harnessed, while Mauritania's combined wind and solar energy potential is estimated to be nearly four times what the country currently produces a year.

Beyond sprawling solar farms in the desert or giant wind turbines offshore, North Africa is also poised to become a major green hydrogen exporter. By harnessing "cheap" renewables, the sub-region can transition toward less capital and emissions-intensive production of green ammonia and/or green hydrogen, either for export, local industry or agriculture.

However, this is only assuming North African countries employ the right policy mix, overcome political paralysis and are granted generous funding to decarbonize and successfully diversify their economies — a Herculean task among the daunting challenges already plaguing the sub-region today. After all, tapping into North Africa's vast clean energy potential will not be easy nor cheap. For others, the prospect of covering uninhabited parts of the Sahara with solar panels or littering Mediterranean coastlines with giant wind turbines does not sound desirable or wise.

Nonetheless, decarbonization and diversification in favor of renewables will enable North Africa to lower energy costs, meet emissions targets and expand export capacities for energy importers still reliant on fossil fuels prior to a globe-spanning shift toward cleaner energy

sources. For countries in the region that import fossil fuels, diversification of economies and their energy mixes will lower risks of disruptions, while the exports of excess generated capacity can substantially boost export revenues. Falling energy costs also make it possible to rapidly expand solar and wind capacities, allowing for large-scale green hydrogen production, which can then become a major driver of North Africa's sustainable development.

Looking ahead, Europe's targeted investments in the sub-region's clean energy sector have mutual benefits on both sides of the Mediterranean. For instance, harnessing North Africa's potential for green hydrogen will not only reduce the countries' dependencies on non-renewables, it will lower greenhouse gas emissions by up to 75 percent in just over a decade.

In addition, it will allow Europe and North Africa to chart pragmatic pathways toward much-needed development that would solve the sub-region's intractable issues, ranging from youth unemployment to migratory surges, pervasive inequality and unsustainable debt burdens — to list a few. In turn, Europe will have much better energy-import options, especially given green hydrogen's varied and extensive end-use cases that will contribute to the bloc's growth (in an inevitable post-oil world) without undermining its commitments to substantially reduce emissions.

Transatlantic ties transformed on Ukraine war anniversary

Some 12 months after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, key upside surprises include not just the remarkable resilience of Ukraine's fighting forces and wider populace, but also the unity of the Western alliance in the post-Trump era, as will be showcased with Joe Biden's forthcoming visit to Poland.

Well documented is the fact that the EU-27 has shown unexpected solidarity since the Ukraine conflict began, albeit with the frequent, significant exception of Hungary's intransigence. Building from this, however, is the restoration of the wider transatlantic alliance in the post-Trump era, in no small way thanks to the statecraft of the Biden administration.

To be sure, there are very significant sores that continue to exist between the

US and Europe. These include the new US Inflation Reduction Act, or IRA, legislation, which has caused much concern across the EU-27, and indeed other allies including the UK.

Problematic as those tensions are, however, the transatlantic alliance has largely recovered from the nadir of the Trump era. And Russia's invasion of Ukraine has helped with this revitalization of the alliance in the face of a resurgent Moscow.

The Biden team's emphasis on rebuilding Western partnerships stands in stark contrast to the Trump administration. Trump declared during his presidency that "I think the EU is a foe, what they do to us (the US) in trade." The contrast between Trump, with his calls for a weaker Europe and more "Brexit"

across the continent, and US policy at the start of the EU integration process in the early post-war era, could not be starker.

The latter was embodied in John Kennedy's 1962 Atlantic Partnership speech. The core US view for decades, through different Democratic and Republican presidencies, was that a united Europe would make future wars on the continent less likely; create a stronger partner for the US in meeting the challenges posed by the then Soviet Union; and offer a more vibrant market for building transatlantic prosperity.

So this was, by and large, the tone of post-war US administrations till the turn of the millennium. And its direction chimes much more with Biden's approach today than with Tru-

mp's from 2017 to 2021.

Yet, political stripes aside, there is little question that overall US attitudes have — at least in some areas — gradually become more ambivalent as European integration deepened, particularly (but not exclusively) in recent Republican administrations. That is why the future health of the transatlantic alliance cannot be taken for granted.

In the economic arena, for instance, the drive toward the European single market led to US concerns about whether this would evolve into a "fortress Europe." Similarly, the creation of the European Monetary Union prompted worries about the dilution of US primacy in the financial sector and macroeconomic policy. Moreover, in

competition policy, the increasing assertiveness of the European Commission has periodically raised US concerns about EU overreach.

Prior to the Trump era, the George W. Bush administration came closest to questioning the value of European integration. For instance, the controversy over the Iraq conflict saw Washington querying the benefits of EU collaboration in the security and defense arena.

On the eve of the Iraq war almost two decades ago now, then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld even drew a distinction between "old" and "new Europe" with the latter (mainly Eastern Europe) perceived as more favorable to US interests. This

was a theme that became salient during the Trump era, too, with the then-president, on average, enjoying stronger popularity in states in the east than longer-standing allies in the west.

Trump's strong relationship with populist politicians in the East, including Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, exemplified the way that US policy toward Europe was then recalibrating toward stronger ties with states with pro-Trump leaders but weaker relationships with some traditional allies, especially former German

Chancellor Angela Merkel who had a difficult, frosty relationship with him. Remarkably, Trump said that Orban was "a powerful and wonderful leader," whom he endorsed for a fourth term of office, while Biden by contrast declined to invite the Hungarian leader last year to a democracy summit he hosted (the only EU head of government not invited).

At the same time, Trump regularly chastised Germany, including for its "delinquency" on multiple issues, including international trade. Trump claimed

the cost to the US was hundreds of billions of dollars over the years (referring to the German trade surplus).

This highlights the redrawing of US policy toward Europe that has been underway since 2021, with Biden's coming to office, which has been consolidated by Russia's invasion. To be sure, his support for EU nations is not unqualified and tensions such as IRA remain, but his arch-Atlanticism is nonetheless appreciated across the continent with much of Europe favoring his re-election next year.

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Call for exploring possibilities to import cheaper oil and gas

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman Meher Kashif Younis Sunday urged the need for exploring the possibilities of importing cheaper oil and gas through pipelines from neighbouring friendly countries for economic growth and development in the country.

He said that the Türkiye-Syria earthquake is likely to affect the world economy including Pakistan by causing changes in logistics and transportation, even if it doesn't affect global output.

Address seminar on "Türkiye-Syria Earthquake Impact on Oil and Gas Supply around the world", he said in the prevailing global scenario, it's the high time since its inception Pakistan must strive hard for its own survival to fully explore the possibili-

ties of importing cheaper oil and gas through pipelines from neighbouring friendly countries which is only way out to cope with financial crunch.

The event was held under the aegis of the Gold Ring Economic Forum, said a press release issued here today.

In addition, he requested absolute priority in the agricultural sector over the modern scientific lines which are the backbone of the economy.

"Syria has a negligible little role in the wake of economic sanctions, adding that Türkiye located between Europe, the world's largest energy importer and consumption market, and the Middle East and Central Asia-Caspian Sea, two oil and gas energy-rich areas, Türkiye is a global energy transportation hub,

he stated."

"On the other hand, Russia has been trying for years to export oil and gas to Europe bypassing Ukraine, while Central Asian countries and Azerbaijan plan to open new oil and gas export routes, especially to Europe through Türkiye, he added."

He said furthermore, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan needed to open new oil and gas export channels beyond the Russian pipeline network, because these former Soviet republics wanted to expand their energy supply channels.

He said that Pakistan should explore the possibilities of importing gas and oil through Russia and the Central Asia States at cheaper rates than global markets to strengthen its fragile economy.

Malik for promoting exhibition to attract investment

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman United Business Group in Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Shahzad Ali Malik Sunday said exhibitions primarily promoted businesses as the country's products and brands offered at competitive rates that also attracted local and foreign investment.

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the mega expo arranged by Sahiwal Chamber of Commerce and Industry he said a country like Pakistan needed more of these exhibitions to showcase its specialities, industrial outputs and goods.

He said products could catch the attention of traders and buyers in expos, participants could get an overview of what the industry offered.

He said some expos could have hundreds of exhibitors in one show, with each stand displaying something different.

He said this was a good opportunity to conduct market research into current trends in products and customer preferences. He said exhibitors can also be aware of what their competitors were offering and how they could compete.

"The importance of exhibitions allows you to reach a larger audience and promote your product or service, he said."

He said depending on the industry, exhibitors could hold exhibitions to gather business feedback before introducing their products to the public.

Ali Malik said expos could be a great source of generating temporary employment – bringing a cash injection from out-of-town visitors, raising the profile of an area and local businesses to visitors and migrants, or simply bringing a community closer together.

He said attendees at trade shows go to shows so that they can: get discounted show prices on goods and services, research new trends in their industry and learn in-depth about a product or service before they commit to purchasing it.

Appreciating the Sahiwal Chamber he said all chambers across the country must hold expos in their areas for the projection and promotion of their local products to attract local and foreign investors.



FAISALABAD: Traders displaying seasonal fruit (orange) to attract customers at Fruit Market.

BOP sets Rs.37,500 as minimum salary for all employees

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Three years after the onset of the pandemic, inflation has become one of the main concerns for the global economy. The situation in Pakistan is even more exacerbated due to the macro-economic challenges and catastrophic flooding that it experienced in 2022. This has resulted in historically high inflation and a depreciating currency that has severely affected the real incomes of citizens. As high inflation takes its toll on the purchasing power of people, the low and middle income especially salaried people continue to reel

from the impact of high commodity prices & rising electricity/fuel prices.

The Bank of Punjab, taking into account the current economic climate, has undertaken various initiatives in an effort to support lower cadre employees of the Bank. As a first step, The Bank of Punjab has announced an across the board minimum monthly gross salary of PKR 37,500 for all employees. This increase is in line with the Bank's commitment to being a fair and equitable workplace. This increase will benefit all employees, regardless of grade or level. Additionally, the Bank has also removed bars between

entry level officer grades, clerical and non-clerical staff, and linked minimum gross salary with the minimum financial requirement of all grades in recognition of the fact that all of Bank's employees deserve protection from the inflationary impact.

Furthermore, in order to acknowledge the talent of employees who have joined the Bank from leading universities in Pakistan and abroad, their minimum salary has also been revised in line with the market. This will also assist the Bank in attracting good quality resources & talent at competitive salaries.

At BOP, the Board of

Directors and the Management believe in the wellbeing of all employees. The Bank had already taken a number of initiatives during the year 2022 for the welfare of its junior grade employees. This latest round of measures only reaffirms our commitment to support junior grade colleagues and the Country at large as we believe that this promotion of pay for performance culture, equity, fairness, merit and transparency, where every effort is being made to adopt the global best practices, will help us achieve our vision of 'being the first Employer of Choice'.

China, Pakistan launch Int'l Industry-Education Cooperation Alliance

BEIJING (INP): The China-Pakistan International Industry-Education Cooperation Alliance Initiative was launched at the China-Pakistan Seminar on "Internet+ International Education and Industry-Education Integration held here.

According to China Economic Net (CEN), Pakistan's Ambassador to China Moin ul Haque addressed the seminar, which is hosted by China Education Association for International Exchange and Organized by TANG International Education Group and Pakistan's Embassy in Beijing as part of the 23rd China Annual Conference & Expo for International Education.

"A large number of Chinese enterprises are working in Pakistan on such projects. They need skilled labor force", the Ambassador said, adding, "Recently, I had the opportunity to visit some big names in Shenzhen, China and was impressed by their innovation, hard work, and focus on people training.

China has emerged as

one of the world leaders in AI, computing, IoT, and big data. We would like to emulate the achievements of China in Pakistan".

It is learned that almost ten percent of the youth in Pakistan are unemployed and have no vocational, technical and commercial skills. Meanwhile, with the progress of CPEC, the demand for skilled labor force is becoming more and more urgent.

It is under such backdrop that the seminar was hosted. "Chinese colleges' investment on modern international education platforms and digital curriculum resources has helped train local Pakistani teachers and provided a large number of scholarships and living allowances for the poorest students in Pakistan to access to learning and life-changing opportunities", said Mr. Li Jinsong, President of TANG International Education Group.

In the same spirit, the China-Pakistan International Industry-Education Cooperation Alliance will facilitate the introduction of

210 Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) disciplines of China to Pakistan, the establishment of 36 TVET excellence centers, the provision of international courses, and the opportunities of pursuing further studies and jobs in China in its following work.

"The alliance has been under preparation since Aug, 2022. It has garnered the support of over 500 of bilateral TVET colleges, universities, and enterprises", Ammar Muhammad, Secretary General of China-Pakistan International Industry-Education Cooperation Alliance introduced.

"We aim to build a bilateral platform for China and Pakistan to exchange information on industrial and education information, share success stories, and work together in various programs so as to empower Pakistan's young people, promote employment, support the construction of Special Economic Zones and enhance Pakistan's export", he added.

China Focus: Busy job fairs mirror China's economic vitality

WUHAN (APP): In the early morning, Hu Zhiyang, a 50-year-old job seeker, had a quick breakfast and hurried to a nearby job fair in Huarong District of Ezhou City, central China's Hubei Province.

Following China's adjustment to its COVID-19 response, the country's economy is rebounding quickly, creating new employment opportunities, which gives people much confidence to find jobs.

As one of China's major industrial provinces, Hubei has been running the "Spring Breeze" event since early January, which aims to offer people employment opportunities by holding job fairs across the province.

"Unlike in past years, companies develop with a strong willingness to hire this year," said Liu

Yanhong, head of the provincial human resources and social security department.

Hubei will hold nearly 2,500 job fairs from January to March, with 856,000 jobs on offer from 20,000 companies.

At the job fair in Huarong District, 8,000 jobs offered by companies have attracted job seekers, including Hu, who used to be a plumber but was laid off for half a year.

"Just as I expected, this year's job fair is quite busy," Hu said, adding that he has consulted several companies that are all expanding the recruitment of plumbers this year.

"They all want to hire me," Hu said. "I prefer to choose a building materials company that provides a decent salary, and I'll have a try the next day."

Meanwhile, express

logistics positions were popular, attracting many young applicants.

"The express logistics industry is recovering with the rebounding economy," said Tan Kai, a recruiter of an express company. "The recruitment need of the entire express logistics industry is increasing significantly this year."

Busy job fairs directly reflect China's economic vitality. At another job fair held in Hubei's Tianmen City, plenty of sewing job opportunities mirror the rapid development of the local clothing industry.

To promote the clothing industry's development, Tianmen invested in a "Clothing Town" of 5,300 mu (about 353 hectares) in recent years and has planned to introduce over 50 garment enterprises.

Eleven garment enterprises have moved in and

started production with 4,500 employees.

"The continuous entry of such enterprises has created many job opportunities. This year, the "Clothing Town" has provided 1,000 new jobs, and sewing positions are the most in short supply," said Zhu Jundong, administrative staff of the "Clothing Town."

Hubei has also set up a series of livestreaming recruitment events to expand recruitment where enterprises explain their job requirements and answer any questions the audience may have in real-time.

Up to now, Hubei has held over 2,000 online and offline job fairs, helping over 215,000 people find jobs, according to the provincial human resources and social security department.

Farmers advised to beware of rusts

SARGODHA (APP): Farmers have been advised to regularly inspect their wheat crops and apply suitable anti-fungal pesticides in case of crop attack by Rust disease.

In a press statement issued here on Sunday, Director Agriculture Sargodha Muhammad Shahid said that there was likelihood of Rust disease attack on wheat due to expected rise in temperature.

He added the disease had been witnessed in some parts of the division and advised farmers to apply spray of Tebuconazole, Proiconazole, Triadimefene, or Trifloxystrobin+tebuconazole only on the disease-hit parts of plants.

Muhammad Shahid said that there were three types of disease including yellow Rust which could attack when temperature ranged from 10 to 20 Celsius, brown Rust (20-25 C), and Black Rust (20-35 C).

Brown Rust usually attacks plant leaves and can reduce per-acre yield. In case of an attack on an early sown crop, the disease weakens plants and disturbs food formation process. It can compromise wheat production by 10-30 percent.

Yellow or mustard Rust also attacks plants' leaves and appears as mustard dots on leaf. In case of an intense attack, its damage impact could be more than what Brown Rust can cause.

Black Rust emerges on leaf, branches, and trunks in shape of black or brown blots which later rupture and ooze out black powder, Muhammad Shahid added.

Economic experts upbeat about growth, contribution

BEIJING (APP): Economic experts from the International Monetary Fund are optimistic about China's economic growth outlook in 2023, saying that China will continue to be one of the major countries to see the strongest growth this year.

The IMF updated its World Economic Outlook and projected that China's economy will grow by 5.2 percent in 2023, 0.8 percentage points higher than the forecast in October last year. It forecast that China's economic growth will hit 4.5 percent next year.

China will continue to be one of the major countries to see the strongest growth this year, and its contribution to global economic growth will stand at 30 percent, Steven Barnett, IMF Senior Resident Representative in China, said in a keynote speech at a seminar on world economic situation.

The seminar was cohosted by the IMF Office in China and Institute of

World Economics and Politics of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS).

In contrast, the IMF updated its 2023 global growth outlook to expand by 2.9 percent, lower than the 3.4 percent growth rate registered in 2022.

Against this background, the outstanding performance of China's economy will help improve the global economic growth prospects, according to the IMF official.

With the optimization and adjustment of China's epidemic prevention policies, indicators such as transportation, total retail sales of consumer goods, and manufacturing purchasing managers' index (PMI) are improving, indicating that market optimism is increasing, said Li Xin, IMF Deputy Resident Representative in China. These factors have pushed the IMF to raise its forecast for China's economic

growth in 2023.

The PMI for China's manufacturing sector came in at 50.1 in January, up from 47 last December, data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed.

Huang Yiping, deputy dean of the National School of Development at Peking University, said that China's future development will rely more on an innovation-driven growth model.

It is crucial for China's economic development to encourage and guide private enterprises, foreign-funded enterprises, and other market players to actively participate in innovation, Huang said at the seminar.

Data showed that from 2020 to 2022, the Chinese economy posted an annual average growth of 4.5 percent, outpacing the world average of 1.8 percent and higher than those of other major economies.

Used car market expects steady rebound in 2023

BEIJING (APP): China's used car market is expected to see a steady recovery this year, with a sales volume possibly reaching 20 million units, industry data showed.

In January, about 1.25 million second-hand vehicles were traded in China, with a total transaction value of 78.03 billion yuan (about 11.36 billion US dollars), according to the China Automobile Dealers Association.

The trade volume went down 15.93 percent year on year, said the association, noting that the drop was due to a shorter trading period as most dealers closed shops early to return to their hometowns for family reunions during the Spring Festival.

Meanwhile, it emphasized the increase in demand before the week-long Spring Festival holiday, saying the expansion

of traffic to stores and quicker inventory clearing indicated a sound recovery of the market.

The association also forecasted a year-on-year sales growth in February and projected a rebound of the industry in 2023. Survey data showed that about half of the used car dealers expected more than 20 percent of the growth in trade volume this year, it said.

IMF bailout alone cannot put economy back on track: BMP

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: As the annual inflation rate has hit the new high of 38.42% for the previous week the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Businessmen Panel has warned that a bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) alone was unlikely to put the country's economy back on track, as the minibudget would further deteriorate the financial situation in the country.

Amidst continuous of hike in cost of production in the country, what the Pakistan's economy really needs is persistent and sound economic management, observed FPCCI former president and BMP

Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar. He asked the authorities for undertaking economic reforms and improving the regulatory environment to boost foreign investment so that financial stability can be achieved in the long-run.

The Businessmen Panel (BMP) chief stressed the need for reducing cost of doing business, besides evolving a new price control mechanism, as huge taxation, rising oil prices and constant jump in electricity and gas tariffs have lifted the inflation to decades high level in Feb 2023.

Mian Anjum Nisar warned the authorities that inflation above 6 percent can hurt economic growth and a careful policy is

required to keep it in control. He said that the pace of inflation is skyrocketing at a time when the economic activity is slowing down.

As the oil prices have been increased by another Rs12/liter and power tariff has gone up further the BMP chairman stated that the government has dropped a fuel bomb on the businessmen after it suffered an electric shock to meet the conditions of IMF for the revival of the stalled loan program- a recipe to shake the trade and industry.

The FPCCI former president said that the decision would prove detrimental to the industries due to high cost of doing business and will also open the floodgates of inflation. In addition

to making the electricity bills costlier and unaffordable for the consumers, the hike in base tariff would escalate prices of all household goods being widely used in every household, he added.

He termed the increase in tariff unlawful and a violation of NEPRA's own rules and regulations, as any increase in tariff has to be determined and implemented only after holding public hearings but unfortunately they have solely decided to raise the tariff without holding public hearings, he argued.

He condemned the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority's decision to increase electricity tariffs, stating that the burden of power theft,

mismanagement, and inefficiencies cannot be shifted to consumers on the pretext of fuel adjustment.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that Pakistan's industry had been harmed by the high cost of doing business, which discouraged investment in capacity and capability and called for easing the burden of heavy taxes on the power sector.

Anjum Nisar stated that the constant increase in power tariffs on the pretext of fuel adjustment had increased electricity prices and added to the already high cost of trade and industry. Seeking comparable energy tariffs for domestic industries in order to capture the global market, he stated that due to high electricity rates, power

theft became rampant as the tariff was unaffordable to consumers.

He urged the power ministry to identify system constraints and communicate targets to all concerned departments in order to launch a wartime effort to upgrade the transmission system.

He urged the completion of all ongoing power projects well ahead of schedule. He stated that business-friendly policies must be adopted, similar to those adopted by other neighboring countries in the region.

He suggested that the amount specified in trade policy be used to promote exports by providing incentives to trade and industry and by exploring new markets. According to the BMP

Chairman, Pakistan's electricity prices were already on the high side, which was the primary reason for the country's price hikes. He stated that providing affordable electricity would assist in lowering production costs, thereby benefiting the public. He stated that rising imports and a widening trade deficit posed a serious threat to economic growth and must be addressed urgently.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that the recent increase in fuel and electricity rates will add to the miseries of the businessmen, who are already feeling the heat of runaway inflation. He said that increase in fuel prices and tariff rates would also bring about another flood of inflation in Pakistan as it

would increase the cost of doing business in the country.

The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics reported that inflation hit the 48 years' highest level in Feb. The likely acceleration in the index would bring more misery for the trade and industry which was facing difficulties in meeting soaring cost.

He asked the government to inform the IMF that due to floods, tight monetary policy, high inflation, and a less conducive global environment, the economic growth rate might slow down in the range of 1.5% to 2% - a pace that was even lower than the population growth rate and would cause more unemployment in Pakistan.



PAARL: Aliya Riaz chops on, Pakistan vs West Indies, Women's T20 World Cup.

Women's T20 World Cup

England through to semi-finals after Pakistan lose to West Indies

PAARL (Agencies): England qualified for the Women's T20 World Cup semi-finals after Pakistan slipped to a nervy three-run defeat by West Indies.

Chasing 117, Pakistan needed 18 from a dramatic final over but could only manage 14 to fall agonisingly short.

It meant England are certain to finish in the top two in Group 2 and can guarantee top spot if they avoid defeat to Pakistan on Tuesday. Rashada Williams earlier hit 30 from 34 balls as West Indies posted 116-6. The result moved West Indies up to third and level on points with second-placed India, meaning they still have a mathematical chance of reaching the semi-finals.

However, their inferior net run-rate means they need India to lose heavily against Ireland on Monday to overtake them. If India do lose then Pakistan would also have a chance of reaching the last four if they beat England on Tuesday.

Bismah Maroof's side looked to have the upper hand when they restricted West Indies to a below-par score, but paid the price for an ultra-cautious approach at the start of their reply.

It took until the eighth over for Pakistan to hit a boundary and they limped to 40-2 at the halfway stage in a match littered with individual mistakes from both sides. Some hefty late hitting from Aliya Riaz - who scored a lively 29 from 23 balls - set up a dramatic finish, but West Indies just managed to squeeze home.

The 2016 winners once again had captain Hayley Matthews to thank for a superb all-round performance, scoring 20 from 21 balls with the bat, taking 2-14 with the ball and claiming a superb catch in the field.

Despite the loss, it was a memorable match for Pakistan all-rounder Nida Dar, who took 2-13 to become the joint-highest wicket-taker in

Women's T20I internationals with 125.

'A complete team effort' - reaction

West Indies captain and player of the match Hayley Matthews: "My heart is still beating a bit fast. As West Indians we like to keep the game close but glad we got over the line in the end. "We knew we had to be extra special in the field today and we spoke about not just winning the game with the bat and ball, but in the field as well and I think the girls did that.

"Over the last couple of weeks I have tried to take on responsibility at the top of the order, but [Rashada] Williams was really good and it was a complete team effort again."

Pakistan captain Bismah Maroof: "It's hurtful for everyone. It was very close. We weren't up to the mark. "Spin was the plan because the wicket was slow. "The match against England is important. We have played good cricket throughout and we will continue that."

Heavy defeat for Islamabad United in their first match at Multan

MULTAN (Monitoring Desk): It was a forgettable maiden outing for Islamabad United at the Multan Cricket Stadium as Multan Sultans handed them their second biggest defeat (by 52 runs) in the HBL Pakistan Super League on Sunday afternoon.

Mohammad Rizwan and David Miller made terrific fifties on either side of the innings to propel the hosts to a towering 190 for four before a consolidated bowling effort - with Abbas Afridi's maiden four-for standing out - skittled the visitors for 138 in 17.5 overs.

Rizwan became the only player to surpass the 200-mark in this edition over the course of his breezy 38-ball 50 that was studded with five fours and a maximum and Miller obliterated the visiting bowlers during his stunning 52, scored at a staggering strike rate of 208.

Despite another early dismissal of Shan Masood, Multan Sultans had a solid beginning with Rizwan and Rilee Rossouw (36 off 30)

putting 91 runs in 65 balls. The two would have put more had Islamabad United not handed debut to Abrar Ahmed. The mystery spinner had the ever-dangerous Rossouw, who entered this contest at the back of 78 not out and 75, guessing and the intriguing contest between the two dried up the runs for Islamabad United. Rossouw could only score five off Abrar's 11 balls as the spinner gave away only 21 runs in four overs.

Abrar was exceptional in his second spell - in which he bowled the ninth and 11th overs - as the batting side could only muster seven singles. Though Abrar could not take a wicket, the pressure that he had created garnered his side the wickets of Rossouw and Rizwan in the next two overs and Multan Sultans' run rate nosedived to 7.53 from almost 10 before the beginning of the ninth over.

Miller staged an epic recovery smacking Shadab Khan for consecutive sixes on the first three balls and a four on the last ball of the 15th over that added 24 runs to the team's total and dispatched Mohammad Wasim Jnr for a six and a

four off consecutive balls two overs later.

Kieron Pollard, who has shown glimpses of his T20 batting prowess, joined the party by smoking Rumman Raees, who had been brilliant in the Powerplay, for a six and a four, in the 17th and finished off with consecutive fours on the last three balls of the innings. Miller hit a boundary every 3.5 balls and was out on the first ball of the last over. His sparkling partnership with Pollard was worth 78 and had come in only 40 balls.

It was a typical start to the run chase for Islamabad United as their run rate hovered around nine in the Powerplay despite losing both openers to Mohammad Ilyas, who replaced Shahnawaz Dahahi after he injured his bowling hand. Rassie van der Dussen (49 off 32) and Colin Munro (31 off 23) threatened to take the game away from Multan Sultans during their 56-run stand, but Usama Mir inflicted twin blows in the 11th over to unravel the run chase.

Usama bowled a wily googly that kissed Munro's leading edge on its way to Rizwan's hands and Shadab Khan, one off three, mist-

imed a leg-break delivery that hurried onto him to be caught at deep square leg.

From here on it was Abbas Afridi's show. The right-arm quick bowled Azam Khan in the 15th and accounted for van der Dussen, Faheem Ashraf and Mohammad Wasim Jnr in the 17th to finish with the career-best figures of four for 22.

Ever-impressive Ihsanullah picked up the last two wickets - Tom Curran and Abrar - on the last two balls of the match.

Multan Sultans now boast six wins in seven matches at the Multan Cricket Stadium. In this edition, they have three wins in four matches in the HBL PSL 8 and sit comfortably at the top of the points table.

Scores in brief:

Multan Sultans 190-4, 20 overs (David Miller 52, Mohammad Rizwan 50, Rilee Rossouw 36, Kieron Pollard 32 not out)

Islamabad United 138 all out, 17.5 overs (Rassie van der Dussen 49, Colin Munro 31, Hassan Nawaz 21; Abbas Afridi 4-22, Mohammad Ilyas 2-12, Ihsanullah 2-19, Usama Mir 2-33)

Player of the match - Abbas Afridi (Multan Sultans).



MULTAN: David Miller's cameo put Multan in charge.

Pakistan wins 3rd position in International Kickboxing Championship held in Iran

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan clinched third position in the recently concluded International Kickboxing Championship held in Iran by showing a great performance while Iran bagged the overall winner trophy.

Afghanistan won the second position and Turkiye got fourth position behind third place Pakistan among 10 countries of Asia that participated in this event.

Teams from ten countries including Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey, Syria, and Iraq participated in the International Kickboxing Championship played in Iran, an international martial art coach Rehmat Gul Afridi told APP here on Sunday.

He said, Pakistani players

have shown their best skills in the competitions organized in this regard. Pakistani athlete Nazir Khan won the gold medal after defeating the Iranian athlete in the 51kg final. In 63kg, Mohammad Sohail of Pakistan won the title of Gold middle Laker Best Fighter by knocking out the player from Iran in the final.

In the semi-final of 54kg, Pakistani player Khalil-ur-Rahman from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and in the final of 57kg, Owais faced defeat by Iranian players. Similarly, during the semi-final match of 67kg, Ehsanullah withdrew from the event due to injury.

In 71kg, the national player Hameed Ullah won the silver medal by defeating

the Iranian player in the final. In this event, Iran team won first position, followed by Afghanistan at second, Pakistan at third while Turkey got the fourth position and Syria took the fifth position and Iraq got the sixth position respectively.

Pakistan Kickboxing Federation Secretary Rana Zahid Mahmood and team coach Mansoor Durrani went to Iran as officials of the Pakistan team. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Kickboxing Association President Mian Waheed Shah and Joint Secretary Naimat Gul and Rehmat Gul congratulated the national athletes and team officials and the entire cabinet of Pakistan Kickboxing Federation for this wonderful achievement.

Neymar carried off as Messi scores late PSG winner

PARIS (Agencies): Neymar was carried off on a stretcher before Lionel Messi scored a 95th-minute winner as Paris St-Germain gained an incredible win over Lille.

PSG had been 2-0 ahead and 3-2 behind after goals from Lille's Bafode Diakite, Jonathan David and Jonathan Bamba transformed the match. Kylian Mbappe, who opened the scoring, grabbed his second in the 87th minute to give PSG hope of victory.

Messi then won it in dramatic fashion with a 22-yard free-kick. Despite the win, PSG's main concern will be for Brazil forward Neymar after the 31-year-old was kicked on his calf and then went over badly on his right ankle five minutes into the second half. He looked in great pain with his hands over his face as he was carried off at the Parc des Princes.

PSG end three-game losing run in dramatic style

The result means PSG are eight points clear at the top of Ligue 1, although second-placed Marseille will cut the gap to five if they win at mid-table Toulouse later on Sunday (19:45 GMT).

PSG came into this match on a three-game losing run following a 2-1 loss to Marseille in the last 16 of the French Cup, a 3-1 Ligue 1 defeat by Monaco and a 1-0 home loss to Bayern Munich in the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie.

But they looked in complete control against Lille and were 2-0 ahead after only 17 minutes. Mbappe showed great skill to jink past Tiago Djalo and Diakite to score the first goal, before Neymar doubled the advantage, scoring from a rebound after Vitinha's effort bounced off goalkeeper Lucas Chevalier.

But Lille, who lost 7-1 at home to PSG in August, pulled one back through Diakite's 24th-minute glancing header. PSG had already lost left-back Nuno Mendes to injury before Neymar was carried off. David's penalty, following a foul by Marco Verratti, made it 2-2 and Bamba's powerful strike put the visitors ahead in the 69th minute.

Jinnah Gold Polo Cup: BN Polo win title

LAHORE, (APP): Team BN Polo defeated Master Paints 6-5 in the thrilling final to win the title of the Jinnah Gold Polo Cup 2023 sponsored by Al Rehman Developers and Town Planners and Dawn Bread that concluded here at the Jinnah Polo Fields on Sunday.

Hamza Mawaz Khan was the hero of the day from Team BN Polo as he displayed outstanding polo skills and techniques and fired in five fabulous goals. Baber Naseem also played well and slammed in the remaining one goal. Manuel Crispo pumped in four goals while Agha Musa Ali Khan struck one for Master Paints, which had a half goal handicap advantage.

BN Polo began the title clash with a successful conversion of 60-yard penalty to take a 1-0 lead, but Master Paints then bounced back in style and banged in two back-to-back goals to gain a slight 2-1 lead before the end of the first chukker.

BN Polo started playing

an aggressive game in the second chukker and hammered a hat-trick of goals to get back 4-2 lead. Just before the end of the chukker, Master Paints converted a 60-yard penalty to make it 3-4.

The third chukker remained goalless as despite various efforts, no goal was converted by either side and the match entered the fourth and decisive chukker, both the teams played excellent polo and pumped in two goals each.

And when the final bell was rung, BN Polo won the final by 6-5 despite a half goal handicap advantage for Master Paints.

Speaking at the concluding ceremony, Hamza Mawaz Khan said: "Our team worked hard and played well, which resulted in team's title triumph. The fans got a chance to watch a great match as well as title-winning performance. We are hopeful of doing well in the remaining high-goal events and try to win that too."

Earlier, Diamond Paints

defeated Master Paints/Newage Cables by 8-8 in the subsidiary final.

Chulo Corti did magic with mallet and polo pony and contributed with five fantastic goals for Diamond Paints, which had also a half goal handicap advantage, while the remaining contribution came from Nico Roberts, Ahmed Ali Tiwana and Mir Shoaib Ahmed as all converted one goal apiece. Simon Prado played well for Master Paints/Newage Cables and smashed in five goals while Juan Cruz Greguol hammered three goals.

A large number of spectators were present to watch and enjoy the final. Chairman Al Rehman Developers

Mian Muhammad Mushtaq, Muhammad Nauman Director Dawn Bread were the chief guests and distributed prizes among the winners. Other notables present on the occasion were JPF President Lt Col Shoaib Aftab (R), Secretary Major Ali Taimur (R).

Rashford scores double as Man Utd beat Leicester

LONDON (Agencies): Marcus Rashford scored twice to continue his hot streak and help Manchester United overcome Leicester in the Premier League.

Rashford is in the form of his career and is leading United's resurgence, taking his tally to 24 goals for the season with strikes in each half at Old Trafford.

Both efforts were clinical finishes, latching on to passes from Bruno Fernandes and Fred before bearing down on goal and coolly slotting past Danny Ward.

Substitute Jadon Sancho finished off a fine team move to seal all three points for Erik ten Hag's side, but it could have been a very different story.

Leicester created the better chances when it was goalless and their failure to find a way past David De Gea proved costly.

The Spaniard made a stunning reflex save to deny Harvey Barnes from close range and kept out Kelechi Iheanacho's div-

ing header with another superb stop.

Defeat ended Leicester's three-game unbeaten run and an inconsistent season sees them remain in 14th place in the table.

Red-hot Rashford leads

United's charge

Manchester United face the most important week of Ten Hag's short tenure, coming up against Barcelona in their Europa League play-off second leg on Thursday, followed by a trip to Wembley where they face Newcastle in the Carabao Cup final.

They go into those two huge games bang in form, having lost just three of their 22 league games, and ruthless finishing ended Leicester's challenge on this occasion.

Leading the charge is England international Rashford, who has now secured his most prolific campaign for United with three months still to play.

The 25-year-old took his tally to 17 goals in 18

games since the end of the World Cup, the most by a player in Europe's top five leagues.

His goals had the hallmarks of a player full of confidence, stroking into the net when through on goal and he could have had a hat-trick when he beat two defenders but drilled his shot straight at Ward.

Diogo Dalot missed a glaring chance from six yards out, miscuing the excellent Fernandes' cross, while Lisandro Martinez headed against the crossbar in a second half that was bossed by the home side.

United's aim at the start of the campaign would have been a return to the Champions League and they are well on their way to achieving that, lying third in the table and 10 points clear of Tottenham in fifth.

Looking above them, is a title charge out of the question? United are five points adrift of leaders Arsenal, although the Gunners have played a game fewer.

Peshawar Zalmi Announces Mahira Khan as its Brand Ambassador

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar Zalmi has announced Mahira Khan as its Brand Ambassador yet again for the HBLPSL Season 8.

With the release of Final Teaser for Zalmi Raalal - Zalmi Anthem for 2023 powered by TCL, Peshawar Zalmi has announced continuation of Mahira Khan's association with the franchise through the teaser video of Zalmi anthem for PSL 8.

As a powerhouse of talent, charisma and dedication to her craft, Mahira Khan is a name with a dense global fanbase.

Peshawar Zalmi takes immense pride in proclaiming Mahira Khan as Zalmi's Brand Ambassador. Mahira Khan and Peshawar Zalmi's relationship is one that goes back to a few years.

Every year, Zalmi fans eagerly wait for Mahira Khan's appearance in Zalmi anthems as well as on the ground to support Peshawar Zalmi during the matches. With "Zalmi Raalal" released soon, music and cricket fans around the globe are excited about the full anthem video.

England thrash New Zealand by 267 runs in first Test

WELLINGTON (Agencies): England completed a resounding 267-run win over the Black Caps in the first Test at Mount Maunganui on Sunday, powering to their first win in New Zealand for 15 years.

The tourists snared the required five wickets in the opening session of day four, dismissing the Black Caps for 126 after they had resumed at 63-5.

Pace bowlers Stuart Broad and James Anderson both finished with four second innings wickets as England took a 1-0 lead in the two-match series.

Broad (4-49) laid the groundwork on Saturday night under lights when he tore through New Zealand's top order, with all four wickets clean bowled to reduce them to 28-5 in pursuit of 394 for victory.

Long-time new ball partner James Anderson (4-18) took over as chief tormentor on Sunday, knocking over four tailenders as New Zealand added 63 more runs in 22.3 overs.

Only Daryl Mitchell, unbeaten on 57, put up any resistance after resuming his innings on 13, striking two sixes on his way to a sixth Test half-century.

It continued Mitchell's record of rearguard innings against the English, having scored 538 at an average of 108 runs during last June's 3-0 series defeat in England.

Michael Bracewell fell for his overnight score of 25 when looping an easy catch off spinner Jack Leach before Anderson began his clean-up job.

Jadeja stars as India hammer Australia to take 2-0 Test series lead

DELHI (Agencies): India spinner Ravindra Jadeja on Sunday returned career-best figures of 7-42 to help India take an unbeatable 2-0 Test series lead with a six-wicket thrashing of Australia inside three days of a dramatic match.

Jadeja, a left-arm orthodox bowler, teamed up with fellow spinner Ravichandran Ashwin to dismiss Australia for 113 in a morning session when the tourists' batting imploded, thanks to overusing the sweep shot on a tricky New Delhi pitch.

The hosts romped to their victory target of 115 in the second session, guaranteeing that they retain the Border-Gavaskar trophy in the four-match series.

They have won their previous three series against Australia and are now close to securing a spot in the World Test Championship final.

India lost skipper Rohit Sharma, run out after a flu-

ent 31, and Virat Kohli, who surpassed 25,000 international runs during his innings, stumped on 20.

Nathan Lyon took two wickets to return a match-haul of seven.

Cheteshwar Pujara stood firm with 31 in his landmark 100th Test to steer his team home with a winning four, as wicketkeeper-batsman Srikr Bharat, unbeaten on 23, looked on.

"We were prepared for them coming out and playing shots," Rohit said of his team's bowling plan.

"Our idea was to not panic and just hit the right areas, waiting for the mistake to happen, and that's exactly what happened."

He added: "So our focus was keeping it tight in the morning, and these guys (Jadeja and Ashwin) are the masters of bowling in these conditions."

Australia, who also lost the opening Test inside three days, crashed from their overnight 61-1 to be

bowled out in 31.1 overs, after losing nine wickets for 52 runs in just over 90 minutes of mayhem.

Jadeja improved on his previous Test best of 7-48, adding to the three he took in the first innings. Ashwin grabbed the remaining three in the Australian second innings.

Off-spinner Ashwin struck in the first over of the day to get Travis Head caught behind for 43, three balls after the left-hander hit a boundary to add to his overnight score.

"This loss hurts" - Marnus Labuschagne attempted to take the attack to the opposition with the paddle shot and the reverse sweep, but was bowled by Jadeja for 35.

David Warner's concussion substitute Matt Renshaw looked clueless against spin in his eight balls at the crease, before he missed an attempted sweep, giving Ashwin another lbw.



In brief

IRSA releases 106,300 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 106,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with an inflow of 60,100 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1473.54 feet and was 75.54 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow in the dam was recorded as 17,900 cusecs, while the outflow as 50,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1119.20 feet, which was 69.20 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded 15,900 cusecs and 30,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 60,500, 43,400, 29,500 and 6,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 13,000 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera, and 2,000 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

Agha Talish remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): Legendary Pakistani actor Agha Talish, known for his portrayal of character actors and villain roles, is being remembered on his 23rd death anniversary on Sunday. Agha Ali Abbas Qizilbash, more commonly known as Agha Talish was a legendary Pakistani actor who was widely recognized for his portrayals of character actors and villain roles. Talish was born in Ludhiana, British India in 1926 and went on to have a prolific career in the Pakistani film industry. Talish made his debut in 1947 and his on-screen performance in the hit song "Yaaro Mujhe Maaf Rakho Mein Nashe Mein Hoon" from Saifuddin Saif's 1957 film Saat Lakh, was widely admired. His biggest hit film was Shaheed, released on 5 January 1962. The highlight of the film was the instant hit song "Uss bewafa ka shehr hai aur hum hain dostau" by renowned poet Muneer Niazi, with music also by Rasheed Attre. Talish's 40-year-long film career earned him six Nigar Awards, in 1961, 1962, 1965, 1972, 1975, and 1994. He was also awarded the Pride of Performance Award by the President of Pakistan in 1989.

Police arrest 23 anti-social elements

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi District Police, in their ongoing operations against law-breakers, conducted raids in different areas and rounded up 23 drug peddlers, bootleggers, illegal weapon holders and other criminals besides seizing over 2880 grams of charras, 550 grams of heroin, 45 litres of liquor, 10 pistols 30 bores, two 12 bore rifles, a 30 bore rifle, ammunition and other items from their possession, said a police spokesman here on Sunday. He informed that Gungmandi police held Qasim with 1400 grams charras while Bani police rounded up Muhammad Ali for having 1260 grams charras, Muzamil for having 20 litres liquor and Faraz with five litres liquor. Rawat police arrested Asad Umar and recovered 220 grams of charras while Sadiqabad police netted Muhammad Nawaz for possessing 550 grams of charras. Similarly, City police nabbed Muhammad Ali on recovery of 10 litres of liquor and Jatl police apprehended Azhar for carrying 10 litres of liquor. City police in their operation managed to net two thieves and recovered Rs 35,000 cash and other items from their possession.



ISLAMABAD: A beautiful view of flowers displayed by vendors at local nursery in Federal Capital.

Polio immunization campaign concludes in 39 districts

ISLAMABAD (APP): A sub-national polio vaccination campaign concluded on Sunday in 39 districts of the country to vaccinate more than six million children under the age of five years. The drive was started after sewage samples in Lahore tested positive for wild poliovirus last month.

The polio drive was conducted in nine districts, including the seven endemic districts of Bannu, D.I.Khan, Tank, Lakki Marwat, North Waziristan, Upper South Waziristan and Lower South Waziristan in southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and two districts of Punjab including Lahore and Faisalabad. The drive was planned after two environmental samples collected from two separate sites in Lahore tested positive for wild poliovirus in January.

According to the nation-

al polio lab at the National Institute of Health, the first positive sample of 2023 was detected on January 19 and was genetically linked to the poliovirus found in the Nangarhar province of Afghanistan in November 2022. This was the first evidence of cross-border transmission in more than a year. The second positive sample was reported on January 27, which was genetically linked to a virus circulating in south KP.

In a statement, Minister for National Health Services, Abdul Qadir Patel said that parents and caregivers should ensure that their children are vaccinated in every campaign to protect them from the disability-causing virus and to stop it from gaining a foothold in their communities. He said the presence of wild poliovirus with genet-

ic links to the virus in Afghanistan and south KP in sewage samples is evidence that the virus is moving with people and circulating in our communities.

The minister said, "Poliovirus on any side of the border is a threat to children in both countries. Only repeated doses of the oral polio vaccine can offer life-long protection."

He said, "Our vaccinators will keep bringing the vaccine to your doorstep as often as needed, so I encourage parents and caregivers to ensure that your children take these drops and remain protected." Coordinator of the National Emergency Operations Centre, Dr Shahzad Baig said in the last phases of eradication of poliovirus move with under-immunized populations, highlighting the importance of repeated vaccination.

CDA to plant saplings on retrieved land to increase green cover

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has decided to increase the city's green cover by planting saplings on billions of rupees of land it recovered from illegal occupants under the anti-encroachment drive.

"The authority has recently launched a massive drive in the federal capital against the land grabbers to recover its precious land that had been unlawfully occupied by the mafia," an official told APP.

He said the tree-plantation decision was taken on the direction of CDA Chairman Noor ul Amin Mengal, and the authority would carry out a comprehensive drive aimed at preventing re-encroachment of retrieved land and increasing green spaces across the capital.

The official said the CDA had retrieved land in several locations of Islamabad, including the Kuri Area, F-7, F-10, F-11, E-12 sectors, C-12 sector, Sarai Kharboza along the Grand Trunk Road, and the Margalla Hills National Park.

He said the authority also launched an awareness campaign to educate people from all segments of society particularly students about the importance of tree plantation so that green cover could be increased in the city by planting more trees.

"On directions of the CDA Chairman, the civic agency is taking all possible steps to maintain the natural beauty of the capital city in collaboration with the citizens, particularly educational institutions," he added.

He said Islamabad was the only city in the world that had been developed on the concept of green city and "the CDA is taking concrete measures for conservation and enhancement of its green character."

'PML-N struggling for country not for personal interests'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Federal Education and Professional Trainings Rana Tanveer Hussain Sunday said the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) was struggling for the country's better future, not for personal benefits.

Talking to a private media channel, he said under the premiership of Shehbaz Sharif, the Pakistan Democratic Movement was committed to pulling the country out of the swamp where Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf (PTI) left us.

"Imran Khan's government was imposed upon us by poorly managed gen-

eral elections in 2018, and it was ousted through a democratic process of a vote of no confidence," he said.

Besides the worst economic crises inherited from the Imran's government, the coalition government was determined to give relief to the people, he added. In response to a question, the minister said Jail Bhara Tehreek should not be limited to workers, Imran Khan should begin by surrendering himself to law instead of seeking pre-arrest bail. Just like Imran's previous unsuccessful political moves, Jail Bhara Tehreek will bite the dust, too, he claimed.

Govt releases Rs 12,779m for railways division in 7 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): The government has so far released Rs 12,779 million in fund, under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) 2022-23, against a total allocation of around Rs 32,440 million to execute 36 different projects.

Out of the total authorization/disbursement of Rs 12,779 million, around Rs 12, 600 million have been utilized by railways division projects, during the seven-month period (July-January) of the current fiscal year, according to official data available with APP. According to the documents, Rs 26,648.036 million have been ear-

marked for 32 ongoing projects, out of which Rs 15,974.500 million have been reserved for the procurement and manufacturing of 820 High Capacity Bogie Freight Wagons and 230 passenger coaches.

The federal government has allocated Rs 2,300 million for the special repair of 100 diesel-electric locomotives for improving the reliability and availability of running locomotives.

Similarly, an amount of Rs 1,000 million was earmarked for the replacement of old and obsolete Signal Gear from the L o d h r a n - M u l t a n - Khanewal-Shahdara Bagh

Mainline section of Pakistan Railways.

While, an amount of Rs 6,000 million has been kept for four new schemes, out of which Rs 5,000 million would be utilized for upgradation of Pakistan Railways' existing Main Line-I, and for the establishment of Dry Port near Havelian (2018-22) Phase-1, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). An amount of Rs 600 million would be earmarked for the replacement of track machines, and Rs 200 million allocated for the conversion of the brake system of 328 MBFRS from vacuum brake to air brake.

HEC invites applications for accreditation of National Research Journals

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan has invited applications for accreditation of Pakistan-based research journals for the year 2023-24 (July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024). The applications can be submitted at research.hec.gov.pk before March 13, 2023.

HEC facilitates national research journals published by registered entities through financial support and capacity building to enhance their academic and publication standards. These entities include universities/degree awarding institutions (DAIs), public sector Research and Development (R&D) organisations and non-profit academic societies with the mandate for research and having registration with the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) and/or Registrar of Societies only. National research journals complying with HEC requirements for accreditation are recognised annually through an open call.

Applications are invited for the above-said year from all Pakistan-based research journals, which meet the minimum eligibility criteria.

The entities applying for accreditation must have valid ISSN, Journal Title, functional website, editorial or advisory board with composition of PhD degree holders in relevant field or FCPS/FRCSMCPs degrees for medical journals and strong research and publication background.

The journal must be owned by a university/DAI, R&D organisation, private society, or NGO. It must have published minimum five original research articles per issue and at least two review reports of each article. The editor of the journal will provide a recommendation letter from the head of the institution in case of an approved educational institution or R&D public sector organisation. The journals owned by non-profit academic societies with the mandate for research will be considered only after registration with SECP and/or Registrar of Societies. The journals listed in removed Directory of Open Access Journal (DOAJ) or Australian Business Deans Committee (ABDC) will not be considered for accreditation. For updates, the applicants may visit research.hec.gov.pk

Kite flying poses serious threats to human lives

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Anti-Kite Flying Volunteers Association (AKFV) has raised the alarm on the dangers posed by kite flying, and called for self-regulation among citizens to abstain from indulging in this activity.

Talking to APP here on Sunday, AKFV representative Yasir Farooq Usman said that kite flying posed serious risks, particularly to human lives and birds. "The strings used for kite flying are made of strong and sharp materials that can cut the throats of unsuspecting people and birds", he said. The kite flying season usually started in February, and law enforcement agencies were making efforts to apprehend the kite sellers, as the police could not prevent people from engaging in the sport, he added.

Yasir highlighted that kites flown in close proximity to one another could collide and result in serious injuries to the people operating them. Kites could become entangled in power lines, leading to electrical outages and the risk of electrocution for the person operating the kite, he added. He pointed out that anti-kite flying laws were not in place in the KP province, and people brought kites and string rolls from Punjab to the KP province.

PBM brings about positive change through life-changing initiatives

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) is making all possible efforts to address issues pertaining to socio-economic imbalance with its life-changing humanitarian and social protection initiatives at national, provincial, divisional, and district levels. The PBM has been significantly contributing towards poverty alleviation through its various pro-poor services by helping destitute, widows, orphan, invalid, infirm and other needy persons since its establishment in 1991 through the Act of Parliament.

The institution had revolutionized lives of millions of people by improving their social order through different initiatives in various areas from health to education and other various forms of assistance. Hafeez Ahmad, a beneficiary of PBM hailed from Attock while describing his ailment, told APP that at the age of 21 he was diagnosed with kidney failure. Due to poor financial circumstances and lack of medical insurance, he was getting delayed in medical treatment. However, the PBM took the responsibility by providing financial assistance that enabled him to get the dialysis done.

"Thanks to the PBM and the government who had established such institutions that serve the ailing humanity during their testing times when people were being faced with inflation," he added.

Madheha, another beneficiary said, "Being a child, it was not easy for me

to continue my studies as my father passed away in 2020 and my mother had to face tremendous challenges to make us successful in our lives. Without the help of Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal scholarships, I was unable to complete my education in any way. Now I am doing my PhD and PBM awarded me scholarships in Masters (MSC) and MS also," she added.

A Thalassaemia patient on condition of anonymity told APP that the PBM had so far spent Rs one million on his treatment. "I wish the PBM more success to serve the destitute people," he added.

Rukhsana Baigam, wife of a taxi driver while expressing her gratitude to PBM, said that she was suffering from breast cancer and had received over Rs 100,000 for her treatment from the institution.

Ameer Sultan a biomedical engineer in a private lab said he had completed primary education at PBM School for Rehabilitation of Child Labour (SRCL) Multan. "I am proud of my teachers who have been helpful and supportive in my education and enable me to get this employment," he maintained.

Managing Director Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal, Amir Fida Paracha while highlighting the objectives of the organization said that social protection for vulnerable people is playing a vital role in inclusive and balanced growth in developing countries.

He said, "The PBM's primary aim is to contribute towards poverty

reduction in the country involving the strategic use of tools such as access to healthcare, education, socio-economic rights, self-reliance, women empowerment and rehabilitation."

He noted that he was determined to implement e-governance and digital infrastructure within the organization to reduce response time and to increase transparency, better workflow and efficient information management through shared databases, effective targeting management, and accountability through transaction tracking. To a query, Mr Paracha said awareness of these services was equally important for community engagement and the public-private partnerships in social services.

Reaffirming the Federal Government's resolution for the well-being of deprived persons, he said he was committed to support the poor, widows, orphans, disabled persons and other vulnerable segments of the country. Commenting on future projects, he said his organization was fully focused on accelerating the execution of expansion strategy while continuing to strengthen the organization. The spokesperson of the PBM said that all information regarding the assistance programs and the procedure to apply for assistance was available on the official website of PBM. "Needy people may call on toll-free number 0800-666 66 or write an email at info@pbm.gov.pk for any query or information," he added.

'White cane helpful in empowering individuals with visual impairments'

ISLAMABAD (APP): White cane and mental optimization experts have weighed the importance of white cane as assistive tool for people with visual impairments that can greatly enhance mobility and independence for individuals with visual impairments. Talking to APP here on Sunday, an Instructor of white cane at National Mobility and Independence Training Center Muhammad Jabbar Khan said that the white cane tool allows individuals to navigate through their surroundings by utilizing a range of techniques, including foot counting, landmarks, speed breakers, the two-touch technique, the three-touch technique, and the dots technique. He said that the foot counting technique involves counting the number of steps taken in a particular direction, while landmarks and speed breakers serve as points of reference for navigation.

Jabbar informed that the two-touch technique involves using the white cane to detect obstacles and changes in terrain, while the three-touch technique involves using the cane to detect obstacles on the ground, as well as those at waist and head level. "The dots technique involves using a raised dot system to mark specific locations and landmarks", he added.

The expert went on to highlight the importance of mental optimization when it comes to using the white cane saying that the tool can greatly enhance mobility and

it requires a certain level of mental focus and concentration to use effectively.

Jabbar said, "This is why individuals who use the white cane should also engage in mental exercises to enhance their cognitive abilities and improve their use of the cane". He emphasized that the use of the white cane should not be viewed as a sign of weakness or incapability, but rather as a tool that enables individuals to navigate through their surroundings with greater ease and independence.

He said that National Mobility and Independence Training Center organizes special training segments for the individuals with visual impairments and for their family members. He said the training center provides various facilities including accommodation for 15 days.

The trainer emphasized the importance of empathy and support for individuals with visual impairments, noting that the use of the white cane can greatly enhance their mobility and independence. He said as a society, it is important to create an inclusive environment and offer assistance to those who may need it in order to uplift and empower individuals with visual impairments. He said that society as a one unit should work towards creating a more inclusive environment that recognizes the abilities and potential of individuals with visual impairments.

6 people suffer casualties

JAWZJIAN (Agencies): Local traffic officials of Jawzjan say that 2 people lost their lives and 4 others were injured in a traffic accident in the Khaja Dakoh district of the province. The traffic head of the province, Mawlawi Mohammad Anwar Zahid told BNA that a car has collided in the Bakshi site of Khaja Dako district, where 2 people died and 4 others have been injured. The non-compliance of the driver with traffic laws was blamed for the accident.

Families access to water

KUNDUZ (Agencies): A drinkable water reservoir completed with the financial support of UNHCR in the Dasht-e-Archi district of Kunduz. In the opening of the network, Qari Hijratullah Nusrat, the district governor of Dasht-e-Archi, said that this network, prepared with solar power, was implemented with the financial support of UNHCR. The residents of the site expressed happiness with the construction of the solar network system for the supply of clean drinkable water.

Hibat called on leadership to avoid favoritism and discrimination: Mujahid

KABUL (Khaama Press): Taliban's spokesperson Zabiullah Mujahid says the group's Supreme Leader Hibatullah Akhundzada in a meeting with the provincial authorities of certain provinces asked them to avoid "favoritism and discrimination" and follow meritocracy instead. The group's Supreme Leader met with the provincial governors and military officials of Badakhshan, Nimruz, Herat, Farah, and Badghis provinces on Sunday, and discussed a number of issues, Mujahid said.

Mujahid in a statement said the group's Supreme Leader in a meeting with the provincial officials has reiterated that resolving people's problems and the country's development should be prioritized.

The Taliban leadership has also called for the general public should be aware of "Islamic Principles" and the group's members should align their conduct with Sharia laws and values. Mujahid did not provide further details about the location of this meeting, and the group has not published any photos or videos of the meeting. The spokesperson further added that the Taliban leadership has emphasized that tremendous efforts have been put to corrupt the mindset of the public over the past two decades, and now religious scholars have to enlighten the people's minds. The enemy has been defeated on the battleground, however, propagandas are ongoing to

instill distrust in the general public's mind against the Islamic Regime. He asked the Taliban officials to do not to underestimate the enemy's propaganda and closely monitor their moves. This comes as the ruling regime's repressive policies restricting women and girls from accessing education, work, or appearing in public environments have drawn criticism on national and global levels. Meanwhile, the so-called ethnocentric policy the current regime pursues has become debatable among the group's leadership. Some senior Taliban leaders even described the monopolization of power as "dangerous and unacceptable" for the regime and the people of Afghanistan.

Military bases to be replaced by economic zones

KABUL (Agencies): Economic Commission meeting held under Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar Akhund, chairmanship, Deputy Prime Minister, in Marmarin Palace. After all-around discussions, the meeting decided to replace military bases with economic zones in the country which will be assigned to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce gradually. Among the bases to be replaced only in Kabul and Balkh, fundamental works will be started, a statement released by Deputy Prime Minister's office said. Same the meeting that decided to complete the remaining work of the Shah was the Arus dam. The economic commission meeting decided to form separate committees under the supervision of the Railway Authority and the Ministry of Energy and Water, so there will be more outcomes for the railway and electricity projects. The meeting further discussed major infrastructure projects' budgets for the next year.

Iran bans entry of Afghan students to universities

KABUL (Khaama Press): Iran's Sharq Daily on Sunday reported that the Ministry of Education has instructed universities to avoid the entry of Afghan migrant students holding refugee certificates. These students will have to travel to Afghanistan and should enter Iran with passports and study visas to get enrolled in universities and educational institutions, the announcement said. This comes as none of the Afghan Embassies can issue fresh passports to Afghan nationals since the return of the Taliban to power in August 2021. Additionally, the central passport department in Kabul has also stopped issuing passports for the past couple of months. Those Afghan citizens holding 'Amayesh' cards are recognized as legal refugees in Iran according to the UN Refugee Agency. International human rights conventions will have to oblige Iran to respect the refugee rights of these people. Herewith, Afghan refugees are wrestling with systematic discrimination in Iran. Daily has written that Afghan students are required to pay tuition fees even for non-degree courses at public universities, according to the laws of Iran's Ministry of Education.

7,000 male students take medical school exit exam

KABUL (TOLOnews): An exit exam for graduate medical students was held at Kabul University only for male students. More than 7,000 graduates of the School of Medicine from various provinces took part in the test, according to Gul Mohammad Osman, director of the Afghanistan Medical Council. No female students were present. The Afghanistan Medical Council officials noted that when the procedure was approved, female students will also be permitted to take the test in the second round. "This test is conducted in two rounds, the first round is for males, and the second round is for women," said Gul Mohammad Osman, director of the Afghanistan Medical Council. "The procedure that we have finalized is on behalf of the medical council. Following approval by the officials of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the test of the female will be taken in the second round," said Ahmad Shah, technical consultant of the council. The National Examination



on Authority has said that the results of this exam will be made public in a week. "The National Examination Authority will take this exam in complete transparency," said Rahmatullah Haqqani, deputy of the National Examinations Authority. "There are 106 questions in the test. According to the Afghanistan Medical Council's standards, 60% of the questions must be answered in order to succeed," said

Yama Aman, a technical adviser to the National Examination Authority. Some female and male graduate medical students asked the Islamic Emirate not to politicize the field of medicine and to allow female students to take the exam. "Do not politicize medical school because we are completely distinct from politics, let us advance and let us reach our dreams," said Kamila, a graduate

medical student. "Females make up half of our society. We want all the Islamic Emirate officials to start working on their exam and the procedure and to take an exam," said Rahmatullah, another graduate student. According to figures from the Afghanistan Medical Council, 10,000 participants, including 3,000 women, have registered for the Faculty of Medicine's final exam.

Mujahid: Afghanistan has right to use Amu River water

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Islamic Emirate said that Afghanistan has the right to use Amu River water in the Qosh Tepa Canal. The Islamic Emirate spokesperson, Zabiullah Mujahid, emphasized that Kabul and Tashkent have friendly relations and that Uzbekistan also supports the prosperity of Afghanistan. "We do not take even a drop of water from other nations because we do not need it and do not wish to take it. Hence, no country will be worried about this, and we have good and friendly relations with Uzbekistan. And we believe they support Afghanistan's growth and standing on its feet and they work with us in this area," Mujahid said. However, the Economist said in a report that with the completion of Qosh Tepa Canal, there is a possibility of tensions in the region regarding the use of Amu River water. According to some analysts, Afghanistan has not been allowed to use the Amu River's water due to continuous wars, hence using this river's water in

the Qosh Tepa Canal is a right of the country. "I hope that Uzbekistan, a friendly nation, respects the rights of its neighbor. I don't think that the implementation of this project would lead to any tension or confrontation between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan," said Hamidullah Yalani, the former director of Afghanistan's water supply. "Because Afghanistan is the Amu River's neighbor and a portion of the water in the river originates from Afghan soil, Afghanistan has the right to use the water from the Amu River. But, Afghanistan has not been given the opportunity to use the Amu River's water because of the continuous conflicts," said Najib Aqa Fahim, an expert on water issues. The first phase of the Qosh Tepa Canal, according to the National Development Company, will be finished in the early months of 1402, with 54% of the construction already done (Solar year). "The construction of the first phase of the canal is 54 percent completed," said

Navid Ahmad Rabbani, head of engineering at the Helmand Directorate of the National Development Company. The Economist recently reported that the comple-

tion of the Qosh Tepa Canal would result in less water flowing down the Amu River, which will help farmers in Afghanistan but hurt Uzbekistan's cotton industry.

Current regime's repressive policies endanger Afghan future

KABUL (Khaama Press): Belgium Foreign Minister Hadja Lahbib says that the Afghan interim regime's rigid policies endanger the future of Afghanistan, particularly that of women and girls. On the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference 2023, Foreign Minister Lahbib said on Twitter that her country is fully committed to supporting the people of Afghanistan under all circumstances. She further added on the joint coordination of the international community and the regional players in matters regarding war-torn Afghanistan. While speaking at a round table at Munich Security Conference, the foreign minister said that the volatile security situation is a reality in Afghanistan, and efforts should be made to find a solution to this critical challenge posing threats to the security of this country, its neighbors, and beyond. Mahbuba Seraj, a journalist and women rights activist, and Hosna Jalil, a former Deputy Interior Minister represented Afghanistan at Munich Security Conference. Participants at MSC 2023 discussed Afghanistan, with special emphasis on the dire humanitarian and economic situation in the country. The deteriorating security situation and the growing threat of Terrorism in the country were other key aspects of the meeting.

16 people killed, 2 injured in Afghanistan last week

KABUL (Pajhwok): Kabul last week rejected the massing of thousands of Daesh or Islamic State militants near the Tajikistan border. Last week, some countries renewed their call for the establishment of an inclusive government in Afghanistan and others stressed continued relations with the war-torn nation. **Casualties** Last week, 16 people were killed and two others were injured in separate incidents of violence across the country. The General Directorate of Intelligence said its special forces raided a Daesh hideout in the 8th security district of Kabul city, killing three members of the group and capturing one alive. A kidnapper was killed during an armed clash with security forces in northern Balkh province and two people were killed and two others injured when two rival families clashed in eastern Nangarhar province. In Badghis, unknown gunmen killed two youths and two children were killed in the province when an unexploded ordnance went off and a child died due to a mortar shell explosion in Uruzgan. A man gunned down his fiancée and her mother in Sari Pul province, a person stabbed his mother to death using a knife in Jawzjan, a 25-year-old woman was found dead under mysteri-

ous circumstances in Logar and the body of a young man turned up in Kandahar province. These casualties are based on reports reaching Pajhwok Afghan News as some incidents may have gone unreported or sources provided incorrect figures. In the previous week, according to sources, 18 people were killed and five others were injured in various incidents across the country. Before the regime change in August 2021, hundreds of civilians, security forces and the insurgents would get killed and wounded every week in the country. **Daesh presence near Tajikistan border** Russia-led military alliance Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) chief Anatoly Sidorov last week claimed that the strength of Daesh fighters in Afghanistan reached 6500 and out of them 4000 were believed to be stationed near the Tajikistan border. The alliance includes Russia, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus and Armenia. However, this claim was rejected by acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, saying no threat was posed to any country from Afghanistan's soil. Referring to the recent meeting and concerns of Afghanistan's northern

neighbors, Muttaqi said anyone could visit Afghanistan and could see everything closely, asking them to avoid such claims. He asked the world, particularly neighboring countries, to refrain from making accusations about the presence of Daesh in Afghanistan. Last week, US State Department spokesman Ned Price asked the caretaker government not to allow the use of Afghanistan's soil against other countries as per its promises under the Doha agreement. He said if the Islamic Emirate could not or did not want to act on its promises, the US would take action in this regard. However, Islamic Emirate spokesman, Zabiullah Mujahid said as a responsible party, the Islamic Emirate was committed to not allowing anyone to use Afghanistan's territory against other countries and so far there had been no evidence in this regard. He asked the US to share information with the Islamic Emirate if they had any based on the Doha Agreement. Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, who visited China last week, accused the US of supporting Daesh and Al-Qaeda in the region. **IEA leaders' speeches last week** Acting Minister of Interior Sirajuddin Haqqani last week renewed IEA's

adherence to its commitments and asked the global fraternity not to seek excuses for denying recognition to the caretaker Afghan government. Addressing an event in southeastern Khost province, he insisted the IEA was serious about legitimate engagement with the world. Challenging and questioning the current system had become a fashion, the acting minister noted, calling the trend intolerable. He said the Islamic system was achieved on the basis of mujahideen's and the nation's sacrifices and protecting the system required courage and patience. He said they should treat the people well and give them their rights if they wanted to strengthen the system. Acting Defense Minister Maulvi Yaqoob Mujahid said that the system's stability relied on fulfilling the legitimate demands of the nation. "We should never be arrogant and should always respond to the legitimate demands of the nation." Shaikh Shahabuddin Dilawar, acting minister of Mines and Petroleum, during a ceremony marking the withdrawal of Soviet Union forces from Afghanistan said: "Independence is gained with the support of people and individuals who misuse the emotion of its people and get to the reign

of power waste independence because the turn their back to the people." Islamic Emirate Spokesperson Zabiullah Mujahid during a ceremony in Kabul University said government officials should have the guts of hearing the objection of the people but these objections should not be at the cost of disgrace to officials. But later Mujahid in a video clip said: "My speech at Kabul university was directed to the activities of media outlets and objection raised from media outlets, nobody was specifically targeted. Foreign circles wishing to create differences, cracks or any other issues within the ranks of IEA officials will take this dream to their grave. I can assure you there is no contradiction in my speech every leader's speech is based on its own understanding and the speech is always referred to his own limitation. Nobody should misuse the speeches of others." **Afghanistan relations with world** China and Iran in a joint statement asked the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) government to remove restrictions on women and create an inclusive government. But Bilal Karimi, deputy spokesperson of the IEA government, said IEA government understood the concerns of other nations

was committed to take steps keeping in mind the demands of the people of Afghanistan, supreme national interest and religious obligations. Karimi said the people of Afghanistan could resolve and administered their internal matters and asked other nations to behave with Afghanistan as an independent nation. China's special representative for Afghanistan Yueh Hsiaoyung has discussed bilateral cooperation with Qatari officials on efforts to stabilize Afghanistan. In a series of tweets on Friday, Hsiaoyung wrote that he had held separate meetings with Qatari and Pakistani diplomats in Doha. He also held talks with Sohail Shaheen, the head of the Islamic Emirate's political office in the Qatari capital. Turkish Ambassador to Afghanistan Cihad Erginay during a meeting with Deputy Foreign Minister Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai said Ankara relations with Afghanistan was expanding and Turkey will always stand by Afghanistan. EU Special Representative for Afghanistan Tomas Niklasson said in the post IEA rule era change in Afghanistan should be brought through peaceful means at the hand of the people of Afghanistan. **Women's, girls' work and education**

On the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, US Chargé d'Affaires Karen Decker renewed her call for lifting of restrictions on Afghan women. She tweeted: "I ran up against the tweet limit, not the list of names. Afghan women are being denied the chance to study science. What kind of scientists does Afghanistan need? #BlackHistoryMonth #LetAfghanGirlsLearn." UN Special Representative for Afghan Women Rights Rina Amiri during a meeting with Qatar Deputy Foreign Minister Lola Alkhatar said the most important factor during interaction with IEA officials was how ways could be opened for women education in Afghanistan. UN Deputy Secretary General Amina Mohammedi termed girls education in Afghanistan a top priority for the international community and said: "It was vital to standby Afghan girls and raise their voice." Chinese and Iranian heads of state in a joint statement stressed over girls education and demanded lifting curbs on women's work in Afghanistan. Save the Children International Organisation said less fortunate women suffered the most from ban on women work in NGOs while Germany announced to resume work on developmental projects in

Afghanistan when it benefit Afghan women. But Deputy Foreign Minister Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai said: "Incumbent government is Islamic and we want to resolve all issues including unemployment, education and others under the framework of Islam and in line with Afghan culture and values. Work is underway pertaining to these issues and hope that soon the problems would be resolved." This comes that UN said that Afghanistan stood among 10 nations where education is faced with critical situation. **Continuation of Aid** Last week Afghanistan received two separate packages of 40 million dollars each as part of humanitarian cash assistance. World Health Organization (WHO) said that this year 17 million people in Afghanistan needed health assistance while UNOCHA said 28.3 million people in Afghanistan needed emergency humanitarian assistance this year. Earlier UNHCR already demanded the continuation of humanitarian assistance with Afghanistan. Russian Ambassador to Afghanistan Dmitry Zhirnov said Moscow will expand the export of gas and crude oil to Afghanistan and added traded between the two countries jumped by 40pc this year.

‘Imran ridiculing judiciary to get bail through bullying’

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Sunday that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan was ridiculing and making mockery of the judiciary which was unprecedented.

In a statement, the minister said that Imran Khan used abusive language every day and threatened judiciary to get bail through bullying.

Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzebsaid that PML-N was now running a campaign to expose Imran and his facilitators. She said her party was now only campaigning against those who were damaging national economy and making people unemployed.

The minister said that the PML-N was now only campaigning against foreign agents and "Tosha Khana thieves". "PML-N is now only campaigning

against those who are conspiring against the country", she remarked.

Marriyum rejects ‘malevolent campaign’ regarding post-earthquake assistance to Turkiye: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Sunday categorically rejected a "malevolent campaign" regarding humanitarian assistance provided by Pakistan to Turkiye after the earthquake.

"We categorically reject the orchestrated malevolent campaign by rogue elements who are spreading misleading and fabricated propaganda regarding post-earthquake humanitarian assistance to Turkiye," the minister said in a tweet.

Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzebsaid such "shameful attempts" were designed to tarnish the country's international stature.

Israeli missile strikes building in central Damascus, five dead

AMMAN (Reuters): An Israeli rocket strike early on Sunday hit a building in central Damascus, killing five people and damaging several buildings in the densely populated district, witnesses and officials said.

The strike hit near a security complex around which Syria's ally Iran has installed bases, two intelligence sources said.

An Israeli military spokesperson declined to comment.

Citing a Syrian military source, state media said Israel had carried out air strikes targeting several areas of Damascus shortly after midnight, causing five deaths and 15 injuries among civilians.

"It caused damage to several civilian homes and material damage to a number of neighbourhoods in Damascus and its vicinity," the Syrian army said in a statement.

Syrian foreign minister Faisal Mekdad said the strike should be considered a "crime against humanity" given it took place less than two weeks after the Feb. 6 earthquake that left more than 5,800 dead across the country.

It was not immediately

clear whether the Israeli strike was aimed at a specific individual, but two Western intelligence sources said the target was a logistics centre in the building run by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

Iran and Russia both helped President Bashar al-Assad turn the tide of the country's civil war in his favour with military and economic support. Tehran and Moscow both condemned the strikes and said they threatened regional stability.

Edmond Ajji from Syria's antiquities directorate told Reuters the capital's historic citadel had suffered some damage in the incident.

But two Syrian military sources, speaking anonymously because they were not authorised to speak to press, said stray anti-aircraft rockets fired in response to the missiles hit the vicinity of the citadel.

Pro-Iran Hezbollah's top commander Imad Moughniyeh was killed in 2008 in a bombing in the same neighbourhood, Kafr Sousa, a heavily policed area where residents say several Iranian security agencies are located,

including a cultural centre.

Although officials rarely acknowledge responsibility for specific operations, Israel has been carrying out air strikes against suspected Iranian-sponsored weapons transfers and personnel deployments in Syria for almost a decade.

Israel has also in recent months intensified strikes on Syrian airports and air bases to disrupt Iran's increasing use of aerial supply lines to deliver arms to allies in Syria and Lebanon, including Lebanon's Hezbollah.

The strikes are part of an escalation of what has been a low-intensity conflict whose goal was to slow down Iran's growing entrenchment in Syria, Israeli military experts say.

Iran's proxy militias, led by Hezbollah, now hold sway in vast areas in eastern, southern and northwestern Syria and in several suburbs around the capital.

Assad has never publicly acknowledged that Iranian forces operate on his behalf in Syria's civil war, saying Tehran has only military advisers on the ground.

ECP refuses to enter into consultation with President over polls

ISLAMABAD (NNI): In its reply to the second letter of President Arif Alvi, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Sunday refused to enter into the process of consultation with the office of the President regarding elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

A letter issued by the ECP secretary Omar Hamid Khan to the president's secretary shared on Twitter on Sunday, stated that the electoral body was well aware of its constitutional and legal obligations.

"It is pertinent to mention that Article 105 read with Article 112 of the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973, provides the procedure for appointment of poll date in case of dissolution of the provincial assemblies," it stated. "Under Article 105 of the Constitution, the governor can give the date of elections for a dissolved assembly," read the text of the ECP's reply.

"The ECP wrote a letter to the governors of Punjab and KP in the light of the Constitution, and both of them have not yet given the date for elections," it added. "The matter related to the general elections in both the provinces is under hearing in different courts. The Lahore High Court (LHC) in its order had directed to consult with the Governor of Punjab," it stated. "The ECP officials had consulted with the Governor of Punjab, but he did not give the date for elections," it maintained.

"The ECP also filed an intra-appeal in the LHC regarding the decision. The ECP has no constitutional or legal authority to fix the date for elections," it stated. "The ECP is well aware of its constitutional and legal obligations. In response to the first letter, the ECP had informed the office of the President about the entire situation," it emphasised.

"The matter of Punjab and KP elections is currently under hearing in the courts. It is regretful to say that the ECP cannot involve the President's House in this consultation process," it declared.

‘Jail bharo tehrak’ Punjab govt decides against arresting PTI workers

LAHORE (INP): The caretaker Punjab government has decided against arresting Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) workers, following Imran Khan's announcement to start 'Jail Bharo Tehreek'.

According to sources, the caretaker Punjab chief minister Mohsin Naqvi presided over the meeting which was attended by the Punjab Chief Secretary, Inspector General (IG) Punjab and other heads of institutions. In the meeting, Mohsin Naqvi instructed not to arrest the PTI members who surrender voluntarily to law enforcement as part of the PTI's Jail Bharo Tehreek. The meeting decided that the PTI workers or leaders should only be arrested if they violate law.

Meanwhile, sources claimed that the Punjab government ordered the security officials to ensure the law and order situation in the province. It is pertinent to mention here that PTI has announced Jail Bharo Tehreek schedule. As per details, 200 PTI workers and a six-member group of former MNAs and MNAs will present themselves for arrest on a daily basis from February 22 till March 1st.



KARACHI: Funeral prayers for a police officer who was martyred after succumbing to his injuries from the Karachi Police Office attack.

U.S. stages joint air exercises with Asian allies after North Korea’s ICBM launch

SEOUL (Reuters): The United States held joint air exercises bilaterally with South Korea and Japan involving strategic bombers on Sunday, a day after North Korea fired a Hwasong-15 intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) in a "sudden launching drill".

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the exercise, in which South Korea's F-35A, F-15K and U.S. F-16 fighters escorted American B-1B bombers, demonstrated the allies' "overwhelming" defense capabilities and readiness posture.

"(The exercise) strengthened the combined operation capability and affirmed the United States' ironclad commitment to the defence of the Korean Peninsula and the implementation of extended deterrence," the South's military said in a statement.

Japan flew F-15s over the Sea of Japan with the U.S. Armed Forces' B-1 bombers and F-16s in tactical exercises, Japan's Defense Ministry said in a statement, calling the security environment "increasingly severe" after the latest North Korea missile landed within its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). "This bilateral exercise reaffirms the strong will between Japan and the United States to respond to any situation, the readiness of (Japan's Self Defense Forces) and U.S. Armed Forces, and further strengthens the deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance," the ministry said.

The air drills come a day after North Korea launched a long-range ballistic missile into the sea off Japan's west coast, following a warning of a strong response to upcoming

military drills by South Korea and the United States.

North Korea's state media KCNA said the country conducted a "sudden launching drill" on Saturday in an "actual proof" of its efforts to turn the "capacity of fatal nuclear counterattack on the hostile forces into an irresistible one".

Leader Kim Jong Un's sister, Kim Yo Jong, issued yet another warning and accused the United States of trying to turn the U.N. Security Council into what she called a "tool for its heinous hostile policy" toward Pyongyang. "I warn that we will watch every movement of the enemy and take corresponding and very powerful and overwhelming counteraction against its every move hostile to us," she said in a statement.

Saturday's missile launch, the North's first since Jan. 1, came after Pyongyang threatened on Friday an "unprecedentedly persistent, strong" response as South Korea and the United States geared up for their annual military exercises as part of efforts to fend off the growing nuclear and missile threat that the North poses. North Korea's state news agency said its missile had flown for 1 hour, 6 minutes and 55 seconds, as high as 5,768 km (3,584 miles), before accurately hitting a pre-set area 989 km (614 miles) away in open waters. It first test-fired a Hwasong-15 in 2017.

Last year nuclear-armed North Korea fired an unprecedented number of missiles, including ICBMs capable of striking anywhere in the United States, while resuming preparations

for its first nuclear test since 2017.

South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin said Saturday's launch "clearly" signals the North's intent to conduct further provocations.

"If North Korea conducts the seventh nuclear test, which could happen at any time, it will be a game changer in a sense that North Korea could develop and deploy tactical nuclear missiles," Park told the Munich Security Conference on Saturday.

KCNA said the North's latest launch, guided by the Missile General Bureau, was conducted on an "emergency firepower combat standby order" given at dawn, followed by a written order from Kim Jong Un at 8 a.m. (2300 GMT on Friday). South Korea's military said it detected the missile at 5:22 p.m. (0822 GMT). "The important bit here is that the exercise was ordered day-of, without warning to the crew involved," said Ankit Panda, a missile expert at the Washington-based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

"The amount of time between the order and the launch is likely going to be decreased with additional testing."

Analysts say North Korea is likely to conduct more weapons tests, including a possible new solid-fuel missile which could help the North deploy its missiles faster in the event of a war. North Korea's ballistic missile and nuclear weapons programmes are banned under U.N. Security Council resolutions, but Pyongyang says its weapons development is necessary to counter "hostile policies" by Washington and its allies.

IMF demands Pakistan to end subsidies for upper class

DUBAI (Agenices): International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva has stressed that Pakistan needs to protect the poor and tax the wealthy while ensuring that subsidies are targeting those who really need them, it emerged on Sunday.

In an interview on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference on Friday, the IMF chief said: "My heart goes to the people of Pakistan. They have been devastated by the floods that affected one-third of the population of the country. "What we are asking for are steps Pakistan needs to take to be able to function as a country and not to get into a dangerous place where its debt needs to be restructured," she said.

"I want to stress that we are emphasising two things. Number one, tax revenues. Those who can, those that are making good money [in the] public or private sector

need to contribute to the economy. Secondly, to have a fairer distribution of the pressures by moving subsidies only towards the people who really need it.

"It shouldn't be that the wealthy benefit from subsidies. It should be the poor [who] benefit from them," she said. "And there the Fund is very clear. We want the poor people of Pakistan to be protected."

Pakistan held 10 days of intensive talks with an IMF delegation in Islamabad — from Jan 31 to Feb 9 — but could not reach a deal.

The IMF, however, said in an earlier statement that both sides have agreed to stay engaged and "virtual discussions will continue in the coming days to finalise the implementation details" of the policies, including the tax measures, discussed in Islamabad.

The government is in a race against time to implement the tax measures and reach an agreement

with the IMF as the country's reserves have depleted to a critically low level of \$2.9 billion, which experts believe is enough for only 16 or 17 days of imports.

The agreement with the IMF on the completion of the ninth review of a \$7bn loan programme would not only lead to a disbursement of \$1.2bn but also unlock inflows from friendly countries.

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar on Wednesday tabled the Finance (Supplementary) Bill, 2023, in both houses of the parliament, outlining tax measures to raise an additional Rs170bn in the next four and half months to meet the last prior actions agreed upon with the IMF.

The IMF has given a deadline of March 1 for the implementation of all these measures. However, the bulk of tax measures worth Rs115bn was already implemented from Feb 14 through statutory regulatory orders

Sheikh Rasheed urges president to announce election date or resign

LAHORE (NNI): Awami Muslim League chief and former Interior Minister Sheikh Rasheed on Sunday said constitutionally President Dr Arif Alvi has the authority to announce the date of the elections, asking the president to give the date of the election tomorrow (Monday) or resign from his office.

"As per the constitution, the president can give an election date," Sheikh Rasheed said while talking to media men in Lahore.

The AML leader said the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has not earned respect by pushing the country into crisis, adding the elections will be held together in the provinces and the center.

Sheikh Rasheed said Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz is yet undecided over contesting by-polls in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The former minister claimed that elections in the centre and provinces will be held at the same time. "Only Supreme Court can save Pakistan after Allah," Sheikh Rasheed said. He said Pakistan has 'default', the confirmation was also made by Defence Minister Khawaja Asif.

Calling fresh elections in the country is the only solution to steer the country out of the present crises, he maintained.

He claimed that the fate of the country's politics would be decided by April 30, saying he won't

be responsible for any major mishap before April 30.

"I did not stand with thieves and dacoits. They want to take me to Karachi but I am Sheikh Rashid not Arshad Sharif."

The former minister was of the view that after Allah Almighty only the Supreme Court could save Pakistan. He said he had been 'reborn' as a new Sheikh Rashid after being kept in prison on false charges.

On Friday, President Arif Alvi invited Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja for an urgent meeting on general elections. The invitation was sent to consult on elections under Section 57(1) of the Elections Act, 2017.

Ukraine war: Blinken says China may give weapons to Russia

NEW YORK (BBC): China is considering giving Russia weapons and ammunition for the Ukraine war, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said.

Mr Blinken told CBS News that Chinese companies were already providing "non-lethal support" to Russia - and new information suggested Beijing could provide "lethal support". This escalation would mean "serious consequences" for China, he warned. China has denied reports that Moscow has requested military equipment. Chinese President Xi Jinping is an ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin and is yet to condemn Russia's invasion - but he has sought to remain neutral in the conflict and has called for peace.

Mr Blinken was speaking to CBS after he met China's top diplomat, Wang Yi, on Saturday at the Munich Security Conference.

He said that during the meeting he expressed "deep concerns" about the

"possibility that China will provide lethal material support to Russia".

"To date, we have seen Chinese companies... provide non-lethal support to Russia for use in Ukraine. The concern that we have now is based on information we have that they're considering providing lethal support," he said. He did not elaborate on what information the US had received about China's potential plans. When pressed on what the US believed China might give to Russia, he said it would be primarily weapons as well as ammunition.

The US has sanctioned a Chinese company for allegedly providing satellite imagery of Ukraine to the mercenary Wagner Group, which supplies Russia with thousands of fighters. Mr Blinken told CBS that "of course, in China, there's really no distinction between private companies and the state".

Relations between Washington and

Beijing were already poor after the US shot down an alleged Chinese spy balloon in early February. Both sides exchanged angry words, but equally both sides appeared embarrassed by the incident and seemed ready to move on. But if China were to deliver weapons to help Russian forces in Ukraine, then US-Chinese relations would deteriorate much more severely. Mr Blinken's warning seems to be clearly designed to deter China from doing that.

Mr Blinken also said the US was worried about China helping Russia evade Western sanctions designed to cripple Russia's economy. China's trade with Russia has been growing, and it is one of the biggest markets for Russian oil, gas, and coal.

Nato members, including the US, are sending a variety of weapons, ammunition and equipment to Ukraine, including tanks. They have stopped short of sending fighter jets,

and Mr Blinken would not be drawn on whether the US would help other countries supply jets.

"We've been very clear that we shouldn't fixate or focus on any particular weapons system," he said.

He did, however, say that the West must ensure Ukraine had what it needed for a potential counter offensive against Russia "in the months ahead". Russia is currently trying to advance in eastern regions of Ukraine, where some of the fiercest fighting of the war has taken place.

Mr Wang said in Munich yesterday that China had "neither stood by idly nor thrown fuel on the fire" for the Ukraine war, Reuters reported.

China would publish a document that laid out its position on settling the conflict, Mr Wang said. The document would state that the territorial integrity of all countries must be respected, he said.

"I suggest that everybody starts to think calmly, especially friends in Europe, about what kind of efforts we can make to stop this war," Mr Wang said. He added that there were "some forces that seemingly don't want negotiations to succeed, or for the war to end soon", but did not say who he meant.

The Chinese President, Mr Xi, is scheduled to deliver a "peace speech" on the anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on Friday, 24 February, according to Italy's foreign minister Antonio Tajani.

Mr Tajani told Italian radio that Mr Xi's speech would call for peace without condemning Russia, Reuters reported.

During their meeting, Mr Blinken and Mr Wang also exchanged strong words on the deepening row over an alleged Chinese spy balloon that was shot down over the US.

Mr Blinken said during the meet-

ing that the US would not "stand for any violation of our sovereignty" and said "this irresponsible act must never again occur".

Mr Blinken told CBS that other nations were concerned about what he called China's "surveillance balloon program" across five continents.

Mr Wang, meanwhile, called the episode a "political farce manufactured by the US" and accused them of "using all means to block and suppress China".

China has denied sending a spy balloon.

And on Sunday morning, Beijing warned that the US would "bear all the consequences" if it escalated the argument over the balloon. China would "follow through to the end" in the event "the US insists on taking advantage of the issue", it said in a foreign ministry statement reported by Reuters.