

Six terrorists arrested

RAWALPINDI (INP): Security forces on Wednesday arrested six terrorists including a suicide bomber from S Waziristan. Security forces conducted operation in South Waziristan and arrested six terrorists including a suicide bomber and four facilitators. The arrested terrorists have confessed to their crimes. It has been revealed that the majority of arrested terrorists were studying in religious seminaries in Hangu, Kurram, Tall and other areas.

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First national English daily published from Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Karachi and Washington D.C

Prisons ready to greet PTI F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Minister for Information Sharjeel Inam Memon, while commenting on PTI's 'Jail Bharo Tehreek', has raised question that whether Imran Khan has presented himself for arrest in Lahore? He said, coward Imran Khan is filing applications for bail in courts. On the other hand, he is plotting to play with the future of the country by putting the youth of the nation behind the bars.

Vol. XXXIX

No. 38

Regd. No. 241

SHABAAN 02 1444 -- THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 23 2023

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

Price. 20

PM unveils major austerity measures

Shehbaz Sharif hopes to save Rs 200 billion annually; salaries cut, ‘unnecessary’ trips prohibited

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday unveiled a massive austerity drive at the federal government level to slash expenditures while eyeing an ambitious plan to save Rs200 billion annually.

Addressing a news conference along with the members of his cabinet, the prime minister said the result of such a frugal exercise would yield far-reaching effects. The prime minister said that the federal cabinet in today's lengthy meeting had deliberated and the members decided with their sweet will that all the federal cabinet members, advisers and special assistants would not draw salaries and other privileges.

All members of the cabinet would pay the utility bills from their own resources and would return all the luxury vehicles which would be auctioned, he said, adding the cabinet members would use economy class during their visits abroad while their assisting staff would not be allowed to accompany them. The prime minister further said the cabinet members, during their visits abroad would not stay in five stars hotels.

All the division, departments, subordinates and other government entities under the federal government would slash their current expenditures by 15 percent whereas the purchase of luxurious vehicles would be completely banned. The prime minister said the senior officers in the federal government who had been utilizing official vehicles besides, availing the monetization scheme would return all such vehicles.

He said this practice was being immediately banned and anyone found violating the ban would be proceeded against. The prime minister said that extra security vehicles for the cabinet members would be withdrawn and a committee headed by the interior minister would decide the matter in case of threats.

The TA, DA of the officials would be reduced by utilizing the telecommunication facilities like holding of zoom conferences which would be promoted to save expenditures. The prime minister further announced that a single treasury account would be established. For the purpose of power and gas saving, the government offices would start functioning from 7.30am during the summer season while power-saving items would be used in the offices.

At the federal government level, no division, unit, district, or tehsil would be created for administrative purposes. The government servants would not be allotted more than one plot and a committee would present a plan of selling out the palatial official residences constructed during the British era, in a transparent manner, fetching handsome amount for the cash-strapped national exchequer, he added. The prime minister said during ceremonies and in official meetings, single dish would be used except for foreign dignitaries, adding during the 2023-24 fiscal budget, extra measures would also be announced including steps to reduce losses of the state enterprises.

The prime minister said the cabinet members should be appreciated for their sacrifice and goodwill gesture for their decision over salaries and privileges. Replying to a question, he said that they would announce a decision over the size of the cabinet in the next few days.

All the members of the cabinet, in today's meeting, had insisted upon slashing the size of the cabinet, he added. The prime minister also appealed to the Chief Justice of Pakistan and all the CJs of the high courts and provincial chief ministers to take similar decisions under their jurisdiction. He also warned that the energy conversation plan was not being fully implemented and they would be forced to take steps to enforce it.

About Toshakhana, the prime minister said the cabinet had decided that a gift worth \$300 (Rs80,000) could be retained and others would be deposited in the Toshakhana while the record in this regard would be published on the website for the information of the general public. He informed that an Independent third party would make the evaluation of these gifts. To a question, the prime minister said there was no shortage of wheat and flour in the country as PASCO had already imported wheat and the situation in the provinces should also improve.

The prime minister elaborated that during the mini-budget, the government decided to tax the luxury goods in order to protect the common man who had already been burdened with the price hike. He said that the agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was in the final stages and hoped that would it be finalized soon as all the conditions had been met. The prime minister said that the people could experience price hike as the subsidies were slashed, still the government was working hard to save the poor people.

Poverty, he said, had unfortunately increased but they were trying to overcome it. The prime minister said that he did not want to peep into the past, but wanted to remind the nation that during the last 75 years, the middle and poor classes always rendered sacrifices for the country whether it was war of 1965, quake or floods.

During the last 75 years, the governments had increased their expenditures and burdened the poor, on the other hand, the elite class and well-off people, no doubt, had also contributed for the country, but they had not done so much as was required. The prime minister regretted that the free treatment facility for the poor during the PML-N government was ended by the subsequent governments. The prime minister resolved that despite certain issues, the coal-



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif addressing a press conference after the cabinet meeting.

tion government, with the support of the nation, would steer the country out of the current problems.

He stressed upon collective efforts by all if they wanted the country to move on the path of progress and prosperity by realizing the vision of Quaid e Azam, adding that all the institutions had been working under the ambit of the constitution in this regard. In today's cabinet, meeting, he said, they had agreed to alleviate the sufferings and ordeals of the poor segments of society across the country.

A committee was tasked to come up with the recommendations to lower the burden on the poor and middle classes, he said and urged the wealthy and well-to-do elements to come forward. In response to a question, he said the armed forces had also given positive response over the austerity measures. Replying to a question, he said in a veiled reference to PTI's chairman Imran Khan that in the past, he used to claim to return

back 300 billion dollars of the country stashed away in Swiss and UK accounts.

He said that such a question should have been raised during Imran Khan's three- and half-year tenure. The prime minister said he Imran Khan Niazi had misused funds for charity purposes and was caught red-handed. He sold out a watch bearing a model of 'Khana Kaaba' in the market instead of depositing it in the Toshakhana. Moreover, he duped the nation with the production of a fake receipt. The gift was given as a token of esteem for the entire nation, he added.

The prime minister said that foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari was himself bearing all the expenses of his foreign visits. About holding of the elections in two provinces, the prime minister said that he would follow the constitution as the relevant forums would decide it. The prime minister, responding to a question, said that he would write a letter to the

president on his direction with regard to holding of elections in two provinces.

He regretted that some nine months back, the president was also involved in the dissolution of the assembly which they viewed as unconstitutional steps on his part. The prime minister said that they held the judiciary in high respect and expected that impartiality would be maintained. He said in Nawaz Sharif's Panama case, the former prime minister was disqualified on the basis of Iqama. On the other hand, Imran Khan Niazi's house spreading over 300 kanals was regularized.

He said during an interview with VOA, Imran Niazi had denied role of US in the change of his government, but in the last nine months, he built up a false narrative by creating havoc in the country. The prime minister said that he (IK) was responsible for straining bilateral ties with the US.

CJ takes suo motu notice on delay in Punjab, KP polls

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial Wednesday night took a suo motu notice of an apparent delay in the elections of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and also formed a larger bench to hear the case.

The nine-member bench includes: Justice Umar Ata Bandial, Justice Ijaz ul Ahsan, Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Munib Akhtar, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Sayyed Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Athar Minallah.

The bench will hear the case today (Thursday) at 2pm. The matter was sent to the chief justice seeking the suo motu by a two-member Supreme Court bench comprising Justice Ijaz Ul Ahsan and Justice Mazahir Ali Akbar Naqvi in the Lahore Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Ghulam Mehmood Dogar case on February 16.

According to the apex court's statement, the bench will assess who is eligible to issue the date for polls, the constitutional responsibility of the federation and provinces, and who will fulfil the constitutional responsibility of conducting elections and when. "It is the government's responsibility to conduct elections in Punjab and KP according to the Constitution," the top court's statement read.

The Supreme Court added that the two provincial assemblies were dissolved on January 14 and 18, respectively. "Under Article 224 (2), polls should be held within 90 days of the assembly dissolution. The Constitution mandates that polls be held within 90 days." The country's top court also said that requests for the date of elections were also received from the Islamabad High Court bar, and speakers of KP and Punjab assemblies.

The CJP, in the statement, highlighted how the two assemblies were dissolved and almost immediately after the dissolution a question was raised as to who had the constitutional responsibility and authority to appoint the date of the general elec-

tion to obtain the mandate of the electorate and elect fresh assemblies. "It is to be noted that Article 224(2) requires that a general election be held within a period of 90 days after the dissolution, and the use of the word "shall" indicates that this is, prima facie, a constitutional imperative," he added.

CJP Bandial further said that in respect of the appointment of the date for the holding of the general elections to the dissolved provincial assemblies there are several petitions already filed in various courts of Pakistan. "By judgement dated 10.02.2023 a learned single judge in Chambers concluded that the authority lay with the ECP and called upon the same to immediately announce the date of election of the provincial assembly of Punjab with the notification specifying reasons, after consultation with the governor of Punjab, being the constitutional head of the province, to ensure that the elections are held not later than ninety days as per the mandate of the Constitution.

"Reportedly both the governor and the election commission have filed Intra Court Appeals which are pending before a learned Division Bench of the high court." According to the statement, as the governor did not act on the advice tendered by the then chief minister Parvez Elahi and made no order dissolving the assembly, he does not have the responsibility or authority to appoint the date for the general election.

"The Election Commission has, it appears, also taken the position that under the Constitution it has no authority to appoint the date for a general election, though it has categorically stated (as reported in the public media, both print and electronic) that it is fully committed to conducting the said election in accordance with the Constitution. "At the same time, the governor of KP province has also not appointed a date for the holding of the general election and a petition in this regard is pending before the Peshawar High Court," as per the statement.

The chief justice, in its statement, wrote that the president has taken the

position that it is "he who has the authority and responsibility for appointing a date for the general elections, in terms as provided in section 57(1) of the Elections Act, 2017". It maintained that despite a month gone by since the dissolution, even the matter of appointing the date of general polls, which is the first step towards the holding of the elections, has not been resolve.

"Constitutional authorities appear to hold divergent, and perhaps even conflicting, views on the issue," Justice Bandial's statement read while highlighting that several federal ministers, who reflect the view taken by the federal cabinet as a whole, have contested the authority asserted by the president. The country's top judge stated that there is a "lack of clarity on a matter of high constitutional importance". His statement also highlighted the ECP's statements regarding the unavailability of required assistance and support, in particular by the provision of necessary funds, personnel and security, which is needed to conduct the elections as per the Constitution.

"Having considered the above, and the material placed before me, I am of the view that the issues raised require immediate consideration and resolution by this court. Several provisions of the Constitution need to be considered, as also the relevant sections of the Elections Act," the statement, signed by Justice Bandial, read. It further added: "In particular, the issues involve, prima facie, a consideration of Article 17 of the Constitution and enforcement, inter alia, of the fundamental right of political parties and the citizens who form the electorates in the Punjab and KP provinces to exercise their right to elect representatives of their choice to constitute fresh assemblies and provincial cabinets." The chief justice further said that this is necessary for government in the two provinces to be carried on in accordance with the Constitution. "These matters involve the performance of constitutional obligations of great public importance apart from calling for faithful constitutional enforcement."

PTI kicks off 'jail bharo tehreek'

LAHORE (INP): PTI on Wednesday commenced 'Jail Bharo Tehreek' (court arrest movement) from Lahore as the party's senior leaders including Vice-Chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Asad Umar, Azam Swati have voluntarily surrendered themselves to the law enforcers. The 'court arrest' drive was launched in protest over "violations of the fundamental rights", "abuse of the Constitution", "unprecedented inflation" and "economic meltdown".

On the directions of Imran Khan, as many as 200 leaders and workers will surrender themselves for the 'Jail Bharo Movement' today. Former Punjab governor Umar Cheema, Senator Waheed Iqbal, former Punjab minister Murad Raas, PTI ticket holders Muhammad Madni and Fawad Bhalar and others will surrender themselves in the first phase.

Imran said that PTI was launching the 'Jail Bharo Tehreek' for two important reasons Taking to Twitter, Imran said there were two main reasons for the campaign that aimed at achieving 'Haqeeqi Azadi'.

"One, it is a peaceful, non-violent protest against the attack on our constitutionally-guaranteed fundamental rights," he wrote while highlighting that illegal corruption cases and FIRs were being registered against the PTI leaders. "Two, it is against the economic meltdown brought on by cabal of crooks who have money laundered billions in looted wealth & gotten NROs for themselves," Mr Khan said, adding that the government's policies have crushed the poor and middle class "under the burden of spiraling inflation & rising unemployment".

The minister went on to say that both judges had

SC dismisses petition seeking cypher probe

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Supreme Court (SC) has dismissed three appeals seeking an investigation into the alleged foreign conspiracy behind the ouster of former premier Imran Khan's government.

Justice Qazi Faez Isa heard the petitions filed by GM Chaudhry, Zulfiqar Ahmed Bhutta, Tariq Badar and Naeemul Hassan in March last year under Article 184(3) of Constitution requesting the Court to pass direction to probe the veracity of cypher on 'international conspiracy'. Justice Qazi Faez Isa conducted hearing of the petitions in his chamber.

The petitioners had prayed that a high-powered commission of inquiry should be constituted to hold inquisitorial proceedings with regard to the anti-state activities conducted by the respondent political parties through mala fide and abuse of power under the provisions of the Constitution and for committing sedition and treason against the democratically and legally elected government.

At the outset of the hearing, Justice Qazi Faez Isa asked the petitioners under which law they had filed pleas. The petitioners stated that Imran Khan's speech

put Pakistan's sovereignty in 'danger'. "Don't talk on assumptions give reference to the law," Justice Isa asked the petitioners and asked if dealing with foreign affairs matters duty of the court.

The SC judge asked do Imran Khan ordered any inquiry while being prime minister after the cypher came to light. He added that all the authorities were under the prime minister, he could have called for an inquiry. "Now what should SC do in this matter? The SC turned down the pleas by saying no fundamental rights were affected in the matter.

PML-N comes out in open against 2 'biased' SC judges

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah said on Wednesday that PML-N's legal team will be approaching two judges of the Supreme Court to recuse themselves from hearing the cases against the party leadership. In a series of tweets, Sanaullah named the judges and alleged that they "have a biased attitude towards the PML-N".

Sanaullah recalled that one of the judges had been the supervising judge in cases against party supremo Nawaz Sharif and "we have no expectations of justice from him". He also mentioned a purported audio leak related to the second judge, saying that it had "raised questions on his impartiality".

The minister went on to say that both judges had

passed "opposing" verdicts in dozens of cases against Nawaz and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, including Panama, Ramzan Sugar Mills, and Pakpattan Land Allotment (against the Sharifs' family members). He said it was a legal and judicial tradition that "controversial" judges voluntarily recused themselves from the bench at the request of the aggrieved party.

"The legal team of PML-N will ask the two judges to recuse themselves from the benches hearing the cases of Nawaz Sharif and other leaders of the party," Sanaullah stated, adding that the two judges will be asked not to hear cases of the PML-N. The development comes a day after PM Shehbaz completed consultation with the legal brains of the government during a meet-

ing on Tuesday.

A party insider said that the "bold move" would pay off in case both the judges in question recuse themselves from the cases against the PML-N leaders especially Nawaz Sharif which might pave the way for his return from London. "Nawaz Sharif wants relief in the Al-Azizia corruption case (in which he was serving a seven-year imprisonment) before returning to his homeland," the insider said.

Defence Minister Khwaja Asif also told a private channel that the PML-N direly needed Nawaz Sharif back home to lead the party to match with Imran Khan's PTI. The PML-N leadership has already started taking on the apex court judges in public rallies and press conferences.

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb Wednesday said PTI Chairman Imran Khan's 'Jail Bharo' campaign was only for the helpless party workers as it was, in fact, a 'Jail se Bacho' campaign for the leadership. It was an irony that Imran Khan had obtained protective bail for himself, but at the same time he was asking the innocent PTI workers to court arrest, she said while addressing a press conference.

The minister said instead of leading the court arrest drive, Imran Khan was apparently taking refuge in a bunker at Zaman Park in Lahore with a plaster on his leg. Terming the 'court arrest

'Jail Bharo' drive for helpless workers: Marriyum

movement' a conspiracy against the country, she said it should have commenced with the arrest of Imran Khan, who was trying to escape from accountability through such tactics.

The minister said for the last nine months, Imran Khan had been changing his stance over the dismissal of his government by negating his own statements one after the other. The incompetent and inefficient former rulers had conspired against the country and ruined its economy since they were involved in foreign funding and Toshka Khana theft, she added.

Imran Khan, she said, ruled at the

federal level for four years and in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for 10 years but miserably failed to deliver to the people. Marriyum Aurangzeb said during his tenure as prime minister, Imran Khan misused the 'state power' to fill his pockets with illegal gains and benefits. The PTI leadership, she added, sent their political opponents to jail and used public funds to spread baseless propaganda against their political opponents. However, despite having all the state power for four years, they could not prove even a single penny of corruption against them (opponents).

The entire Pakistan Muslim

League-Nawaz leadership, including Nawaz Sharif, Maryam Nawaz, Shehbaz Sharif, and Hamza Shehbaz were placed in death cells to settle political scores, she said. Marriyum said: "When they could not prove any charges (against the opponents), they pushed the country towards the economic disaster, rendered youth unemployed, and did compromise on the Kashmir issue."

The minister said the PTI rulers destroyed each and every sector of the country and today the people were suffering from its consequences. She said Imran Khan Niazi had started his

narrative nine months ago first with a cipher conspiracy, but he recently confessed that no foreign conspiracy was hatched against his government.

He had embarked on a long march from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa towards Islamabad, during which his followers attacked and injured the police personnel, she added. Imran Khan, she noted, was fully aware that neither there was any global conspiracy behind his ouster from the government nor any such move was harboured in the United States.

(Continued on Back Page)





Political governments should complete tenures: Saad

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Railways and Aviation Khawaja Saad Rafique on Wednesday said that elected political governments should complete their constitutional tenures, and political vendetta should be ended for stability in the country.

Talking to the media, he said that PTI chief Imran Niazi did not have credibility among public as he was in the habit to change his stance according to his needs. He said that detention of political workers should not be supported, however, he added that morally the leader of that party should come forward for court arrest before urging his party workers to do so. Citing PML-N leader Muhammad Nawaz Sharif detentions, he said that Nawaz remained in detention for a long period in the era of Pervez Musharraf and even during the recent unannounced Martial Law, he (Nawaz) was once again kept in prison along with his family members.

He said that now Imran was securing pre-arrest

bails from courts and asking his workers to fill jails which was incomprehensible. To a question about the resignation of former chairman

National Accountability Bureau, he said that Aftab Sultan was a dutiful and honest man, and he was respected for his honesty, but he (Aftab) himself could well comment on the reasons of resign. To a question about Ch Pervaiz Elahi, he said that he wished good luck for him, however, Ch Pervaiz should recall what Imran Khan had said for him when he was in power. "I don't want to repeat those words which Imran used to say for Ch. Pervaiz," he said. Imran was the man who could embrace anyone for his own need, he said and cited that Imran used to utter indecent words for anyone in past.

To a question about the illness of Nawaz Sharif, he said that when you felt danger then it was better to protect yourself from that, first. He said Nawaz Sharif was seriously ill when Imran government had sent

him abroad in the fear that any mishap might happen. He added that Nawaz remained in a long detention in Musharraf

era unlike Imran who did not come out of Zaman Park, whereas, the court was calling him for getting bail. It was another strange attitude that former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi was issued non-bailable arrest warrants by a court on not turning up the court in time due to some traffic mess yesterday (Tuesday), whereas, he had several times appeared before the court earlier.

Saad said that Imran was playing conspiracy games against the PML-N government, adding that such games should have not been started as 'As you sow so shall you reap'.

He said Imran and his family had not been suffering as compare to Nawaz whose entire family including Shehbaz Sharif, Hamza, his daughters, Maryam Nawaz and all senior leaders of PML-N had to face cases and detentions.

He said the PML-N leader

ership and workers did not cry even after 18 months imprisonments whereas PTI leaders started crying after a few days detentions.

He said the government did not support arrest of anyone without any reason but, he questioned, should investigation not be initiated if one commit a crime?

He said that if someone openly played with the state and attempted to make the state bankrupt then should they be spared?, the minister asked and added that nothing had happened to them (PTI), not even ten per cent of what his opponent had to face during the regime of Imran Khan.

He said that PTI leadership was not ready to feel shame for what they did to others. Another thing, he added that Imran would not be given way-out as he was not a trustworthy person. Imran was telling lies continuously and still talked about taking revenge from others, he said. To a question, he said that Nawaz himself and his party wanted to return home, however, there were some procedures left.



KARACHI: Delegation of journalists, columnists and anchors from Punjab called on Pakistan Peoples Party Women's Wing President, Ms Faryal Talpur on Wednesday at Zardari House.

Int'l conferences promote meaningful research: Murad

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that there is a need of organizing international conferences every year to invite men of letter to visit Sindh and to interact for promoting our literature, and education and encourage meaningful research.

This he said on Wednesday while speaking at International Conference on 'Alexander in the Indus Valley', organized by Endowment Fund Trust at Jahangir Siddiqui Auditorium, IBA City Campus, Saddar here.

The conference was attended by Syed Fakir Aijazuddin, Dr. Robin Lane Fox, Emeritus Fellow of New College, Oxford University, and Dr. Richard Stoneman, Honorary Professor at the University of Exeter.

This conference will continue until 24 February 2023.

The Conference opened with a performance from the Kalash dancers who had come from Chitral for the occasion. Hamid Akhund hosted the first session in which Minister of Culture Syed Sardar

Shah, Hamid Haroon, Jahangir Siddiqui, and others spoke on the occasion.

"Up till very recently, a road in Sehwan was referred to as Sikandari road," he said and added, "although Sehwan may or may not be the city the Greeks called Sindhimana, Eggermont states that the fort possibly retains evidence that will help understand the full impact of Alexander's time spent in the Indus region."

He said that as a boy, Alexander dreamed of matching the heroic feats of Achilles, by 20 he led his cavalry to stunning victories, and by twenty-five, he had crushed the Persian Empire.

"He was in the Indus Valley for a very short period of over two years and this great leader of armed men had for the first time in history linked the east to the west with the largest empire and for twelve and half years, he has ruled," he said and added wise men whom he had brought with him to record events have provided us with the knowledge and conditions of diverse peo-

ples and their customs.

According to the CM, "the Endowment Fund Trust (EFT) has come upto his expectations in organizing this conference on time, and they have my appreciation as do Sardar Ali Shah, Jahangir Siddiqui, and Hameed Haroon for their inspiring support. I am aware of the difficult task they have on their hand, they have the full support of his government."

The CM sought the counsel of visiting friends to advise us about the works at the Sehwan Fort, a site that has suffered due to neglect.

"The Sindh government has started repair works on rain and flood-damaged sites, it may take longer but steps are being taken," he said and added he advised the Sindh Culture dept to organize one or two such events every year to invite men of letters to visit Sindh and to interact so as to create a clear understanding of each other and reviving old contacts and to promote and enrich our literature, education and promote meaningful research.

Parvez Elahi to occupy PTI ultimately, claims Talal

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Talal Chaudhry termed Chaudhry Parvez Elahi a deceiver on Wednesday, who had deceived Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, who had introduced him in politics.

He claimed that Ch Parvez Elahi would ultimately occupy Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

Talking to the media here, Talal said that Parvez Elahi was such a person who used to announce electing a

dictator [Pervez Musharraf] as the president in uniform for 10 times. However, later on, he even did not attend his funeral prayers.

Responding to a query about judiciary, he said that the PML-N would use its constitutional right by objecting to the decisions made by the courts and non-judicial attitude of judges. He said that Imran Khan had nothing to show as his performance during his tenure in government. He said the PML-N leaders always offered sacrifices

and party supremo Nawaz Sharif went to jail along with her daughter. However, the 'Jail Bhao Tehreek' [Court arrest movement], announced by PTI Chairman Imran Khan, was nothing as he himself was enjoying protective bail in some cases. Talal Chaudhry said that Imran Khan was given 16 chances to appear in the court; he was given extraordinary relaxation in all cases, but the PML-N leaders had to receive notices even on speaking a single line, he regretted.

GB Info department officers visit DEMP

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation of officers of Information Department from Gilgit Baltistan currently under training at Information Service Academy has visited Directorate of Electronic Media and Publications (DEMP).

The delegation was welcomed by the Executive Director General, Dr Tariq Mehmood Khan and briefed about the functions and performance of DEMP.

The officers from Gilgit Baltistan Information Department toured all the sections of DEMP and showed keen interest in the working and style of the officers and staff of Directorate of Electronic Media and Publications.

They expressed the



desire to replicate the monitoring setup of DEMP in GB at a small scale.

The officers also discussed possibilities of collaboration between DEMP and the GB government in documentary making and conducting of exhibitions. The visiting officers were presented with souvenirs on the conclusion of their tour.

The DEMP is an execu-

mentaries include "Pakistan and FIFA World Cup", "Documentary on Gurdwara Kartar Sahab", "Media Black Out in Kashmir".

The department also produced songs "Mera Piyara Pakistan" and "Jivay Pakistan", the later was sung by Sahir Ali Bagga and received overwhelming response. The Film section has also been conducting the "National Amateur Film Festival" in last two years in collaboration with ISPR.

The Department's monitoring section conducts round the clock monitoring of electronic media in order to keep the government updated with any development, events, analysis and views being reported in the media.

LDA seals 13 properties

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Development Authority (LDA), in an operation against non-payment of commercial fee, sealed 13 properties in the provincial capital on Wednesday.

On directions of Director General LDA Amir Ahmed Khan, special team of Town Planning Zone-VII led by Chief Ayesha Mutahir and Deputy Director Umar Majeed took an action against violators in Quaid-E-Azam Town Peco Road.

It may be mentioned here that special teams of different Town Planning Zones had sealed dozens of shops, show-rooms, marriage halls and academies during the last 10 days due to non-payment of annual commercialization fee.

Funeral prayers of cop

KARACHI (APP): The funeral prayers of policeman embraced martyrdom during encounter with robbers were offered at Police Headquarters Garden, South on Wednesday.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sindh Ghulam Nabi Memon, Additional IGP Karachi Javed Alam Odho, other senior officers, family members of the deceased, relatives and others attended the funeral prayers of head constable Zaheer. IGP Sindh expressed his sympathy and condolence to the heirs of the martyr and paid tribute to the martyr and his departmental services.

Opening ceremony of "The Sindh Chapter", at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan National Council of the Arts, Karachi hosted an exciting new exhibition "The Sindh Chapter" by 16 artists across Sindh on 22nd February 2023 at the PNCA. MS. Fareena Mazher, Secretary National Heritage and Culture Division graciously inaugurated the exhibition. She appreciated the exhibition and the artists and was very much inspired by the beautiful art pieces.

The exhibition consists of unique and diverse narratives and experiences of the artists which have been skillfully curated at this celebratory exhibition. "The Sindh Chapter" portrays exciting and contemporary artworks followed by traditional techniques. The

theme of the exhibition is broad, flexible and gentle which need not be restricted to the diversity of artistic expression and a conjunction of abstraction and realism. This particular exhibition pushes traditional boundaries in its treatment of material or subject. The artists have highlighted the given concept through creative expressions, by building a dialogue between the artwork and the viewer to make the audience ponder upon the concept of being, its meaning and the process of transformation of life. The exhibition

was a huge success and was attended by more dignitaries, artists across Karachi including students from different art colleges and schools. The event was heavily covered by media

and press and the workshop was followed by refreshments for the distinguished guests and media.

PNCA is dedicated to promote Pakistani Art on local and international scale. Our elevate and unique programs that present the traditional and contemporary art practices we reflect upon the excellence and cultural diversity of Pakistan as well as support professional development of the artist. PNCA is committed to promoting significant aspects of the country and encourages community participation in gallery activities, fostering curatorial practice to artist's own understanding of their work and encourages a healthy and sustainable local arts industry.

Delegation of journalists, columnists and anchors from Punjab called on Faryal Talpur

F.P. Report

KARACHI: A delegation of journalists, columnists and anchors from Punjab called on Pakistan Peoples Party Women's Wing President, Ms Faryal Talpur on Wednesday at Zardari House, Karachi.

The delegation members highly appreciated some of the flagship initiatives of PPP-led Government in Sindh exclusively with an state-of-the-art network of hospitals, which is free for every Pakistani from Karachi to the Gambat in Sindh. The delegation members thanked the Government of Sindh's Culture Department and the Arts Council of Pakistan,

Karachi for arranging

Pakistan Literature Festival last week at Lahore, with a next plan of Literary Festivals at provincial capitals including federal capital of Pakistan, for encouraging and promoting the cultural exchanges that would help on bridging gaps and stereotypes among the cultures and provinces in Pakistan.

Ms Faryal Talpur told to the delegation that Pakistan Peoples Party had always prioritized and promoted the domain of culture, adding that it was Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who had established the Department of Culture for the first time in Pakistan, and laid the

foundations of premier institutions for the promotion of arts and culture in Pakistan. She added that those cultural and literary institutes were later promoted during both tenures of Governments of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto; and are now decentralized to the provinces after the historic 18th amendment by the Pakistan Peoples Party.

She said that the Pakistan Peoples Party believes that by promoting the intercultural and inter-provincial harmony, the Federation of Pakistan would be more strengthened; adding that such cross cultural visits of opinionmakers and

thinkers in Pakistan should be promoted at both governmental and nongovernmental levels in Pakistan.

For this, she appreciated the proactive role of Sindh Government's Culture Dept and Arts Council of Pakistan for collaborative cultural ventures, which should be followed by other provinces in the country.

Sindh Culture Minister, Syed Sardar Ali Shah, Members of Provincial Assembly, Sohail Anwar Siyal and Qasim Soomro including former Law Minister, Ziaul Hasan Lanjar and Syed Ahmed Shah, President Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi were also part of the meeting.

Indecent language of Sh Rashid not to be tolerated: PPP

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party Central Punjab General Secretary Syed Hassan Murtaza on Wednesday said that credit of dirty politics went to Imran Niazi and Sheikh Rasheed.

Addressing a protest rally organized by the PPP Lahore chapter against using indecent language by Sheikh Rasheed against PPP leadership and the party, outside the Gaddafi Stadium here, he said that Sheikh Rasheed had changed his political father in every era, adding

that Imran would have to face this abusive language in future as Sheikh Rasheed did not spare anyone.

He warned the responsible of intolerance and dirty politics that it could be dangerous for them in future.

He said that it was not culture of the PPP to abuse someone and warned Sheikh Rasheed by saying that the PPP also had ability to speak otherwise.

PPP Lahore President Ch Aslam Gill said that Sheikh Rasheed was

doing dirty politics. He said that the PPP always spoke the language of constitution, law and democracy, however, he warned that the PPP workers would never tolerate any abusive or third class language against their beloved Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari.

PPP leaders Samina Khalid Ghurki, Naem Dastgeer, Nargis Khan, Faiza Malik, and several other leaders and workers participated in the protest rally.

Sindh govt to frame SOPs for emergency operation of ambulance services

KARACHI (APP): In wake of the recent terrorist incident at the Karachi Police Office, the Sindh Government has decided to frame Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for ambulance services in any emergency situation in the metropolis.

A high-level meeting in this regard was held here on Wednesday with Chief Secretary Sindh Dr Muhammad Sohail Rajput in the chair, to deliberate upon the role of ambulance services and the need for

SOPs for their smooth operation in case of any calamity or emergency situation.

Commissioner Karachi Muhammad Iqbal Memon, Secretary Home Saeed Ahmed Magnejo, Secretary Health, officers of Police and Rescue 1122 and representatives of private ambulance service attended the meeting.

The meeting decided to constitute a committee, headed by the Secretary of Health, to draft Standard Operating Procedures for ambulance services.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER C&W DIVISION KOHISTAN LOWER CANCELLATION OF TENDER

Tender were invited from Government contractors upto 01/03/2023 for the scheme which were published in daily Newspapers vide (i) INF(P) 535/23 dated 11th February, 2023 (District ADP Schemes single stage double envelopes system.

Due to E-Bidding system / Server Services remain suspended for next 10 to 15 days Intimated to this office vide Secretary to Govt: of KPK C&W Department No. Comp/C&W/E-bidding/2022-23 dated 13-02-2023. The tender called is hereby cancelled. The tender will be re-advertised through Print Media and E-Bidding system C&W Website.

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
C&W DIVISION KOHISTAN LOWER

INF(P) 638/23



New link road to connect Industrial Estate directly with Ring Road to be to constructed: Adnan Jalil

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: It has been decided to construct a new link road to connect the Kohat Road Industrial Estate directly with the Ring Road in Peshawar, for which the formal procedure is in the final stages.

It was revealed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister Industries, Commerce and Technical Education Muhammad Adnan Jalil in a meeting with the industrialists and investors of the Peshawar small industrial estate, in which the high ups of the Small Industries Development Board (SIDB) and the district administration besides WAPDA, Sui Gas, Excise and other relevant departments were present. On this occasion, the problems and difficulties faced by the industrialists were openly discussed and suggestions and recommen-

dations for the development of small industries were seriously reviewed while certain necessary decisions were also taken.

The meeting was told that with the construction of the new road, the cargo vehicles of the industrial estate will start moving directly on the ring road instead of landing on the Kohat road, which will also end the routine traffic jam issue on Kohat road.

The Minister directed to ensure immediate acquisition of the land required for this link road and to start construction of this link highway by imposing section four and clarified that there should not be any obstacle in this regard because due to the increasing traffic congestion in Peshawar, the early completion of this project has been become essential then.

Adnan Jalil also directed

the WAPDA officials that after the installation of a separate feeder for the industrial estate, the long-standing problem of providing special power supply line to it should also be resolved promptly so that the industrial and urban supply lines work without any interruption or malfunction whereas resultantly on the one hand the domestic consumers would not be suffering time and again while on the other hand, the production of the factories will not be affected. He also directed to solve other problems of the industrial estate on priority basis. The industrialists thanked the provincial industries minister for taking personal interest in the early resolution of their problems and assured full cooperation in making the industrial policy of the provincial government a success.



PESHAWAR: KP Caretaker Minister for Industries Adnan Jalil talking with investors of SIDB Kohat Road Industrial Estate at Civil Secretariat.

3-day int'l public health moot begins at KMU

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Former Federal Minister of Health Dr. Zafar Mirza said that non-communicable diseases (NCDs) share in total deaths annually in Pakistan is 55.3%. NCDs metabolic/physiological risk factors responsible for raised blood pressure, overweight/obesity, raised blood glucose and raised lipids as well as behavioural risk factors including tobacco use, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity and alcohol abuse.

He was talking to the third international Public Health Conference organized by Khyber Medical University (KMU) Institute of Public Health & Social Sciences. While explaining Universal Health Coverage (UHC) he said UHS means that all people and commu-

nities can use the promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative health services they need, of sufficient quality to be effective, while also ensuring that the use of these services does not expose the user to financial hardship.

He said that types of services are Preventive, Promotive, Curative, Rehabilitative and Palliative, whereas delivery Platforms are Community and Primary Health Centers (PHC), however 70% of essential health services can be delivered at PHC level. National NCDs & Mental Health Framework 2021 - 2030 aimed to reduce by one-third premature mortality from NCDs by 2030, through prevention and treatment, and promote mental health and well-being, he added.

The vice-chancellor KMU Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq while talking to the conference said that Pakistan is facing a double burden of communicable diseases and NCDs. Adoption of a sedentary lifestyle and changes in diet have resulted in a surge in NCDs in Pakistan. He elaborated that NCDs include cardiovascular diseases, cancers, respiratory diseases, diabetes, and mental disorders, and injuries have become the major causes of morbidity and mortality in Pakistan.

He said that tobacco use and hypertension are the leading attributable risk factors for deaths due to cardiovascular diseases, cancers, and respiratory diseases. Pakistan has the sixth highest number of people in the world with diabetes; every fourth adult is overweight or obese; cigarettes are cheap; antimoking and road safety laws are poorly enforced; and a mixed public-private health-care system provides sub optimum care. Furthermore, almost three decades of exposure to sociopolitical instability, economic uncertainty, violence, regional conflict, and dislocation have contributed to a high prevalence of mental health disorders. Pakistan could achieve at least a 20% reduction in the number of deaths from NCDs by targeting the major risk factors, he added. Prof. Dr. Zulfiqar A. Bhutta, Dr. Bilal Ahmad and Dr. Zainab Raza also talked to the plenary session on various topics related to NCDs.



Civil Judge stops estate office from evacuating quarter

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Civil Judge Peshawar Alamzeb has stopped Estate's office from vacating residence from orphan girl and issued notices to competent authorities, on Wednesday.

The counsel argued that petitioner Alia Yousaf is residing at government quarter in Gulshan-e-Rehman colony which was allocated to her late mother in 2000.

The counsel Tariq Afghan Advocate informed that in 2018 her father was passed away while in 2021 her mother was departed to eternal world. He argued that Estate's office has served notice to petitioner to evacuate the quarter while she is student of 4th semester in Anesthesia.

Under 2018 rules, the wife of government servant can maintain her husband residence for three years while husband of government's servant can hold at for one year while law is absent regarding children, the counsel argued.

The counsel added that petitioner has no alternative residence while her livelihood depends on her mother pension and added that if rules are silent in this regard, the law may provide relief to applicant.

Civil Judge Peshawar Alamzeb stopped estate office from evacuating quarter from petitioner and adjourned further hearing 6th March.

Problems to be addressed

PESHAWAR (APP): Caretaker Minister of Labor, Excise Taxation and Narcotics Control Haji Manzoor Afridi Wednesday said that efforts are underway to address longstanding deprivations of people living in merged districts.

He has expressed these views while talking to a delegation of Khyber tribesmen at his office. He said that provision of needed facilities and basic amenities of life is among topmost priorities of caretaker government.

He said that measures would be initiated for development of tribal districts and to bring tribesmen in national mainstream of development. He also assured delegation of his cooperation and assistance.

FIA arrests 3 suspects

PESHAWAR (APP): The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa zone on Wednesday arrested three men for their alleged involvement in Hawala and Hundi business, and other illegal activities.

The FIA team, led by Assistant Director Shafqat Jamal and supervised by Deputy Director Commercial Banking Circle Peshawar Afzal Khan Niazi, arrested 3 suspects from Chowk Yadgar Peshawar.

The arrested suspects, identified as Jafar, Ishaq, and Imran Khan, were found in possession of an amount of 8.31 million rupees. The accused have been booked under the relevant charges, and further investigation is currently underway.

This move comes as part of the FIA's ongoing crackdown against illegal activities across the country.



PESHAWAR: Advisor to CM on Tourism and Culture Zafar Mahmood meeting with Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan.

PHC orders GM to enlist candidate for interview

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Rooh-ul-Amin and Justice Ijaz Anwar has ordered General Manager Media Relations Pakistan Television (PTV) Corporation to enlist Arshad Ali for interview while also directed to submit reply, on Wednesday.

The counsel Fazal Shah

Mohmand Advocate argued that petitioner serving the PTV at Peshawar since 1992 and added that several positions were advertised for promotion of employees.

The counsel added that petitioner Arshad Ali has applied for the post and according to sources he has obtained highest marks in the test.

He argued that today (on Thursday) applicants are called for interview at

Islamabad on nepotism.

The counsel requested to enlist petitioner for interview and ordered to ensure appointment on merit.

The divisional bench of Peshawar High Court comprising of Justice Rooh-ul-Amin and Justice Ijaz Anwar ordered General Manager Public Relations to enlist Arshad Ali and submit reply in this regard while adjourned further hearing.

Workshops important for developing journalists' skills

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Deputy Director, Press Information Department, Peshawar, Muhammad Hanif said that it is very important to organize various training workshops to adapt the journalism industry to requirements of the modern world and to develop the technical skills of journalists.

He said this in his opening remarks on the occasion of a workshop on "Documentary Filmmaking" for journalists to be held on February 22nd and 23rd,

organized by Pakistan Information Center, under the auspices of Press Information Department, Peshawar in which renowned trainers of the country, Muhammad Faheem (Senior Anchor Person Mashreq TV), Safiullah Gul (Bureau Chief Sonu TV) and Tahir Mahmood (Controller International Relations PTV HQ Islamabad) participated as trainers.

DD Press Information Department, Muhammad Hanif said that the technical skills required to complete a five to ten minutes video

project using a camera in the workshop titled "Documentary Film Making" will be taught to media persons including the various aspects of filmmaking like Production, Direction and Storytelling skills.

He said that for the first time in this workshop, online participation has been arranged for journalists through which they can participate in the training workshop from anywhere. More steps will be taken to enable journalists to take part in various training workshops, he added.



PESHAWAR: Deputy Director Press Information Department Muhammad Hanif addressing at opening "Documentary Film Making Workshop".

Peshawar literary festival inaugurated

PESHAWAR (APP): Secretary Culture and Tourism, Muhammad Tahir Khan Orakzai inaugurating the five-day Peshawar literary festival said that the event would bring writers, readers and literary enthusiasts on a common platform.

Speaking on the occasion, Secretary Culture said that such activities would help revival of literary tradition of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, said a press release issued here Wednesday.

He said that festival would feature author readings, panel discussions, book signings, and work-

shops, providing a unique opportunity for audiences to interact with writers and acquaint themselves to literary world.

It is also an opportunity for publishers and literary agents to discover new talent and for writers to showcase their work to a broader audience, he added.

Secretary Culture and Tourism, Muhammad Tahir Khan Orakzai said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cultural and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) is endeavoring to support such events for promotion of cultures, tourism, languages and associated literature.

It merits a mention that event was organized by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cultural and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) in collaboration with National Commission for Human Development, Department of Education and Research University of Peshawar and Dosti Foundation.

The festival aims to provide writers, readers, and literary enthusiasts a platform to engage in discussions, debates and to exchange ideas to foster a love of reading and writing, engage and entertain audiences, and contribute to a vibrant cultural scene.

Service charges for affidavit, arms license revised

PESHAWAR (APP): The district administration here on Wednesday revised service charges for affidavits, arms' licenses and domicile etc.

In a statement, the fee for affidavit on stamp paper was fixed at Rs300, provincial arms license at Rs10,402, all Pakistan arm license at Rs20,402, round increase (25) at Rs1,000, per round increase Rs40.

Similarly, the fee for the 222 and 223 bore license was fixed at Rs40,402, the change of license at Rs2,300 and the charges of duplicate arms at Rs3,300.

Furthermore, no service charges would be collected for domicile.

Deputy Commissioner Shah Fahad asked people not to pay any additional charges except the above charges and said that they could contact the control room established in his office through landline number 091-921338.

People can apply for 222 and 223 bore arms licenses through the Deputy Commissioner office which would be further submitted to Home Department KP in the Civil Secretariat along with receipt of charges after verification and approval by the district committees, he added.

QWP terms Jail Bharo Tehrik as political hoax

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial Vice Chairperson, Quami Watan Party (QWP), Dr Faiza Rasheed has termed the Jail Bharo Tehrik (Court arrest movement) a political hoax and height of hypocrisy.

In a statement issued here on Wednesday, she said that on one hand threatening to launch Jail Bharo Tehrik in protest against delay in the announcement of elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa while on the other hand they are getting bail before arrest from the courts.

She said that if Imran Khan is really so sincere, then being a nominee in dozens of FIRs, why is he not offering unconditional arrest to allow national institutions to move forward as the constitution of the country.

Dr Faiza Rasheed termed the announcement of the dates for elections in Punjab and KP as surprising and questioned the President of Pakistan taking those acts, which are not under his ambit of powers. She urged the President to instead of proving himself as a member of the PTI affiliated Tiger Force to take into consideration his constitutional objections.

Karkhano Market, a safe haven for drug addicts

Ishaq Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar's famous business hub Karkhano Market, once famous for imported products all over the country now becoming a safe haven of drug addicts in the provincial capital where the drug addicts can be seen consuming heroin freely in broad daylight on the abandoned Torkham-Peshawar railway track in front of Hayatabad Industrial estate.

The shopkeepers claimed that the drug addicts becoming a threat for traders and local people as they were found involved in robbing the passerby with their infected sharp blades and knives to collect money to buy drugs for themselves.

Hazrat Shah, 50 year-old

shopkeeper of Karkhano Market told The Frontier Post that these drug addicts are really affecting their business as they were found in pick pocketing and stealing different items from shops and customers.

"Especially the customers with families trying to avoid visiting the markets if they find these drug addicts near the shops because of their dirty clothes and continuously begging for money to fulfill their drug needs", Shah claimed.

He said, we are businessmen and trying to provide a healthy environment to buyers in the shops and markets, it is beyond our power to clean the area from these drug addicts.

It is the responsibility of government officials to clean the dirt and shut all

those banned activities in the better interest of the business, he said.

Karkhano Market was founded in 1985 where around 7,000 business outlets are located. Since its inception, Karkhano Market has been famous for smuggled goods because of its close neighborhood to Jamrud subdivision of the newly merged tribal district of Khyber.

Bilal Afridi, a 38 year-old local said, it is disgusting to see these drug addicts freely roaming and consuming heroin and other drugs without any fear of action from the authorities in the area.

"The authorities need to take strict action against them to provide a healthy environment as thousands of buyers are visiting the

Karkhano Market on a regular basis, affecting not only the business activities but also the local people with their banned practices", Afridi said.

The drug addicts were reluctant to talk and continue their smoking under the cover of dirty sheets. But surprisingly a 30 year-old young man agreed to share his story.

Madad Khan, a 30 year-old drug addict started crying, told that he was a taxi driver, used to visit the area frequently for dropping and picking the customers in the area but one day he consumed heroin and now it feels that I will not be able to leave this hell.

"My family abandoned me, my wife with three years old daughter left me because of this addiction

and now I am trying to get rid of it and rejoin my child but looks no one has time to pull me out of this hell", he cried.

Everyone knows who is providing and where to get heroin and other drugs. It's a secret, Madad answered a question.

Tariq Mehmood of Dost Welfare Organization, an organization working against the Drug addiction, claimed that the drug addicts in Karkhano markets have nowhere to go as most of them were abandoned by their families because of their actions, so they are compelled to live the rest of their lives in these dirty places.

Family support is essential in the rehabilitation of any drug addict without the support of their family;

they (drug addicts) will probably be returned to their past lives and start drug use again. Most drug addicts in the Karkhano Markets had completed the rehabilitation process but without the family support they returned to their drugs, Tariq informed.

Tariq said as we all know that Karkhano market is adjacent to Jamrud tehsil of Khyber district (newly merged tribal district) and the drug was all available freely and in low cost in the area, so they tried gathered in adjacent area to get cheap drugs though the situation changed now after the drug shops were destroyed but still the area is much of attraction for these drug addicts.

Last year, the district administration launched a

campaign to pick drug addicts in Peshawar for their rehabilitation and so far 2500 drug addicts were sent to rehab centers for treatments.

The Social Welfare Department shared that the teams of social welfare organizations and officers of concerned departments carried out a grand operation for the rehabilitation of the drug addicts.

During the two phase of this campaign, the team picked 2500 drug addicts from Karkhano Market, Hayatabad, University Road, Shoaba Chowk Railway Crossing, Sunehri Masjid Road, Bacha Khan Chowk, Hashnagri Railway Crossing, Dalzak Road, Gulbaha and other localities.

These drug addicts were shifted to 10 different rehab

centers including Dost Welfare Organization, Al-Khidmat, Save Life and others for treatment.

The police official said that the police force committed to clean the area and in this purpose taking action against these addicts from time to time and in the recent campaign of district administration police actively participated and helped the administration in this regard.

In the first nine months of 2022, police recovered over 903.645 kilograms of ice, 1279.431 kilograms of heroin, 18841.834 kilograms of hashish, 1381.3 kilograms opium and 12883.52 litres of liquor in the operations of Narcotics Eradication teams in conducted in different parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



In brief

Vocational training kicks-off F.P. Report

PARACHINAR: A two month long vocational training has been provided to tribal youth to compete with the demands of global age and contribute in national economy. According to details, to impart professional skills and develop technical knowledge of unemployed youth security forces has arranged 2 months long vocational training program in Sadda area of Parachinar, district Kurram. Through this program, youth will be provided with the requisite knowledge in different categories including Computer, Tailoring, Mason Work, Electrician and Welder. The training program is aimed not only to provide skills but help the youth to be better parts of society. The training program will continue till the 9th of April 2023.

Qaris demand upgradation F.P. Report

SHANGLA: Qaris (theology/Quran teachers) at government schools protested and demanded upgradation as well as service structure like other cadres. According to detail the government theology teachers holds play cards in front of Shangla press club Alpuri. The theology teachers demand provincial government to give promotion to BS-14 to BS-16 they more they said government the government only promoting the grade of school's teacher. The protesters said that if the provincial government do not accept our demands then we will boycott the class of government schools.

Law & order situation flayed F.P. Report

PABBI: Unknown thieves looted transformer from Zong telecommunication Company facility at GT road pabbi. According to details, there is no proper action from police against the culprits, while law and order situation is getting poor in tehsil Pabbi transformer from Zong company on main GT road was stole by unknown person. Despite that fans and ups batteries were stoled from home and masjid. There is no proper action from police against unknown person. Beside that unknown person cut fruits and burns the fruit garden. The residents of tehsil Pabbi demand from police to strict action against the culprits and increase patrolling in the premises.

Hafiz-O-Qirat competition held F.P. Report

GHALANAI: A competition of Hafiz-O- Qirat competition held at tehsil level to polish youth talent of both madrasahs and public sector schools, on Wednesday. Security forces are focusing to increase the self-confidence of students of madrasahs and schools in tribal districts, so that they actively participate in positive activities. In this regard, a grand ceremony was organized to give prizes and certificates to the students who obtained prominent positions in the tehsil level Hizf-O-Qirat competition held in Mamad Gat, District Mohmand. 295 students participated in the tehsil level Hizf-O-Qirat competition which started from February 9. Out of which, 36 students have been shortlisted for the final competition to be held on February 23 at the district level. A large number of teachers and students of various madrasahs and schools participated in the closing ceremony of the tehsil level competitions.

SLO best tool to evaluate academic progress

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Experts have termed the student learning outcome (SLO) based assessment a best tool to assess and evaluate the academic progress of students, saying that the implementation of SLO based assessment with true spirit will help to achieve the objectives of education and improve creativity and cognitive skills of learners.

They were speaking at seminars held on the premises of BISE Bannu and at the municipal hall in Lakki Marwat on Wednesday. The board of intermediate and secondary education Bannu with support of association for academic quality (AFAQ) had organised the seminars for the heads and secondary school teachers of government run higher secondary and high schools of Lakki Marwat, Bannu and North Waziristan districts.

Speakers included the education board's chairman Arshad Ali Khalil, controller of examination Dr Faiq Jan, AFAQ director training and service Amir Zeb and resource persons Dr Ibrar Khattak and Ahmad Yar. BISE Bannu assistant controller of examination Rafiullah Khan, Lakki Marwat ESED deputy DEOs Gul Faraz Khattak and Nargis Jabeen and Bannu ESED officials were also present.

"By introducing the SLO based assessment our sole aim is to train our new generations and impart quality education to the students", said Mr Arshad Ali Khalil. He said that the curriculum was already based on the student learning outcomes

and the teachers were fully aware of the new exam system.

"The conduct of annual examinations under the SLO system will be helpful to know to what extent the students have learnt the lessons they have been taught by the teachers", he maintained. He said that the examinations under the student learning outcome system would also prove helpful to achieve the set targets, objectives and goals.

The educational board chairman said that the board would also arrange orientation training sessions for teachers on preparing SLO based question papers and marking procedures. Dr Khattak shed light on the SLO based assessment, curriculum and its framework, teaching methodologies, assessments and Bloom taxonomy. He also elaborated the cognitive and difficulty level of question papers and briefed the participants about SLO based question papers and marking procedure.

During his lengthy lecture he also engaged the participants in several activities aiming to acquaint them with the new examination system based on the student learning outcome and said that the educational board had uploaded information about the SLO based assessment and model papers on its website to benefit both teachers and students. Dr Faiq Jan said that the board would conduct the 50 percent upcoming grade nine examination under the student learning outcome system. "It will discourage rote learning and make the teaching and learning useful and purposeful", he added.

Governance Program team meet Commissioner

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: A team led by Provincial Team Leader of Sub-National Governance (II) Program Dr. Raheel Ahmad Siddiqui called on Commissioner Malakand Division Shahidullah Khan at Commissioner's Office Saidu Sharif on Wednesday.

Various aspects of technical support provided under the Sub-National Governance Program (II) were discussed in the meeting. In the meeting, the measures taken for solid waste management in two tehsils of Swat district.

The training of local government representatives of Bajaur district in local governance, and the training of administrative and local government officers of various tehsils of Malakand division in public financial management were discussed. The meeting also discussed matters related to the proposed visit of the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office delegation to Swat.

Free medical camp at Malam Jabba organized: Samsons Group of Companies with the cooperation of Ilaj.pk organized a free medical camp for the residents of Malam Jabba.

During the camp expert medical practitioners checked hundreds of patients and also distributed free of cost medicines amongst them.

The camp was organized while keeping in view the hardships of the people in access to health centres due to heavy snowfall and poverty in the locality. The residents of Malam Jabba have expressed gratitude to Samsons Group of Companies over organizing the free medical camp and termed it a welcoming step for the area.

Muslim Hand appreciated for provision of education to orphan: Former Member of Provincial Assembly (MPA) Haji Fazl Mullah and Chairman Tehsil Council Kabal Saeed Khan have said that providing orphans and destitute children with modern education and training is a privilege of Muslim Hands.

Providing special attention to the education and training of orphans and impoverished children, the role of Muslim Hands is worthy of emulation for other institutions. They expressed these thoughts while addressing the annual prize distribution ceremony at Muslim Hands School Kanju Swat.

Haji Fazl Mulla, Saeed Khan, senior journalist Ghafoor Khan Adil and others participated in the ceremony and distributed prizes to the boys and girls who showed outstanding performance. On this occasion, the boys and girls of the school won the appreciation of the audience by presenting sketches and tableaux, while the boys and girls attracted the attention of the audience by presenting songs, while the best organizer award and certificate were given to Miraj Badshah principal of the school.

The speakers said that the welfare organizations which participate in such activities and play their role for a bright and shining future should be encouraged. Haji Fazal Maula and Saeed Khan paid tribute to Muslim Hands in glorious words and praised their performance and said that it is very fortunate that there are non-governmental organizations like Muslim Hands in today's era. They are paying attention to the education and training of poor and helpless children, he said that it is the responsibility of all of us to fully encourage organizations and welfare institutions in this way.



QUETTA: Relatives of mother daughter who killed in Kuhlo holding sit-in outside Chief Minister's House.

Pakhtunkhwa Radio arranges multilingual Mushaera

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Pakhtunkhwa Radio Kohat organized "Multilingual Mushaera" on eve of International Mother Languages Day in which Pashto, Urdu and Hindco poets of Kohat Region had participated.

Station Manager Irshad Muhammad Afridi also attended. Well-known Writer and Radio Komore Feroze Khan Sadiq presided over the event. Abasin Khan Mohmand was the Producer of the program. On this occasion, Irshad Afridi while welcoming the participants

thanked them. He said that this shows their love to mother languages. He said that such events would be arranged in future also and they would be invited again.

Dr. Shakir Orakzai on this occasion said that establishment of Pakhtunkhwa Radio FM 92.4 in Kohat was a good omen. He appreciated the management of Radio for arranging a Multilingual Mushaera on Mother Languages Day. He added that the day was meant to save all spoken languages from extinction loss of language finish the origin of a region.

Abasin Mohmand said that giving rights to all regional languages in accordance with the United Nations Charter was the need of the hour. Syed Masoom Shah Masoom said that we love all the languages spoken in the world because all these languages belongs to human being. He demanded to give equal rights to all regional languages.

Through telephonic message, Professor Dr. Abbasin Yousafzai said that the children should be educated in their mother languages for development and self reliance.



MULTAN: First Lady Begum Samina Arif Alvi laying foundation of the second phase of shelter homes of Dar-ul-Sukoon to provide homes to the poor and homeless people.

Enterprise Recourse Planning inaugurated F.P. Report

KARAK: Vice Chancellor Khushal Khan Khattak University (KKKU), Karak Prof. Dr. Johar Ali inaugurated here Wednesday Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system in the University to automate it electronically.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony, he said that due to digitalization, one can abreast ourselves from the new innovations and work procedure of other academic organizations in the world. Prof. Dr. Johar Ali said ERP is the step towards green and paperless environment and the University has got strength to rank itself among the top universities of the country. He went on saying that heterogeneity and diversification can cause development in the educational institutions.

Universities are the engines of socio-economic development in a country. Dr. Johar Ali remarked. He further said that we all should be well cognizant to the ERP in order to run the University smoothly and efficiently. He lauded the role University Officers and Faculty who worked hard and completed the ERP in a short span of four months.

Earlier, Focal Person ERP and Assistant Professor Computer Science and Bio Informatics Dr. Muhammad Zubair said that ERP has been successfully launched and student files are generated and two admission intakes of Fall 2022 and Fall 2023 are also operated through ERP. Dr. Muhammad Zubair added that Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak for the first time in the province, has included affiliated colleges in the ERP. He said that ERP is designed to be user-friendly and training facility is available for the staff of the University to enable its effective operation.

Edu in mother language key for prosperity F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Like other parts of the province the International Mother Language Day was also observed in Lower Dir. The Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party in collaboration with the University of Malakand arranged a function in this regard at the Chinar Kor in Chakdara which was attended by teachers, lawyers, social and political activists.

The function was addressed by the Awami national Party central vice president Hussain Shah Yousafzai, PkMAP deputy general secretary advocate Arshad Ali, PTI former MPA Humayun Khan, Sartaj Khan, Syed Liaquat Mulk, Prof Zafar Yab, Zar Naseeb Khan and others.

The speakers shed light on the importance of mother tongue in the sector of education and said that the child learnt better in his/her mother tongue.

Officials directed to pay visits to markets in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The newly posted deputy commissioner Iftikhar Ahmad on Wednesday directed the assistant commissioners and additional assistant commissioners to pay frequent visits to the markets so that the shopkeepers could be barred from overcharging commuters. The directives were issued during an introductory meeting of the DC with Additional Deputy Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners and Additional Assistant Commissioners.

The ADC (General) Abdul Wali Khan briefed him regarding the overall situation of the district, revenue cases, Pakistan Citizen Portal complaints and ongoing development projects.

The DC directed the officers to pay special attention to the monitoring of development projects, dispose of revenue cases quickly on merit and make a special map and plan for state lands and ensure its protection. He also directed the participants to ensure implementation of the government rates. The DC said that ACs and AACs should visit the markets on a daily basis and check the prices of essential commodities. He also directed the officers to monitor the distribution points of subsidized flour and the entry and exit routes. Directives for selection of suitable site for a Ramazan bazaar were also issued.

Fake captain: The Samarbagh police on Wednesday claimed to have arrested five accused of defrauding and looting people impersonating as military personnel including a fake captain. The Scout Wing 182 had informed the Samarbagh police that a group of five persons was active in the area and defrauding locals in

the garb of Pakistan army personnel. The Samarbagh police took notice of the matter and started a search for the group. The police arrested the accused including a fake captain Zubair, Abdul Hameed, Asim Khan, all residents of Mardan, Muhammad Ismail of Manga Dargai and Javed Iqbal of Gardai Bajaur from the Tittar area of Samarbagh. Police registered a case and started an investigation.

Digital populatio census: The Bureau of statistics district coordinator in Lower Dir Bakht Alam while talking to local journalists at Timergara said that all necessary arrangements had been finalized for the 7th digital population and housing census to be started from March, 1st.

He said the relevant staff training had been completed. The official said that concrete measures had been taken for the staff security. He said that a total of 116 supervisors and 729 enumerators would work in 207 circles and 1433 blocks. He asked the general public to extend their full cooperation to the census staff. He said that for the first time in the history of Pakistan a citizen could register himself from his home through a smartphone.

Social media coordinators: The Jamiat Tulba Islam, a students' wing of Jamiat Ulema Islam Fazl on Wednesday announced its social media coordinators in all the seven tehsils of the district. The media coordinators were appointed after due consultation with the JUI-F district chief Sirajud Din and general secretary Haji Javed Iqbal. According to the announcement Maulana Noor Salim was nominated for Talash, Zahirullah for Samarbagh, Inamullah for Balambat, Izharrullah for Adenzai, Muhammad Abbas for Munda, Ubaidullah for Maidan and Reehanullah for Khall tehsil.

Intolerance, extremism slurping society: Samina

F.P. Report

QUETTA: The most dangerous process in the deterioration of our society which is consuming our society like fire is "intolerance and extremism". It is completely contrary to it and it is less to be condemned. These views were expressed by Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri in her newspaper statement.

She said that if it is said that our society is continuously and rapidly declining, then the majority may agree with us. There are many factors that are rapidly growing in our society which are leading to rapid degradation of our society, the biggest factor being intolerance and extremism. How many homes have been destroyed by this disease? Every day the incidents of intolerance and extremism are happening so regularly that the heart

cries tears of blood, but it is sad to say that no concrete steps are being taken to reduce and prevent it.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri further said that the recent incident in Barkhan is very sad and condemnable. She said that the incident should be investigated with complete impartiality and whoever is found involved in this heinous act should be severely punished so that such incidents do not happen in the future. She said that such incidents would have happened before but no effective measures have been taken to prevent them and this is the reason why such incidents are happening every day. Discourage this growing trend. The best way is for everyone to start showing patience and tolerance from themselves. Be it politicians, teachers, lawyers, journalists or any common man,

there is a need for everyone to think about their behavior in their own place.

As far as scholars and religious figures are concerned, the most responsibility is imposed on them because it is their duty to promote the religion of Islam and to convey the teachings of the last Prophet Hazrat Muhammad Mustafa (SAW). Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri said that to get rid of the scourge of extremism and intolerance, we all have to play our own role. Be it a maulvi of a street mosque or a professor of a famous university of the country, a politician or a journalist. Be it a lawyer or a civil servant, a doctor or a common man, we all will do our part in promoting tolerance and tolerance, only then will the society change because if we protect our future generations from diseases like intolerance and extremism.



KARAK: VC Khushal Khan Khattak University Dr. Johar Ali inaugurating ERP.



Russians make Thailand a refuge

BANGKOK (Agencies): Since Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022, a growing number of Russians have looked to Thailand as their ticket to a new life. Tens of thousands of Russians hoping to avoid the threat of conscription and the economic ravages of the war have travelled to the kingdom in the year since the invasion, many of them seeking a new home.

In Phuket, a popular resort island, Russians are buying off-plan condos with half a million dollars or more to facilitate their relocation or provide a landing pad for a future time when they may feel forced to leave their homeland. Between November 1, 2022, and January 21, 2023, more than 233,000 Russians arrived in Phuket, according to data from Phuket International Airport, making them the biggest group of visitors by far. Phuket has long been a favourite escape from the harsh Russian winter but property sales have surged since President Vladimir Putin in September ordered Moscow's first wartime mobilisation since World War Two, suggesting many arrivals are intent on staying well beyond the length of a typical holiday.

"My clients are mostly young, 30-35... they're wealthy, high-budget clients," Sofia Malysheva, a real estate agent in Phuket who originally hails from Russia, told Al Jazeera. "A lot of people have decided to move to Phuket from three to six months... to one year." To stay on the idyllic island, Russian arrivals need homes, schools, jobs and visas - which takes time in Thailand, where obtaining long-term residency rights can be difficult to achieve. For many of the

newcomers determined to swap a home on a war footing for a life in the Thai sunshine, money is not a problem. Realtors in Russian-dominated areas of the island say the influx of wealthy visitors, fuelled by the growing realisation the war has no end in sight as it enters its second year, has driven prices up to record levels.

Luxury condos that until recently were available to rent for about \$1,000 a month can now go for three times that. Meanwhile, extravagant villas on the market for \$6,000 or more are booked out up to a year in advance. The buyers' market is similarly red hot. In 2022, Russians bought nearly 40 percent of all condominiums sold to foreigners in Phuket, according to the Thai Real Estate Information Center (REIC). Russians' purchases amounted to \$25m in sales - several times the amount spent by Chinese nationals, the next largest group of buys, according to the REIC. Some buyers have spent upwards of \$500,000 on luxury off-plan homes by the sea, according to local real estate agents.

"The situation has changed at home," Malysheva said, referring to the tough economic conditions in Russia. "People who have money come abroad and are ready to pay money for international school, which costs less than in Moscow." A Russian travel agent in Phuket, who spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the issue, said some Russians have arrived on one-way tickets and tourist visas. "[They] just do not go home... they are here to get away from conscription." The mass influx of Russians is also reflected in other popular tourist

areas such as Koh Samui, Thailand's second-biggest island, and the eastern seaboard resort of Pattaya, where there has been a sizeable Russian community concentrated in the beach town of Jomtien for years.

"More Russians have moved to Pattaya since October. They're mostly young couples who fear for their safety," Mikhail Ilyin, the head priest of the All Saints Russian Orthodox Church in Pattaya, told Al Jazeera. But the impact of Putin's invasion works both ways. Dar, a Thai masseuse in her 40s, said she left her job at a high-end spa in Moscow as the rouble collapsed and her salary - which was generous by Thai standards - plummeted in value. Dar has found new work in Jomtien, where her rare language skills win over repeat Russian clients.

"The women tell me they are desperate to get their husbands, boyfriends or children to come over here to stay," she said, asking to be referred to by only her first name. "So they come over first and find houses and try to make visas for them."

Visas, though, are not as easy to obtain as they used to be after a major scandal was uncovered in November involving Thai immigration police helping the Chinese mafia bring thousands of people into Thailand through fake work and volunteer schemes. That means Russians who can afford it are having to apply for expensive property ownership visas known as the "Elite Card", which allows a long-term stay for a family for approximately \$25,000. "It's not as easy as they think to do long-term living here," said Ilyin, the priest. "Some are thinking of returning as they run out of options."

China, Japan square off at first security talks

TOKYO (Reuters): China said it was troubled by Japan's military build up and Tokyo took aim at Beijing's military ties to Russia and its suspected use of spy balloons during the Asian powers' first formal security talks in four years on Wednesday. The talks, aimed at easing tensions between the world's second- and third-largest economies, came as Tokyo worries that Beijing will resort to force to take control of Taiwan in the wake of Russia's attack on Ukraine, sparking a conflict that could embroil Japan and disrupt global trade.

Japan in December said it would double defence spending over the next five years to 2% of gross domestic product - a total of \$320 billion - to deter China from resorting to military action. Beijing, which increased defence spending by 7.1% last year, spends more than four times as much as Japan on its forces. Tokyo plans to acquire longer range missiles that could strike mainland China and to stock up on other munitions it would need to sustain a conflict alongside the large US force it hosts. "The international security situation has undergone vast changes and we are seeing the return of unilateralism, protectionism, and a Cold War mentality," Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong said at the start of the meeting in Tokyo with Japanese Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Shigeo Yamada.

China is Japan's largest trading partner, accounting for around a fifth of its exports and almost a quarter of its imports. It's also a major manufacturing base for Japanese companies. "While relations between Japan and China have a lot of possibilities, we are also facing many issues and concerns," Yamada told Sun. He pointed to their territorial dispute over uninhabited islands in the East China Sea known as the Senkaku in Japan and Diaoyu in China, Beijing's recent joint military drills with Moscow and the suspected Chinese surveillance balloons spotted over Japan at least three times since 2019. Following the downing of a suspected Chinese spy balloon by the United States, Japan last week said it planned to clarify military engagement rules to allow its jet fighters to shoot down unmanned aircraft that violate its airspace. In a statement released after the meeting, Japan's foreign ministry said it had also stressed the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. The two countries had agreed to try and establish a direct communication hotline "around spring", and to strengthen dialogue between their senior security officials, it added.

Wreckage of missing plane confirmed on Philippine volcano



MANILA (AP): The wreckage of a small plane carrying two Filipino pilots and two Australian passengers was identified one of the Philippines' most active volcanoes, officials said. An aerial search found no sign of those aboard the Cessna 340, which crashed into a gully on the slope of Mayon volcano in Albay province, where it went missing after taking off enroute to Manila, aviation officials said.

"The condition of the crew and passengers are not yet known as the exact site has not yet been reached by the search and rescue team due to bad weather," the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines said. It said investigators spotted the wreckage after three failed aerial searches due to thick clouds. Only the tail section of the plane remained intact, said Eric Apolonio, spokesperson of the civil aviation agency. The Australians were working as consultants for Energy Development Corp., a large geothermal power company. The company said it has deployed teams backed by helicopters and drones to help

in the search.

Mayor Carlos Baldo of Camalig town said four teams of government personnel and volunteers, including mountaineers with satellite phones, began scaling the 8,077-foot (2,462-meter) volcano after the weather cleared. They should be able to reach the crash site on Wednesday, he said. "It's a difficult mission," said Baldo, who is overseeing the search and rescue, citing Mayon's restiveness, steep slope and the fickle weather.

Villagers are normally prohibited from entering a permanent danger zone 6 kilometers (3.7 miles) around Mayon, which last erupted in 2018, displacing tens of thousands of residents. But the government's volcano monitoring agency allowed the search for the plane. Security has also become a concern after two soldiers helping in the search were fatally shot by five suspected communist New People's Army guerrillas in a market where they were buying supplies, military officials said.

Australia, Philippines consider joint patrols in Sea

MANILA (Agencies): Australia and the Philippines are exploring the possibility of joint patrols in the disputed South China Sea, where recent "aggressive activities" by the Chinese Coast Guard towards a Philippine vessel saw Beijing's envoy in Manila summoned by Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles said on Wednesday that he had discussed joint patrolling with Philippine Defence Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr.

"As countries which are committed to the global rules-based order, it is natural that we should think about ways in which we can cooperate in this respect," Marles said at a news conference at the Philippine Department of National Defense in Quezon City. "We did talk today about the possibility of exploring joint patrols and we will continue that work and we hope that comes to fruition soon," he said. The possibility of the Philippines and Australia holding joint patrols in the South China Sea comes on the heels of similar discussions between Manila and Washington, and amid a backdrop of China's increasingly muscular

approach in pressing its extensive territorial claims in the contested sea.

Jay Tarriela, the Philippine Coast Guard's spokesperson on South China Sea issues, told CNN Philippines that talks with the United States have advanced beyond the infancy stage and that the likelihood of carrying out joint patrols was high. Tarriela did not provide details on the scale or timing of the proposed patrols, which come after the Pentagon said this month the US and the Philippines had "agreed to restart joint maritime patrols in the South China Sea".

"There is already a clear path of possibility since the Defense Department of the United States has also supported the joint patrol with the Philippine navy and the US navy so there is a certainty for this particular joint patrols to happen between the coast guard of both countries," Tarriela said. Rommel Jude Ong, former vice commander of the Philippine Navy, told the Reuters news agency the idea of a Philippine and US coast guard deployment in the South China Sea instead of the navy will "mitigate any miscalculation and prevent China from finding an excuse to escalate tension" in the waterway. Earlier this

month, Manila accused China's coast guard of aiming a "military-grade laser" at one of its coast guard vessels that was supporting a resupply mission for troops on an atoll in the South China Sea.

Manila blasted what it said was China's "aggressive activities" in the South China Sea, and President Marcos Jr summoned the Chinese ambassador to express his "serious concern" over the harassment of the Philippine Coast Guard vessel. The incident prompted expressions of concern from other countries including Japan, Australia and the US. China has refuted the Philippine account of the incident, which it said did not reflect the truth. China's foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said last week that his country's coastguard had acted in a "professional and restrained" manner towards the Philippine ship. Wang also accused the Philippines and the US of engaging in "pure political drama" in taking a case to the international court of arbitration, which ruled in 2016 that China had no legal basis for its territorial claim to almost the entire South China Sea. China would not be intimidated by the US, Wang said.

Winds lash Madagascar's coast

MADAGASCAR (BBC): At least one person has died after a tropical cyclone battered Madagascar's east coast, with heavy rain and powerful winds tearing roofs off houses and triggering a storm surge. Cyclone Freddy made landfall, weeks after another tropical storm killed 33 and left thousands without shelter.

Schools have been shut and traffic has been suspended. Earlier, Freddy caused some damage in Mauritius, flooding beach-side hotels. The Indian Ocean island nation is particularly vulnerable to cyclones. It is hit by an average of 1.5 cyclones every year, the highest rate in Africa, according to the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The cyclone slightly weakened once it made landfall on Madagascar, situated off the south-east coast of Africa, with wind gusts exceeding 130km/h (81mph). The country's meteorological service warned that torrential rains would continue along its path.

"The sea remains very rough... and a significant risk of coastal flooding will continue overnight," it said. A 27-year-old man drowned near the port of Mahanoro before the storm made landfall, officials said. Officials also said 7,000 people had been pre-emptively evacuated from the coastal region directly in Freddy's path, and warnings waves could reach over 8m (26ft) were issued by the International Federation of Red Cross. Some people used sandbags to weigh down their roofs as a precaution.

"All the doors and windows started shaking," said Tahina, a resident of Mananjary, a coastal town of around 25,000 people 30km from where the cyclone first made landfall. She had fled her home with her parents and three children to shelter in her husband's office. "Next to us, at least five houses have lost their roofs," Tahina told AFP news agency. Pascal Salle sobbed as he surveyed the damage caused by Freddy - which had ripped a window off of his home and turned his garden into a "sandy field". "It's a repeat performance. I can't take this every year, it's not possible. Batsirai and Emmati in 2022, Freddy in 2023... Who's to say that in 15 days another one won't fall on us?" he said.

Last month the powerful storm Cheneso smashed into north-eastern Madagascar bringing in heavy winds and triggering downpours that caused extensive flooding, and killing at least 33 people and forcing tens of thousands of people from their homes. Mananjary is still recovering from devastation caused by last year's Cyclone Batsirai, which killed more than 130 people across Madagascar.

Huge winter storm churns across Northern US

CHICAGO (Reuters): A massive winter storm spreading across the US West into the Northern Plains and Midwest could produce blizzards, brutal cold, and record snowfall, making road travel treacherous and disrupting air travel. The National Weather Service issued winter storm, blizzard and high-wind advisories for a broad swath of the western and north-central United States. Up to two feet (61 cm) of snow and winds of up to 60 miles (97 km) per hour were expected in some spots.

Snow falling at a rate of two inches an hour and gusty winds will make travel conditions treacherous and perhaps impossible in parts of the Northern Plains and the Upper Midwest, the service said in its forecast. "Snowplow crews will be out working statewide, but this storm could be a doozy," the Minnesota Department of Transportation said in a tweet. While much of the United States will grapple with cold, snowy weather over the next several days, parts of the South may, by contrast, see record high temperatures this week.

Some spots in the South may have temperatures that are over 100 degrees Fahrenheit warmer than some places in the Northern Plains, the forecast showed. Orlando could hit a record high of 90 degrees (32 C), while the temperature is expected to drop to -16 (-27 C) in Billings, Montana, the NWS said. The slow-moving storm started over the Presidents' Day holiday weekend, bringing heavy rain to parts of California and snow to the Sierra Nevada mountains. It was

centered over the northern Rockies and the High Plains, including Montana and the Dakotas. Starting Wednesday, the storm will move into the Upper Midwest with "some of the greatest impacts in Minnesota and Wisconsin," said Frank Pereira, a forecaster with the NWS Prediction Center in College Park, Maryland.

Late on Wednesday through Thursday, the storm will bring heavy snow and freezing rain to New England. New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine could get a foot or more of snow, Pereira said. The lingering storm could also dump snow across California. Nearly all of the state's 39 million residents will either witness snow falling or be able to see the tops of nearby mountains covered in snow this week, UCLA climate scientist Daniel Swain said. Strong winds knocked out power to more 163,000 California homes and businesses, largely in the counties just south of San Francisco, as peak wind at San Francisco International Airport reached 68 mph (109 kph), the weather service said.

Officials in Minneapolis told residents to prepare for blizzard-like conditions on Wednesday and Thursday, telling them to move their vehicles off the streets. The city of 425,000 people could see as much as 20 inches of snow, which would be the most for a February snowstorm and one of the top five heaviest snowfalls of all time in a Midwestern city already renowned for its brutal winters, according to the state's Department of

Natural Resources. Weather conditions were quickly deteriorating in Montana, Wyoming and North Dakota. Snow bands and strong gusty winds were causing whiteout conditions in Great Falls, Montana, the NWS said.

The storm will cause wind chill temperatures to drop to -25 Fahrenheit, which could cause frostbite on exposed skin in as little as 30 minutes, forecasters warned. The growing frequency and intensity of such storms, interspersed with extreme heat and dry spells, are symptoms of climate change, experts say. Transportation officials in Minnesota, Nebraska and the Dakotas urged motorists to drive slowly or stay off the roads altogether over the next couple of days. More than 480 flights in and out of Denver, Minneapolis, and Salt Lake City, Utah were delayed or canceled. In all, more than 1,300 flights were delayed or canceled in the United States, Flightaware.com reported.

Although the snow storm could wreak havoc on daily life, it was welcomed by skiers. "KaBoom!", the Jackson Hole Mountain Resort in Wyoming said in a tweet. "We're in the grips of a powerful storm and delays due to strong winds and heavy snow are likely. Thanks for your patience as we prepare paradise for you." Down in Florida, locals were preparing for a different kind of recreation. "We regularly hit 80s in February every year, but once we start going in that 85 to 90 range, that is much above normal," said NWS meteorologist Jason Hess in Jacksonville. "It's the early beach season for us down here."

Burkina parties hold

OUAGADOUGOU (AFP): Political parties and civil groups in Burkina Faso voiced their backing for the ruling junta following an ambush in which dozens of soldiers were killed by jihadists. Support came notably from the Union for Progress and Change (UPC), which was among the first parties to see its activities suppressed after a coup last September.

"In these difficult times, I urge the Burkinabe people to cultivate a spirit of national unity and support the transitional authorities in their resolve to restore our territorial integrity," said UPC leader Zephirin Diabre. The National Youth Council of Burkina Faso called on "all young people to (take part) in a sacred national union" around the armed forces and the authorities. One of the world's poorest nations, Burkina Faso has been rocked by a jihadist insurgency that spread from Mali in 2015.

Anger within the military at the mounting toll sparked two coups last year. Despite the takeovers, jihadist attacks have been on the rise. Junta leader Captain Ibrahim Traore acknowledged the fight was "strewn with pitfalls" but said the authorities remained "determined" to triumph. The army, giving what it said was a provisional toll, said 51 soldiers and around 160 jihadists were killed after a convoy was ambushed in the northern region of Oudalan.

Hidden Colombia canyon transformed

COLOMBIA (AFP): For years, the crystal clear river flowing between giant boulders served as a strategic guerrilla route in Colombia's bloody armed conflict. But today tourists bob happily down it in multi-colored inflatables, accompanied by birdsong and the rush of water. The Guape Canyon, a 35-meter (115-foot) deep natural wonder in the town of La Uribe in the southern Meta department, was hidden for decades by the fighting between Bogota and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

Its passageways -- illuminated by scant bars of sunlight that cross immense caves -- were rediscovered thanks to the historic peace agreement signed by the two sides in 2016. Now, instead of armed rebels, tourists float down its sometimes turbulent and sometimes

serene waters. Some close their eyes and let themselves be carried away by the sounds and sensations of the jungle. "Before, people used to pass through here armed with rifles.... To see this, the way it has changed, is impressive," says one of the guides, all young victims of violence, before embarking on a tour accompanied by an AFP photographer.

La Uribe rose to fame in the 1980s and 1990s as an enclave of the most powerful guerrillas on the continent. Anchored in the Eastern Plains, between the country's Andean center and the Amazon, the town was the scene of one of the failed peace negotiations between the state and the FARC. It was also the epicenter of a bloody rebel onslaught that destroyed police and army stations.

In 2017, after the peace deal was signed, the story

took a turn. Rebels still in camouflage uniforms and carrying rifles emerged from the thick jungle that hides the canyon to await their disarmament and transformation into a political party. "In spite of all the vicissitudes and problems that have been occurring for decades... today nature itself is in charge of giving rebirth to the communities," declares an official bulletin about a place that until recently was largely unknown to Colombians.

The peace agreement disarmed the bulk of the FARC and pacified certain regions. But some armed and dissident groups continue to fight for control of Colombia's illicit drug trafficking business and illegal mining in an internal conflict that saw some nine million people killed, injured, kidnapped or displaced over more than 50 years of conflict.

Nigerians struggle with costs of living as election draws near

ADDIS ABABA (AFP): Like millions of fellow Nigerians, Rotimi Bankole says he wants to use presidential elections to push for a better life in his oil-rich but crisis-ridden country. Double digit inflation, weak economic growth and mounting insecurity are major issues for voters on February 25 when they choose a successor to incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari, due to step down after two terms allowed by law.

"Nigeria has been so difficult to cope and live in," Bankole said. "Survival has been tough." For years, the 54-year-old struggled to take care of his family of five while doing two jobs. Recently, he took on a third job -- driving a taxi -- but still that could only make an extra 5,000 naira (\$11) -- hardly enough in a country where cost of living has spiralled to record levels. Africa's largest economy and the continent's top oil producer, Nigeria has resources and wealth, but the global pandemic and the economic fallout from the Ukraine war hit the country hard in Buhari's last term.

Inflation is at 21.8 percent, the naira currency has

weakened and the World Bank says more Nigerians are now living below the poverty line. Compounding economic hardships, the country has been hit with fuel shortages and also a scarcity of cash after the central bank began to swap old naira notes for new bills. A chronic shortage of cash has created lines outside banks and triggered protests in some cities, even as the central bank says the policy is needed to curb the amount of cash outside the banking system. Bankole started driving a taxi two months ago, but the recent major fuel and cash scarcity has compounded his misery.

He spends long hours on queues at petrol stations, paying as much as 330 naira for a litre as against 165 previously. Even running his school has been tough as parents struggle to pay fees while his printing business is struggling. "We cannot continue like this as a people," he said. Election has developed into a tight three-way race for the presidency, with the frontrunners all touting their past government experience and business acumen for the country's top job. Ex-Lagos governor Bola Ahmed Tinubu

of the ruling All Progressives Congress or APC is facing former vice president Atiku Abubakar of the main opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and Peter Obi of the Labour Party, a surprise third party candidate with high youth appeal.

Although Nigeria's economy rebounded after COVID-19 pandemic, growing three percent in 2022, critics say the recovery has not trickled down to improve conditions for most Nigerians. Falling oil revenues, growing insecurity from criminal gangs, heavy flooding that hit farming land and impact of Ukraine war have combined to make things worse. Nigeria's unemployment rate is about 33 percent while the number of Nigerians living in poverty rose to 133 million or 63 percent of the population in 2022, according to the national statistics bureau. Youth unemployment now stands at 43 percent, compared to 10 percent prior to Buhari's first administration in 2015.

The naira currency has fallen from an average of 200 naira to a dollar in 2015, to around 750 on the parallel market.

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Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town, Peshawar.

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Chairman's resignation and role of bureaucracy

RECENTLY, the National Accountability Bureau Chairman Aftab Sultan tendered his resignation as the anti-graft watchdog chair. According to the bureaucrat, he always worked on merit in his professional life and was not ready to make or end corruption cases against anyone.

The bureaucracy has always been the backbone, the main driver of governance, an engine of growth as well as an agent of change in any nation in the world. The highly educated youth are picked through a stringent selection process and are trained adequately to accomplish specialized jobs in various fields of administration, accounting, finance, policing, as well as political, and foreign affairs. Bureaucratic services are normally governed by the constitution and legal frameworks designed to run the business of the state in an effective, beneficial, and impartial manner without jeopardizing the national interest, and integrity of the institution as well as of government executives. A professional bureaucrat not only serves his nation but also promotes social and professional ethics, and high moral values through his upright conduct and service delivery.

The bureaucracy in Pakistan played a lead role and attracted laudatory remarks over its adorable role in national planning, economic development, and ensuring the rule of the law in the early decades of independence of the country. Unfortunately, the bureaucracy could not maintain its professional standards and constitutional impartiality after the 1980s, because of increased political interference, nepotism, and corruption. Thus, current-day bureaucrats owe a clear political affiliation with one or the other political faction and many have sympathies with banned religious, ethnic, and sectarian groups instead of the state of Pakistan which raised them to this position. Terribly, the nation faces a scarcity of honest, professional, apolitical, and faithful government servants who believe in merit, service to the nation, and integrity of themselves and their institutions.

The former Chairman of NAB, Mr. Afrab Sultan was an honest bureaucrat who enjoys tremendous respect due to his professionalism and upright posture throughout his service in the past. His appointment in a highly sensitive and controversial position followed by sudden premature deposition on the issues relating to his official duties has caused serious concerns among the masses regarding the tall claims and conduct of the coalition government. Although, NAB Chairman is appointed by the Prime Minister in consultation with the opposition leader in the National Assembly, however, it is an independent position and legally not obliged to the Prime Minister.

Previously, there had been accusations against the NAB and its former Chairman Justice retired Javed Iqbal of political allegiance or alleged blackmail by the previous regime for misuse of the bureau for political victimization of the opponents. Meanwhile, the anti-graft watchdog also failed to implement its inquiries into successful prosecutions, so a majority of the accused got clean chits from the courts, and an embarrassment, and insult was earned by the authority. As reported, Mr. Sultan refused to budge the unlawful demands of the ruling elite and preferred to step down instead of misusing his authority for temporary gains. In fact, bureaucrats and government employees are not personal servants of the rulers and they must not demonstrate weakness in the face of unjust persuasion and intimidation from the politicians in power. Former Chairman NAB has set a heroic example for his colleagues and successors to uphold merit, rule of law, and nationalism which are the core values and mission of all government servants. Hopefully, the bureaucracy will play its role by adopting true professionalism and statesmanship in rescuing the nation through prevailing chaos and fragility.

Biden has heralded a new age of democracy in Kyiv. Sunak's Tories are unfit for it

WATCHING Joe Biden stroll through Kyiv alongside Volodymyr Zelenskyy, flexing the muscles of democratic solidarity under a blue Ukrainian sky, it should be difficult to imagine any US president preferring the company of Vladimir Putin. But it is easy. America had such a president only three years ago. There is no doubt whose side Donald Trump would have taken had he been in the White House this time last year. He told a rally on Monday that Putin would "never, ever have gone into Ukraine" if he had been president. He reminded the audience that he "actually had a very good relationship" with Putin. Just ahead of the Kremlin invasion, Trump declared the missing of Russian troops a "genius" move by a "very savvy" leader.

Biden's Ukraine policy has bipartisan support in Washington, but there is a streak of sweaty Putinophilia running down the right flank of the Republican party. In last November's congressional elections, pro-Trump candidates took positions ranging from isolationism via appeasement (reluctance to "poke the Russian bear") to regurgitating Kremlin propaganda. Tucker Carlson, the ultra-conservative Fox News commentator, delivers a diet of punditry so rich in pro-Putin flavours that portions are served on Russian state television.

Defeat for some of the more hysterical Republicans in the midterms sapped Trump's momentum. But the kernel of his foreign policy is embedded in the conservative mainstream - scorn for rules; affinity with demagogues; dismissal of western Europe as a decrepit

relic, overrun with Muslim immigrants, emasculated by "woke" ideology. It would be comforting to think of that as an exotic American dogma, like the conflation of liberty and firearms, unable to thrive in Britain's more temperate climate. Maybe it can't, but seeds were sown in the hot-house atmosphere of Brexit insurrection.

In March 2014, when

recognise the borders of smaller countries). This inversion of reality has double purchase on the fringes of western democracies, common to the "anti-imperialist" left and nationalist right. It means rejecting the principle that independent democracies should be allowed to choose their own allies. The

Rafael Behr

the incarnation of Churchillian resolve. Happily, those impulses made him swift and energetic in support for Ukraine against fascist Russian assault. It is the most (maybe the only) creditable thing Johnson did as prime minister. His critics might point to vanity and flight from domestic scandal as

threatened by genocidal Russian mercenaries. Then they are suddenly a nuisance when attached to refugees, upheld by European courts and put in the way of deportations to Rwanda. A rules-based order is something the Conservative party cherishes when it means the G7 and Nato - any multilateral institution, in fact, apart from the EU. Then it is a

right to ignore whatever it signs.

That is the idea behind the Northern Ireland protocol bill, currently stalled on its way through parliament. Rishi Sunak knows it corrodes trust with the EU, stains Britain's reputation as a reliable partner - especially in Washington - and grinds the gears of transatlantic diplomacy. But hard-line Eurosceptics cling to it as the cudgel that will beat concessions out of Brussels.

They are wrong. Sunak's de-dramatising approach has yielded more technical progress on problems with the Northern Ireland protocol than threats and swagger achieved under his predecessors.

The Johnsonian method also belongs on the wrong side of a wider argument about the kind of country Britain wants to be post-Brexit. It is a hangover from the period when Tory radicals were playing wingman to Trump's maverick rampage through constitutional order and conventional diplomacy. It belongs to the thrill-seeking phase of Conservative politics when success was measured in decibels of liberal outcry; when it was a kind of sport to denigrate compromise, evidence and expertise as emblems of a pro-European establishment. That ethos still governs much of the Conservative party. It isn't Sunak's natural style, although there is no sign he intends to challenge it. Failing to do so makes him look not only weak, but obsolete - a product of flawed design, the last Tory prime minister in a line that should be discontinued because it isn't compatible with functional European diplomacy, and no longer meets the specifications for serious government in a dangerous world.

The Guardian

In his warped retelling of history, the Kremlin record of bullying its neighbours is, in fact, self-defence against malicious encirclement by the west using places where Moscow has a proprietary claim (derived from Soviet nostalgia and a refusal to recognise the borders of smaller countries). This inversion of reality has double purchase on the fringes of western democracies, common to the "anti-imperialist" left and nationalist right. It means rejecting the principle that independent democracies should be allowed to choose their own allies. The leftwing variant also ignores the fact that Russia was once an empire, and that imperial autocracy is the governance model for its current president.

Putin annexed Crimea, Nigel Farage described the Russian president as the world leader he most admired. Eight years later, when Russia moved on to full-scale invasion, Farage blamed Nato and the European Union for provocative expansions into Moscow's back yard.

This is Putin's argument, too. In a speech today marking the anniversary of the war, he explained at great length how the west started it. In his warped retelling of history, the Kremlin record of bullying its neighbours is, in fact, self-defence against malicious encirclement by the west using places where Moscow has a proprietary claim (derived from Soviet nostalgia and a refusal to

leftwing variant also ignores the fact that Russia was once an empire, and that imperial autocracy is the governance model for its current president.

The idea that western overreach provoked Russia to raid Ukraine for land also got an airing in the Brexit referendum, via Boris Johnson. He told a campaign rally that Kyiv's decision to sign a trade partnership with Brussels had "caused real trouble" and that things had "gone wrong" in Ukraine because of EU meddling.

What Johnson says one day is no guide to what he will later do. He defines truth as any statement aligned with his immediate career interest. But he also believes in his destiny as

his motives, but that doesn't diminish the military advantage bestowed on Ukraine at its moment of maximum peril. Zelenskyy's gratitude was powerfully expressed in a speech to parliament earlier this month.

Zelenskyy's address also contained a note that doesn't harmonise so well with a tune that Conservatives started singing under Johnson. The Ukrainian president located his country's plight at the forefront of a wider struggle to protect the "rules-based world order and human rights". Those are things that Tory ministers are all for, except when they aren't. Universal human rights sound noble and inalienable when projected on to Ukrainians

conspiracy against sovereignty or a disposable nicety that mustn't get in the way of a purer Brexit.

Treaties are sacrosanct, except when they are signed in Brussels. Then they are feints and holding positions that can be rewritten by one side if it feels buyer's remorse. If Britain doesn't like its obligations under international law it can breach them "in a specific and limited way", as Brandon Lewis, Johnson's Northern Ireland secretary, argued of clauses in the internal markets bill that overrode the Brexit withdrawal agreement. That was 2020. Johnson is still arguing that the way to get a good deal in Europe is to pass laws that assert Britain's

The Northern Irish question isn't about trade. It's about who governs

Philip Johnston

THE Bafta awards on Sunday night saw plaudits showered on The Banshees of Inisherin, a film set 100 years ago on a tiny island off Ireland's west coast. It is also nominated for an Oscar next month and has been described as a black comedy. Yet, while it has some funny moments, you would need a peculiar sense of humour to consider it comic.

In truth, it is tragic, an allegory of national self-harm, a metaphor for Ireland's propensity to slide into damaging and destructive disputes for reasons that almost everyone else finds baffling. In The Banshees, two friends fall out because one finds the other boring and doesn't want to drink with him any longer in the island's pub. For those who have yet to see the film I won't spoil it by revealing the plot, but what follows stretches credulity - or it would do if it didn't take place in Ireland, where odd and even destructive behaviour is expected as part of the national character; and I mean both parts of Ireland.

Whenever it seems as if the ancient enmities have been, if not exactly removed, then suppressed, they have a habit of rising to the surface once more. After the First World War, Winston Churchill lamented that even after great empires had fallen and the entire map of Europe redrawn, "the dreary steeples of Fermanagh and Tyrone" had emerged once again to dominate British politics. "The integrity of their quarrel is one of the few institutions that has been unaltered in the cataclysm which has swept the world," he told MPs in 1922. "It says a great deal for their power to lay their hands upon the vital strings of British life and politics, and to hold, dominate, and convulse, year after year, generation after generation, the politics of this powerful country."

Churchill had been one of the negotiators of the treaty that divided the island and which the IRA leader Michael Collins correctly saw as his own death warrant when he signed it. Even though they had managed to remove the British from most of the island, pro- and anti-treaty factions then fell on one another in a bitter civil war, which is the backdrop to The Banshees of Inisherin. Rishi Sunak is the latest British political leader to be trapped in this

web of countervailing national identities. He is looking to fix in the remaining piece of the Brexit jigsaw that Boris Johnson left unfinished in order to secure a deal on the UK's withdrawal and win a general election in 2019.

The big gap in the middle of the picture is the Northern Ireland Protocol, which governs the province's trading relationship with the rest of the UK and the EU. After Brexit, the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic became a land frontier between the UK and the EU. So as not to unravel the Good Friday Agreement (GFA), which is 25 years old in April, it is widely accepted that this should not be a "hard" border with customs controls and physical barriers.

But how was that to be avoided given the different jurisdictions? The answer was to leave Northern Ireland effectively in the Single Market for goods, still bound by some EU regulations and subject to the European Court. Unionists objected at the time that this would treat the province differently from the rest of the UK but

were assured by Mr Johnson that it would not mean a border down the Irish Sea with Britain. To put it charitably, he was being economical with the actualité. Customs checks are still required and some imports are still being treated as though they were entering the EU, even if they will never leave Northern Ireland.

Mr Johnson then introduced a Bill into Parliament to give the Government the power to scrap the Protocol unilaterally because it had turned out to cause the very problems the Unionists feared but which he said would not happen. Mr Sunak wants to withdraw this Bill but is under fire from Mr Johnson for contemplating such a move. The former prime minister and other senior Brexiteers regard this measure as leverage against Brussels to force them to drop the Protocol to which Mr Johnson agreed.

Mr Sunak wants this resolved because the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive have been suspended ever since the DUP walked out in protest at the way the Protocol has left the province semi-

detached from the rest of the UK. Under the power-sharing terms of the GFA and complex rules devised at the 2005 St Andrew's summit, the agreement of the biggest Unionist party is needed for Stormont to function.

That happens to be the DUP, even if it is being squeezed by traditionalists on one side and the Alliance Party on the other. Those who complain that this gives the DUP a "veto" are merely highlighting an element of the GFA they say they wish to preserve. Mr Sunak seems to see this as a trading matter: one proposed solution is to introduce red and green channels for goods coming from Great Britain that might enter the Single Market across the Irish/EU border. But that settles nothing because this is about national identity, as it has always been. With Catholics now outnumbering Protestants in Northern Ireland, the Unionists, who have always felt beleaguered, are concerned about moves towards reunifying the island through consensual referendums.

Any agreement that Mr Sunak strikes with Brussels that continues to treat the province as a halfway

house between the UK and the EU will be rejected by the DUP. It would also be opposed by scores of his own MPs because it goes to the very heart of the Brexit question: who governs? To retain any role, however remote, for a foreign court over the activities of Northern Ireland is a non-starter.

Brussels - and many Remainers in this country, for that matter - find it impossible to understand this because they consider it irrational and tied up with outdated rituals and tribal feuds. Moreover, they favour the supranational regulatory and legal controls that were removed when we left the EU and cannot fathom why others wouldn't appreciate them, too. They regard the Unionists as obdurate and unreasonable, especially when the Protocol gives the province continued easy access to the EU market as well as close ties to Britain. But remaining fully within the UK is a fundamental principle for Unionists and, like Colm in The Banshees of Inisherin, they will go to great lengths to preserve it.

The Telegraph

True heroes of humanity emerge above the rubble in Türkiye, Syria

Ramzy Baroud

FEB. 7, a funeral was held in the northern Syrian town of Jinderis. It was one of numerous such funerals to be held on that day across Syria and Türkiye, following a devastating earthquake that killed and injured thousands. Each one of these funerals represented two seemingly opposite notions: collective grief and collective hope. The Jinderis funeral was a stark representation of this dichotomy.

Earlier, rescue workers found a baby in the rubble of a destroyed home. Her umbilical cord was still connected to her mother. Quickly, they cut the cord and rushed the baby to the hospital. The entire family, save the newborn, perished. Chants of 'Allah Akbar' - God is Great - echoed across Syria and Türkiye throughout the days of desperate search. Every time a person is found alive, or hanging to his life, the res-

cue workers, the medics, and the volunteers would chant the same words with voices gone hoarse. For them - in fact, for all of us - it is a constant reminder that there is something in this life that is bigger than all of us.

The heart-wrenching, sorrowful but also inspiring stories that emerged from the rubble of the 7.8-magnitude quake were as many as the dead and the wounded. Long after the dead are buried and the injured are healed, these stories will serve as a reminder of how vulnerable our human race is, but also how stubborn and inspiring it can be. The little Turkish boy, Yigit Cakmark who emerged alive from underneath the rubble of his collapsed home in the city of Hatay was reunited with his mother atop the wreckage of their destroyed home. The image of them clinging onto one another after 52 hours of search cannot be

described in words. Their unbreakable bond is the essence of life itself.

Another little Syrian girl actually smiled as she was being pulled out through the crushed concrete. Many rescued children smiled, happy to be alive or in gratitude to their rescuers, but this girl smiled because she saw her father, also alive. Heroism is one of the most subjective terms in any language. For these little children, and for the thousands of rescued victims of the earthquake, true heroes are those who save their lives and the lives of their loved ones. It is sad that, quite often, we ascribe heroism to war, and rarely for the right reasons. I have spent much of my life living, writing about or reporting on war, only to discover that there is little heroism in war, from the moment weapons are manufactured, shipped, deployed or used.

When a hand or a foot emerges from beneath the dust and debris, the rescue workers and medics rush to see if there is a pulse, however faint. Then,

The only heroism I found in war is when people collectively fight back to protect one another; when the bodies are pulled from the wreckage; when the wounded are rushed to hospitals; when blood is donated; when solidarity is offered to the families of the victims, and when people share their meagre supplies to survive together. This same heroism is on full display in Türkiye and Syria. The typical rescue site is a tapestry of human tenacity, love, family, friendship and more: The victims underneath the rubble, praying and pleading for rescue; the men and women above, fighting against time, the elements, and the lack of means.

Whenever a hand or a foot emerges from beneath the dust and debris, the rescue workers and medics rush to see if there is a pulse, however faint. Then,

no gender matters; no religion; no sect; no language; no colour; no status; no age, nothing but the shared desire to save a single life. Such tragic events could take place in Türkiye, Syria, Italy, Algeria, Japan or anywhere else. The rescuers and the rescued can be of any race, religion or nationality. Yet, somehow, all our differences, real or imagined, all of our conflicting ideologies and political orientations do not - and should not - matter in the least during these harrowing moments.

Sadly, soon after the wounded are rescued, the dead are buried and the debris is removed, we tend to forget all of this, the same way we are slowly forgetting our rescuers and saviours during the Covid-19 pandemic. Instead of investing more in the structures, technologies and resources that save lives, we often do the exact opposite. Though the pandemic

continues to kill people in large numbers, many nations have simply decided to move on, to seemingly more urgent matters: war, geopolitical conflicts and, expectedly, more investments in new, deadlier weapons.

Our lack of a true sense of priorities is quite astonishing. While munitions are delivered to war-torn countries at incredible speed, it takes days, weeks and months for help to arrive to victims of hurricanes and earthquakes. Sometimes, help never arrives. Chances are our confused priorities will not change, at least not fundamentally, following the Kahramanmaraş earthquake. But it is important to reiterate this time-honoured truth: heroes are those who save lives and offer their love and support to those in need, regardless of race, colour, religion or politics. To our true champions of humanity, we thank you.

Totalitarianism has returned to Europe. It must be defeated

Frans Timmermans

THIS war, like any war, will end at the negotiating table. But as negotiations can only start after Ukraine's territorial integrity has been restored, and since a change of heart in Moscow is unlikely in the short term, pushing Russia back to its borders will have to be done manu militari.

The faster Ukraine gets the means to drive Russian forces back to their own country and ensure they stay there, the better. We should all aim for a swift conclusion to the fighting. Paradoxically, for that to happen we have to make clear to Putin that we will stay the course, whatever and however long it takes. There is no point endlessly sending young Russians into the meat grinder of the Ukrainian front.

Putin will not win this war. In fact, he has already lost, but he can prolong it or create a semi-frozen conflict if Ukraine is deprived of the means to bring about its swift end. Only a just peace is lasting and only respecting Ukraine's international borders, statehood, democracy, and right to choose the kind of country it wants to be can lead to a just peace. This is so important because Russia's justification for its aggression lies in the denial of Ukraine's statehood, which in turn is based on a Russian nationalist and imperialist ideology in which there is no place for a distinct Ukrainian nation or identity.

Russia denies Ukraine's right to exist and Ukrainians their identity, defining them as what Nazi political theorist Carl Schmitt called the "total enemy." In his warped ideology, a total enemy should not just be defeated but erased from existence. Not for what he does, but for who he is. Therein lies Russia's justification for its aggression, countless war crimes, torture, abduction and brainwashing of children, and the removal of Ukrainian books from Ukrainian libraries. The violence unleashed on Ukrainians for being Ukrainians is comparable to Stalin's Red

Terror, when millions of innocent people were killed for being "class enemies." The terror worked precisely because it targeted the innocent and enforced total conformity to the state. It is now clear that Russia, having descended ever deeper into authoritarianism in the last 15 years, has now become a totalitarian state.

Anyone who resists risks falling out of a window or at least ending up in prison for 15 years.

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Terrorizing people into conformity puts people who are different in an ever more vulnerable position. Antisemitism has exploded, sexual minorities live in constant fear, while racism and xenophobia know no limits. This is Russia today.

It will take a very long time for Russia to recover from where it finds itself today, even once the man responsible for turning the country into a totalitarian pariah leaves the stage. The gradual poisoning of the Russian nation took Putin 20 years, the detox might take a generation and the outcome will remain unpredictable. As well as ensuring Ukraine can attain a

just and lasting peace as quickly as possible, we must also collectively support Ukraine's efforts to transform itself into a prosperous nation, based on the rule of law, respect for human rights, and fundamental freedoms. The EU membership process can be transformative in this sense, as previous experiences have shown us. It has helped Greece, Spain, Portugal, and later the countries in Central Europe to overcome their dictatorial

past and it can inoculate Ukraine against a dictatorial future. History has twice in my lifetime taken a sharp turn and set us on a new path: when the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 allowing Europeans to reunite, and one year ago when Russia invaded Ukraine, forcing Europeans to defend and strengthen what they hold most dear. Under the present circumstances, Ukraine's integration will have to happen much faster than was typical in the past. However, sacrificing thoroughness on the altar of expediency would be a grave mistake: a partial or flawed integration into the EU will leave shortcomings unsolved, weakening both

Ukraine and the EU.

What is needed is a Marshall plan-type response: an approach of unprecedented dimensions, combining reconstruction and economic transformation with the legal, administrative, and social transformation needed to fully function as an EU member state. This has never been done before but will have to be done now. One of our most immediate tasks, as politicians both on the EU and national level, is to prepare our citizens for this process that will transform Ukraine, but also the EU and build the economic, financial, political, and administrative structures needed to face this challenge.

The Russian regime portrays us as weak and decadent, "Gayropa" pushovers who will yield to the superior being of the ultranationalist. Putin even had political forces in Europe (and the US) convinced of this, people who praised him for being "such a strong leader standing up for traditional European values." The Ukrainian people are proving him wrong, putting his European admirers to shame.

We should all understand what is at stake. One hundred years after its first incarnations, totalitarianism has made a comeback on our continent. It needs to be swiftly contained and then unmasked for what it is so that it can be defeated and finally expunged by the Russian people. This war is about much more than gaining or losing territory. The Ukrainian nation, a European nation, is fighting for its survival. An imperialist ideology that denies other nations' very existence will not stop at one nation. The flames of war will burn brightly in more European nations if aggression is allowed to pay off, and autocracy will spread like gangrene. United and determined, we are so much stronger than Putin and his ilk. Let the heroism of the Ukrainian nation inspire us to be ever more united and determined in supporting their struggle. The more we do that, the sooner the carnage will stop.

The Moscow Times



Biden Admn announces proposed rule to set new asylum limits

Aline Barros

THE Biden administration published a proposal Tuesday that would block certain migrants from seeking asylum in the United States and allow the government to quickly deport them. The proposal, which is part of the administration's efforts to manage the influx of migrants at the US-Mexico border, already has received strong criticism from immigration advocates.

Under the proposal, migrants who do not use available pathways to come to the US or fail to seek humanitarian refuge in another country they have passed through on their way to the United States will be deemed ineligible for asylum - unless they qualify for certain exceptions. Those who cannot qualify to be exempted or prove they sought asylum protection in another country will be barred from seeking asylum and quickly deported to their home countries without a chance to see an immigration judge.

In a call with members of the media, Biden officials argued that under the proposal migrants will still have "accessible and convenient pathways" to apply for asylum. The provisions are aimed at "cutting out the smugglers looking to make a quick buck off vulnerable people," said an official who spoke on con-

dition that their name would not be used, as is common in Homeland Security Department briefings. DHS officials said the public will have 30 days to comment on the proposed regulation before its implementation, which they expect to take place by the beginning of May. Those who cannot establish a valid claim to protection under the proposed rule will be subject to removal under Title 8 code, which means placed under expedited removal proceedings and sent back to Mexico or their home countries while barred from reentering the United States.

Critics of the proposal argue that it is a remake of the 2019 asylum restrictions proposed under the former Trump administration that were blocked by federal courts. Krish O'Mara Vignarajah, president and CEO of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, said in a statement, "This transit ban defies decades of humanitarian protections enshrined in US law and international agreements, and flagrantly violates President Biden's own campaign promises to restore asylum. Requiring persecuted people to first seek protection in countries with no functioning asylum systems themselves is a ludicrous and life-threatening proposal."

During the call with

reporters, Biden officials challenged the idea the proposal is an asylum or transit ban. "I just really do want to take a minute to push back that this is any version of the continuation of the prior administration's access or actions to cut off access to asylum," a Biden official said on background. "You know, this is definitely different in the sense that we are offering a rebuttable presumption and not barring access to asylum like the prior administration did."

US law still offers asylum for those on American soil who are facing persecution in their home countries on the basis of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular group, regardless of whether they entered the country without permission. "We are a nation of immigrants, and we are a nation of laws," said Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas in a statement to the press. "We are strengthening the availability of legal, orderly pathways for migrants to come to the United States, at the same time proposing new consequences on those who fail to use processes made available to them by the United States and its regional partners." The proposal is likely to face legal challenges from immigration advocates if it is put into effect.

VOA

US presidential campaigns begin, but it is still very early

Kerry Boyd Anderson

US President Joe Biden has only been in the White House for slightly more than two years, but the next presidential campaign is already getting started. For anyone who loves political horse race coverage, there will be months of predictions to enjoy before the November 2024 election. For anyone who wants to follow US politics without engaging in a nearly constant stream of election news, it is time to start paying some attention - but not too much.

Before Americans vote for president, the Republican and Democratic parties must choose their nominees through a series of state-level primaries and caucuses. Typically, a party with an incumbent completing his first term as president nominates him to run again. However, the current Democratic nomination process faces some challenges. Biden is 80 years old - the oldest president to ever serve in Washington. His approval ratings are relatively low, around 42 percent, though approval ratings may be less useful than in the past. Additionally, the Democrats are changing the order of state caucuses and primaries for the first time in decades, which introduces new uncertainties.

Nonetheless, Biden appears likely to run for reelection. Many Democrats saw his recent State of the Union speech as a resounding success and he has a long history of winning elections. While many Democrats would prefer a younger candidate, it is not clear who could step in. The most obvious choice is

Vice President Kamala Harris, but her term so far has been challenging and she has low approval ratings. As long as he remains healthy, Biden is the most likely Democratic nominee.

The Republican race is likely to be far more contested. So far, two serious candidates have announced campaigns: Former President Donald Trump and former South Carolina governor and ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley. More candidates are likely to join the race. So far, polls show two front-runners: Trump and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis. Other potential candidates are far behind. A recent Reuters/Ipsos poll of Republican voters found that 42.8 percent expressed support for Trump as the nominee, compared to 30.6 percent for DeSantis, 7.5 percent for former Vice President Mike Pence and 3.9 percent for Haley, with all others trailing behind.

In many ways, Trump is well positioned to gain the Republican Party's nomination. He has huge name recognition and extensive support among Republicans. A recent Morning Consult poll found that 74 percent of Republican primary voters have a favorable view of Trump. He has already raised impressive sums of money to fund his campaign.

Yet, Trump faces challenges. While many Republicans approved of his presidency, many of them are ready for someone new. Republican critics of Trump form a small minority; his bigger problem is that more Republicans see him

as carrying a lot of baggage that might hurt his chances of winning the general election. One of his major advantages when he campaigned the first time was that he appeared new and like an outsider; many voters liked the idea of a "businessman" in charge of government. Today, Trump has a record as a divisive politician. Also, he has won one of two elections - not a great record for a presidential candidate.

Haley has leaned heavily into the idea that the Republicans need a changing of the guard. In her Feb. 14 campaign announcement, she said that Americans are "more than ready for a new generation" of leaders, adding that "America is not past our prime. It's just that our politicians are past theirs." Haley directly criticized Biden, but her jobs at aged politicians also apply to Trump.

Many pundits expect DeSantis to run, though he has not announced a decision yet. He has leveraged his position as governor to make very public statements against liberal values and immigration. DeSantis has cultivated an image of himself as a warrior against "woke ideology." As he said in a recent speech: "We will never surrender to the woke mob." Many Republicans see DeSantis as someone who has Trump's combative spirit without Trump's baggage. Some political experts have suggested that DeSantis might announce his candidacy this summer. Trump has expressed annoyance that DeSantis might challenge

him, calling him "disloyal." Other Republicans have started making the usual moves in advance of a potential campaign, such as visiting Iowa (the first Republican caucus state) and reaching out to potential staffers and donors. Pence, South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott, former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and several other senators and governors are potential candidates.

It is still early in the race. Both parties' primaries and caucuses to choose a nominee will likely begin in February 2024, so we still have a year of speculation and campaigning before any type of voting begins. A lot can change in that time and no one should assume that they know who will be inaugurated as president in January 2025.

Nonetheless, current events offer important clues about how the contests will shape both political parties. Haley's candidacy will tell us a lot about the future of women in the Republican Party. We will learn more about Trump's long-term influence on the party. A likely Biden reelection campaign will reveal more about the influence of progressives versus moderates in the Democratic Party. Candidates' platforms, speeches and debates will shape which issues will dominate the election; among Republicans, opposition to "wokeism" and addressing border security are clearly going to be big topics. To understand the future of US politics, start paying attention to these early races, but remember that much will change before Americans head to the polls again.

Arab News

Turkey earthquake and disaster diplomacy

Ashok Swain

TWO powerful earthquakes struck Turkey and Syria on February 6 have killed close to 50,000 people, and the number is likely to rise further. It is estimated that damages from the devastating earthquake may exceed \$20 billion, though it is still early to measure the full impact.

Seventy-four countries and several international organisations have sent rescue workers, relief materials, and medical supplies to help the stricken region. Significant support to Turkey has come from NATO member countries led by the US. Besides helping the affected population, post-earthquake disaster support is also expected by some that it may help to better relations between relief-receiving and relief-giving countries.

In recent months Turkey has tried to improve its relations with Syria, and the shared misery from the disaster may expedite that process. However, several commentators and analysts are expecting disaster aid, particularly from the US, and the EU may repair their troubled ties with Turkey to some extent. Turkey has also received generous support from countries like Armenia, Greece, Israel, and Sweden.

However, Turkey has a long-standing conflictual relationship with Greece and Israel. Both these

countries have not only sent relief materials and rescue workers, but their foreign ministers have also visited Turkey's earthquake-affected areas to express sympathy and show their solidarity. Speaking at a press conference in Ankara with visiting Israeli counterpart, Turkey's foreign minister gave an encouraging message of normalising Turkey's relations with the countries in the Eastern Mediterranean region, particularly Israel and Greece.

He was very categorical about the possible outcome of the disaster diplomacy: "We want stability and peace in our region. The steps we have taken to normalize our relations with the countries of the region, especially with Israel, are obvious. I hope our solidarity during this earthquake will also be decisive in opening a new page with Greece." Undoubtedly, the earthquake brought massive destruction and immense misery to Turkey, but will it be a catalyst for improving relations with some countries during this challenging time?

To map the links between disaster and diplomacy has been an interest of many years. Can disaster relief change the dynamics of a conflict and provide a pathway for peacemaking? In the case of internal armed conflicts, the example of

the peace agreement between Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement signed a year after the Indian Ocean tsunami is often given to argue how disaster response brought out the political will to negotiate for peace.

But those who give Aceh as an example of disaster-driven peace tend to forget that the international aid mechanism in response to the same tsunami became a major reason for creating serious hindrances to the peace process between the Sri Lankan government and Tamil rebels. In the past, Cuba refused aid from the US while suffering from a devastating drought, and the USA did the same when Cuba offered support following Hurricane Katrina. The post-disaster settings, in some cases, provide an opportunity for transforming conflict behavior towards cooperation and conflict resolution. Natural disasters can incentivize countries in the conflict to cooperate by delegitimizing divisions and increasing mutual trust.

When a country, despite ongoing disputes and long-standing mistrust, offers critical aid and assistance in the aftermath of a terrible disaster, it can help to build goodwill and trust between the two nations. Disaster relief efforts allow the two countries to work together to address a common chal-

lenge, which can help build relationships and foster cooperation in other areas.

However, for disaster diplomacy to be successful, political leaders must be willing to take advantage of the short-term window of opportunity the disaster-related activities offer. In 2008, Japan provided disaster relief and humanitarian assistance to China aftermath of the earthquake in the Sichuan province, and China also reciprocated in 2011, when Japan suffered from a devastating earthquake and tsunami. Pakistan provided significant support to India after the 2001 earthquake, and India also provided relief supplies to Pakistan after the earthquake in 2005 and floods in 2010. The evidence of cooperation and collaboration induced by a natural disaster are mixed, though invariably, disaster diplomacy helps to improve the people-to-people to relations. However, improved people-to-people relations do not always alter the direction of the bilateral relationship.

Disaster diplomacy offers short-term opportunities to resolve conflicts, but pursuing those opportunities or not is dependent upon the leaders of the countries and their political-strategic calculations. The world needs to wait and watch if disaster diplomacy can bring long-term peace to the Eastern Mediterranean region or not.

Gulf News

Putin shelves blood-crazed bombast

Roland Oliphant

NATIONALIST fervour has served Vladimir Putin well over the past 12 months. But blood-and-soil war fever is a short-lived high. To ready your public for a long conflict, you need a more sustainable offer. So to mark the first year of his short, victorious war, Vladimir Putin went back to basics.

Keep fighting, he told the Russian public on Tuesday, and I'll keep the lights on. I'll also cut your taxes, subsidise housing, and raise the minimum wage, and fix the road network. It was a rehearsal of a pact that has served Putin well ever since he walked into the Kremlin more than 20 years ago. And long time watchers of the Russian president will have recognised several of his favourite personas. There was social contract Putin, promising everything from subsidised housing, tax breaks and minimum wage increases for working families, to a new social fund for care of war widows, orphans, and those wounded in battle.

There was low tax free-market Putin, promising expansive incentives for businesses to invest at home and buying domestic IT solutions - and sanctimoniously reminding his audience to respect

market forces rather than print money. There was technocratic Putin, reeling off statistics on increases in wheat exports, road-building programmes, and health and education reform. The economy, he said with confident reference to half a dozen indexes and percentage points, is holding up very nicely under Western sanctions. Russian inflation may be at four per cent but in the West it is running at 20, he declared - a dubious claim on both counts.

And there was populist Putin, taking a predictable swipe at "the chaos of the 1990s" and unnamed oligarchs who "saw Russia only as a source of income" and spent their wealth on "elite real estate in the West". But one Putin was absent. The furious, resentment-filled, cod-history Putin who launched the war a year ago was taking a break.

Yes, the war loomed through everything he said. Yes, he invoked duty to Motherland and "truth". And yes, he accused the West of seeking a "strategic defeat" on Russia (and blamed it for all the country's ills). But the tone was regretful and defiant rather than violent and triumphalist. The only real nod to

foreign policy was suspension of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, a nuclear weapons control deal.

That is a calculated political move designed to signal displeasure with the United States and the West in general. It is bad news, but hardly radical. There are good reasons for this. There is not much red meat left to throw to the pro-war nationalists. A full mobilisation? A political and economic nightmare. Formal declaration of war? It would spook the public and achieve little. Nuclear strikes on Kyiv? Plain stupid. But the old pact with the wider public - stability, rising living standards, and economic competence in exchange for political quietism - has reliably served the Kremlin for decades.

The price asked of the Russian public is now higher. They must accept not only Mr Putin's supreme power and indefinite tenure in the Kremlin, but also fight his insane war. For now, they seem willing to go along with it. Whether he can deliver on his end of the bargain amid the privations of a wartime economy is irrelevant. Failure can always be blamed on some underling. More promises can be churned out when needed. And the war will go on.

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



Traders raise serious concerns over halt of Pak-Afghan bilateral trade

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) president Muhammad Ishaq expressed serious concerns over stuck up of a large number of export and transit trucks laden with essential food commodities and perishable items at Torkham owing to closure of the border on the Afghanistan side.

He urged the Afghan government to review its decision and issue orders for the immediate opening of the border.

Talking to a delegation of traders and exporters here at the chamber on Wednesday, Ishaq said it was witnessing a long queue of 7,500 export and transit trucks loaded with sugar and other perishable items from Torkham to Hamza Baba Chowk.

He warned the truck queue will be stretched over to Peshawar, if the border on the Afghanistan side was not opened immediately. On the other hand, the SCCI chief said the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has allotted a quota for 45 days of sugar export, and 22 days so far have almost passed.

Whereas, he added, traders are bearing Rs45,000 per truck as demurrage charges and Rs6,000 as halting charges per vehicle on the daily basis.

He said the Pak-Afghan traders have been faced with a huge financial loss due to closure of the border.

Ishaq said when they have made contact with Pakistani authorities concerned and then the official told us that the border was closed on the Afghanistan side, which has caused piling up of a large

number of export and transit trade trucks at the Torkham border.

Therefore, he urged the Afghan government to revisit its decision as the further closure of the border was not in the best interest of Pak-Afghan traders, bilateral trade between the both countries as well as transit trade.

The SCCI chief emphasized that Islamabad and Kabul should sort out solutions to all issues by holding a joint sitting and to prevent any damage to Pak-Afghan bilateral and transit trade.

He also stressed the ending of an environment of trust-deficit between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

According to the Pakistani authorities, Ishaq said the government of Pakistan has issued clear instructions to utilize all

possible resources to facilitate Pak-Afghan trade and transit trade.

As per directions, the SCCI chief said the Pakistan officials concerned told him that pragmatic steps are being taken for carrying out smooth and speedy bilateral trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan and trade to onward regional countries.

He added the Pakistan officials further informed that there was not creating hurdles in the way of bilateral trade.

Ishaq went on to say that halting trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan was best in the best interest of the economy, trade and business communities of the both countries so the Afghan government should order for opening of the border without any further delay.

PSX continues with bullish trend, gains 217 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Wednesday, gaining 217.76 points, a positive change of 0.53 percent, closing at 41,167.60 points against 40,949.84 points the previous day.

A total of 196,543,047 shares were traded during the day as compared to 96,490,520 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs.6,413 billion against Rs. 4,605 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 331 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 185 of

them recorded gains and 122 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 24 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 44,210,807 shares at Rs 1.26 per share; Maple Leaf with 22,383,945 shares at Rs.24.03 per share, and Oil and Gas Dev. with 10,388,052 shares at Rs.90.78 per share.

Sapphire Fiber witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.71.77 per share price, closing at Rs.1,063.99, whereas the runner-up was Reliance Cotton with Rs. 45.00 rise in its per share

price to Rs.645.00.

Sapphire Tex witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.88.49 per share closing at Rs.1,091.41; followed by Nestlé Pakistan with Rs.85.00 decline to close at Rs.5,314.00.

Rupee gains 62 paise against dollar

Pakistan rupee appreciated by 62 paise against the dollar in the interbank trading on Wednesday and closed at Rs 261.89, against the previous day's closing of Rs 262.51.

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

at Rs 267.3 and Rs 270 respectively.

The price of Euro decreased by Rs 1.05 and closed at Rs 279.05 against the last day's closing of Rs 280.10.

The Japanese Yen lost one paisa to close at Rs1.94, whereas an increase of Rs 1.53 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 316.97 as compared to its last day's closing of Rs 315.44.

The exchange rates of Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal decreased by 17 paise each to close at Rs71.30 and Rs69.81 respectively.



HYDERABAD: Daily wages women workers busy in packing tomatoes in wooden boxes at vegetables market.

'Integrated farming key to overcome crisis'

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The current economic challenges faced by Pakistan, Khurram Shahzad the Patron in Chief of the Asian Business Forum had said that the "Integrated Farming" is the ray of light for the Future of Pakistan.

Chairman (BOG) Asian Business Forum Syed Jawad Ali Shah and the chairman agricultural chapter of Asian Business Forum Dr. Syed Yassir Abbas Bukhari added If the Government Support us.

In this, we would not Only Be Able to Convert the Barren Lands into the Lush Green Areas but we would also be able to create the ample job market in the country. They further emphasized that the value addition of the organic agricultural products will not only address the issue of food security but it would also attract the precious foreign exchange through the export.

Shipping activity at PQ

KARACHI (APP): Six ships namely, Maersk Kensington, MSC Veracruz, Mild Bloom, Incredible Blue, Ullswater and Hafnia Hudson carrying containers, palm oil, steel coil, LPG and mogas, berthed at Qasim International Containers Terminal, Liquid Cargo Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal, SSGC LPG Terminal and FOTCO Oil Terminal the other day.

Meanwhile, two more ships, MSC Joanna and Xpress Bardsey carrying containers also arrived at the outer anchorage of the port on the same day.

A total of 07 ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, Maersk Kensington and MSC Veracruz left the Port on Wednesday morning, while a general cargo carrier 'Incredible Blue' is expected to sail later today.

Cargo volume of 103,049 tonnes, comprising 76,274 tonnes of imports cargo and 26,775 tonnes of export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 3,193 containers (1,618 TEUs Imports and 1,575 TEUs export) was handled at the port during the last 24 hours.

There are 07 ships at the outer anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them, MSC Joanna and Xpress Bardsey and another ship, EM Astoria carrying containers are also expected to take berths at the Containers Terminal on Wednesday.

OGDCL posts over Rs95b profit in first half of FY 2022-23

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Board of Directors of Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) in its meeting held on 22nd February, 2023 at OGDCL Head Office, Islamabad announced the financial results for the half quarter ended 31st December, 2022 of fiscal year 2022-23.

Net sales revenue clocked at Rs.203.235 billion translating to Profit after tax of Rs.95.011 billion and earnings per share of Rs.22.09.

The Board of Directors announced an interim cash dividend for the quarter

ended December 31, 2022 @ Rs. 2.25 per share i.e. 22.50 percent. This is in addition to interim dividend already paid @ Rs.1.75 per share i.e. 17.50 percent to its shareholders. The dividend will be paid to the shareholders whose names will appear in the Register of Members on March 07, 2023.

During the period under review, the Company paid Rs. 57.835 billion on account of Taxation. On the exploration and development side company recorded significant enhancement in seismic efforts and drilling activities.

The Share Transfer

Books of the Company will be closed from March 08, 2023 to March 10, 2023 (both days inclusive). Transfers received at the CDC Share Registrar Services Limited, CDC House, 99-B, Block "B", S.M.C.H.S., Main Shahrah-e-Faisal, Karachi 74400 at the close of business on March 07, 2023 will be treated in time for the purpose of above entitlement to the transferees.

The Board of Directors appreciated the efforts of the management for taking effective steps for the implementation of company's aggressive exploration program.

FPCCI hails support of Governor KP to traders

KARACHI (APP): President Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) Irfan Iqbal Sheikh has welcomed the support of Governor KPK, Haji Ghulam Ali, to the business, industry and trade community on the line of FPCCI-proposed Charter of Economy.

Governor KPK gave this message during his visit to the FPCCI Head Office Karachi along with other notable parliamentarians, said a statement on Wednesday.

Haji Ghulam Ali con-

gratulated the entire business community of Pakistan in general & FPCCI in particular for the comeback of Pakistan's representative as the Vice President of the trade alliance of 27 countries, i.e. Asia-Pacific Chamber of Commerce & Industry (CACC).

He added that the newly-elected VP CACC from Pakistan, Khurram Tariq Sayeed, will help bring a lot of trade opportunities, investments, JVs and business collaborations to Pakistan using his influence & goodwill at CACC.

VP CACC & a former VP FPCCI Khurram Tariq Sayeed pointed out that energy security is Pakistan's biggest issue – be its uninterrupted supplies; affordability & efficiency; management of circular debts of electricity & gas sectors; cheap power production and environment-friendly electricity plants.

He called for facilitating and incentivizing renewable and clean energy power plants to enable the business community to invest in power plants on their own.

Tokyo shares drop on US rate hike fears

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks fell on Wednesday as US bond yields climbed, with investors spooked by the prospect of yet more Federal Reserve interest rate hikes.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index dropped 1.34 percent, or 368.78 points, to close at 27,104.32, while the broader Topix index lost 1.11 percent, or 22.21 points, to 1,975.25.

Selling dominated the market after Wall Street shares plunged on worries about the outlook for the US economy and corporate earnings.

Global market sentiment cooled as the yield on the 10-year US Treasury bond climbed closer to four per-

cent -- seen as the latest sign that markets expect more central bank action to counter inflation.

This suggests "there is considerable momentum behind the growing consensus that the Fed will hold rates higher for longer in a more robust economic environment", said Stephen Innes, of SPI Asset Management.

A deceleration of the dollar's gains against the yen also encouraged the selling of exporter shares, IwaiCosmo Securities said.

The greenback bought 134.81 yen against 134.98 yen on Tuesday in New York.

Many investors also refrained from making

major moves before a national holiday in Japan on Thursday.

"Investors shied away from active trade," IwaiCosmo said, adding that the market moved in a narrow range in the afternoon.

Market heavyweights dragged the Nikkei, with SoftBank Group down 2.18 percent at 5,576 yen and Tokyo Electron, which makes tools to build semiconductors, 1.70 percent lower at 44,590 yen.

Nissan tumbled 3.31 percent to 520 yen, Toyota fell 1.32 percent to 1,865 yen, Nintendo dropped 1.85 percent to 5,312 yen and Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group eased 0.81 percent to 975 yen.

Nestle, Telenor joins hand to address iron deficiency in child



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Nestlé and Telenor Pakistan have joined forces to address the issue of iron deficiency. On 20th February, 2023, both companies signed a contract to work together to ensure that children in Pakistan do not suffer from iron deficiency.

According to School Age Children Health and Nutrition Survey (SCANS)

Punjab & Sindh 2020, 9 out of 10 children in Pakistan have inadequate iron in their diet, which could lead to iron deficiency.

To achieve this, Nestlé will be providing extensive information on balanced diets, nutritional requirements, symptoms of iron deficiency, and how to prevent it with iron-rich foods. Telenor will be amplifying this information through live shows on their plat-

form, Khushaal Watan.

This partnership aims to leverage technology as a platform to spread awareness about child nutrition and iron deficiency in Pakistan, so that the nation can tackle this problem together. The live shows will educate parents to help ensure that their children attain a balanced diet, so that they are not at risk of being iron deficient.

Khurram Zia, Business

Executive Officer-Dairy, Nestlé Pakistan commented on the partnership, "At Nestlé, we are committed to being a force for good, by improving the health and well-being of people around the world. Today, I am proud to announce that Nestlé and Telenor have joined forces to promote children's health and wellness through this innovative initiative. Through this partnership, we aim to raise awareness and educate communities about child nutrition and iron deficiency in Pakistan, utilizing technology to drive positive change.

One of our pillar brands, Nestlé BUNYAD aims to create a strong foundation for a better tomorrow by addressing the issue of iron deficiency. We believe that by working together, we can make a meaningful impact and help create a healthier future for all." By working together, Nestlé & Telenor Pakistan aim to make a meaningful impact on the upcoming generations so that their future is not hindered and they can have a stronger foundation for a better life.

'Kazakhstan to launch direct flights between Almaty, Lahore'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Kazakh Ambassador Yezhan Kistafin said on Wednesday that Kazakhstan was starting direct flights between Almaty and Lahore from April, and Almaty and Karachi from May this year to help promote business to business, and people to people relations between both the countries.

"President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev will visit Pakistan this year, which will start a new chapter of trade and economic relations between the two countries", the ambassador said while addressing the business community during his visit to Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI).

Yezhan said that 20 MoUs would be signed during the visit of Kazakhstan's president to further strengthen the cooperation between the two countries in multiple fields. He also extended invita-

tion to the businesspeople to visit Kazakhstan to join the launch of direct flights.

He appreciated the role of Zafar Bakhtawari, former president of ICCI for first-ever direct flights between the two countries. He said a delegation of Pakistan's businesswomen would also visit Kazakhstan to explore business cooperation with Kazakh counterparts.

"Kazakhstan intends to sign a transit trade agreement, and agreement between the banking sectors of both the countries that will provide a legal framework to their business communities for bilateral trade promotion", he added. "Kazakhstan provides Pakistan easy access to Eurasian and Central Asian markets and Pakistan should take advantage of this potential.

"Delegations from both sides will exchange visits this year that would take

the Pak-Kazakhstan relations to the next level", he said.

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President ICCI offered that ICCI would like to host a dinner reception in honour of the President of Kazakhstan during his visit to Pakistan. He urged both the countries to focus on improving trade ties as their current bilateral trade was quite low.

He welcomed the launch of direct flights and assured that the ICCI delegation would visit Kazakhstan to join its inaugural ceremony. He said that direct flights between Islamabad and Astana should also be started soon to connect the capitals of both countries.

He said that Pakistani ports provide the shortest route to landlocked Kazakhstan to the Arabian Sea and emphasized that both countries should establish land and railways links to enhance business

relations.

"Both countries can cooperate in many fields, including construction, agriculture, energy, textiles, pharmaceuticals, tourism, engineering equipment, machinery, banking and finance for mutual benefits", he added.

He invited Kazakh investors to invest in CPEC and in other sectors of Pakistan's economy, and assured that ICCI would cooperate in connecting them with partners in Pakistan.

Faaz Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI said that Pakistan and Kazakhstan were gateways for each other to get easy access to their respective regional markets, and urged for close cooperation to take advantage of this potential.

Zafar Bakhtawari termed the launch of direct flights "a historic development between Pakistan and Kazakhstan."

Asian markets drop as traders contemplate higher-for-longer rates

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian markets sank Wednesday following hefty losses on Wall Street as still-strong economic data fanned expectations that US interest rates will go higher and stay there longer than expected.

Traders are now awaiting the release of minutes from the Federal Reserve's latest policy meeting hoping for an idea about officials' views on how much and how far to lift borrowing costs.

All three main indexes in New York plunged at least two percent Tuesday, with forecast-beating pur-

chasing managers index data showing the US economy remained in rude health despite almost a year of rate hikes and elevated inflation.

The readings followed a massive surge in new jobs in January and a slower-than-hoped drop in inflation, piling pressure on the Fed to continue tightening policy, which many fear could spark a recession.

Adding to the dark mood were downbeat 2023 projections from retail titans Walmart and Home Depot, who noted the impact of inflation and

higher interest rates on consumer health.

They also essentially put to bed any talk of the Fed pausing its rate hikes and even cutting rates by the end of the year.

"A tight labour market and resilient consumer demand could goad the Federal Reserve to maintain its rate hiking campaign into the summertime," said Jeffrey Roach, chief economist for LPL Financial.

"Investors should expect volatility until markets and central bankers come to agreement on the expected path for interest

rates."

In early Asian trade, Tokyo, Seoul, Taipei and Manila were down more than one percent, while there were also losses in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Sydney, Singapore, Wellington and Jakarta.

The Fed minutes, which are due to be released later Wednesday, are a key focal point for traders.

They come after a number of policymakers have lined up to warn of more tightening to come as they try to bring inflation back down to their two percent target from the current levels above six percent.



In brief

Son banned for doping

ASTANA (AP): A weightlifter from Kazakhstan who won a bronze medal at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 has been banned for eight years for doping. The Weightlifting Federation of the Republic of Kazakhstan (WFRK) said Wednesday that Igor Son, who won the bronze in the men's 61-kilogram category in Tokyo, was among six weightlifters from the country to receive doping bans. It was first reported in March 2022 that they had tested positive in samples taken by Kazakhstan's anti-doping authorities. It's the second career doping ban for Son, who served a seven-month sanction in 2015. The WFRK said the positive test would not lead to Son being stripped of his Olympic medal. "This out-of-competition testing was undertaken after six months following the international competitions where (the athletes) had taken part, so there is no issue of disqualifying their results or returning their medals. I especially want to emphasize this in relation to the Olympic award of Igor Son," WFRK general secretary Aldiyar Nuralinov said in a statement. Kazakhstan has a long history of doping in elite-level weightlifting.

The Central Asian nation has been stripped of medals from the 2008, 2012 and 2016 Olympics for various breaches of anti-doping rules. National teams can lose future Olympic places if they have repeated doping cases — a sanction which has applied to Kazakhstan in the past — or be barred from competitions. Nuralinov said that would not happen in this case because Son and the other athletes tested positive in national-level tests within Kazakhstan and not at international events.

Saudi Arabia send first female team

RIYADH (Agencies): Women's sport in Saudi Arabia reached a new milestone this week as the conservative kingdom sent their first female team to an International Tennis Federation (ITF) event. The Asia/Oceania pre-qualifying event of Billie Jean King Cup Juniors, hosted this week in Colombo, Sri Lanka, is the first time Saudi Arabia has been represented by a female team at an ITF event. "This is an amazing experience, and it is so empowering," Saudi Arabia captain Areej Farah told ITF. "Taking part in this event is a big step for women's tennis in Saudi and we are all very proud to represent our country and do our best. "Watching doors open for our young Saudi female athletes is just beyond exciting. I feel like I'm living through them, and I honestly thank this team for trusting me and allowing me this opportunity to guide them." Although recent reforms have given women in Saudi Arabia more freedoms, many of their rights remain restricted.

Saudi Arabia's women's football team only played their first match in February 2022, while Saudi women were banned from attending fixtures in stadiums until 2017. "It's groundbreaking because Saudi Arabia has a goal of expanding the number of women in sports, and being a part of that just makes us feel so lucky," Dania Alzuhair, representing Saudi Arabia at the 16-and-under team event, added. "Billie Jean King Cup is a huge international event, and we are so proud to take part in it." The ITF has been working with the Saudi Arabian Tennis Federation in the development of junior initiatives over the last few years, it said.

President for promoting football in Pakistan, incentivizing athletes



ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday urged the need to incentivize the football players and promote football in the country by adopting international best practices in the field of football.

The president, talking to the members of Pakistan's National Men's and Women's Football teams, at Aiwa-e-Sadr, called for developing linkages with international partners and

promoting public-private partnerships, besides providing better training facilities and coaching to the football players.

He said that the FIFA-appointed Normalization Committee for the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) should speed up its efforts to streamline the issues related to football affairs in the country. The Chairman of the FIFA-appointed Normalization Committee

(FNC), Haroon Ahmed Malik and members of the FNC were also present during the meeting.

Welcoming the athletes, the president said that the sport of football was quite popular in Pakistan and there were millions of football fans in the country and the game should be promoted at the district and club levels.

He advised the athletes to make their country proud

through their performance and work for improving the country's image as they were Pakistan's ambassadors in the field of sports.

The president remarked that he had high hopes from the players to lead Pakistan in regional and international competitions. He regretted that the internal politics within the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) had affected its performance and expressed the

hope that with the help of the FIFA-appointed Normalization Committee, there would be a visible improvement in the performance of PFF.

Haroon Ahmed Malik briefed the president that over 7 million people in Pakistan played football, and that FNC was making efforts to improve the functioning and administration of PFF through the FNC.

He informed that Women's National Team played their first international game in eight years and Men's National Team played their first international game in four years.

He stated that so far almost 4600 clubs from 163 districts of the country had been registered and the documentation and physical scrutiny process would be completed within the given timelines. It was told that Men's National Team would participate in the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifiers and Women's National Team would play in the Olympics Qualifiers for Paris 2024 this year.

Djokovic hopes for positive news on U.S. tournaments participation

BELGRADE (Agencies): Novak Djokovic said on Wednesday he was hoping for a positive outcome shortly, having applied for special permission to enter the United States to compete in ATP Masters 1000 events in Indian Wells and Miami that begin next month.

Djokovic, one of the most high-profile athletes unvaccinated against COVID-19, added he would return to the ATP tour in Dubai next week after winning a record-extending 10th Australian Open title and his 22nd Grand Slam last month. "My plans after Dubai depend on the U.S. I'm waiting for a reply, it's not on me... I will know soon," world number one Djokovic told reporters after practice in Belgrade. "Everything is in process. I'm thankful to the Indians Wells and Miami communities for their support. They would like me to be able to play in their tournaments... I'm looking forward to a positive decision coming soon, but it's not in my hands."

The U.S. vaccine requirement for foreign air travellers is not expected to be lifted before the main draw begins at Indian Wells on March 9 and the Miami Open later in the month, meaning Djokovic could miss out for a second straight year. U.S. President Joe Biden's administration said last month it would lift COVID emergency declarations on May 11, but Djokovic — named on the Indian Wells entry list — said he had submitted the required documentation for special permission.

Indian Wells tournament director Tommy Haas said last month it would be a "disgrace" if Djokovic was not allowed to compete in the U.S. in 2023 after the Serbian also missed last year's major at Flushing Meadows.

Djokovic, who missed last year's Australian Open and was deported from the country due to his vaccine status, has said he would skip Grand Slams rather than have a COVID shot. "Last year I missed Indian Wells, Miami and the U.S. Open swing so it won't be the first time if it happens (again). I hope it doesn't," Djokovic said.

"That's all I can do because my position stays the same... The U.S. Open is still far away so I hope I'll be able to be there. It's one of the four biggest events in our sport's history. "Of course I'd love to be there. I've received the most wonderful support from the New York and American crowd during the 2021 final I lost to Daniil Medvedev. But I experienced something that I never did there before. "So I want to go back and connect with people and hopefully play my best tennis and get another trophy there."

IOC says Games can 'inspire peace-building' amid calls for Russia ban

BERN (Agencies): The International Olympic Committee says the Games "can inspire us to solve problems by building bridges" amid calls to uphold the ban on Russian and Belarusian athletes for Paris 2024.

The United Kingdom is among 36 countries that have pledged to support an ongoing ban, which was put in place following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The IOC said the Olympics "can open the door to dialogue and peace-building".

It is almost one year since Russia's invasion began on 24 February 2022.

IOC president Thomas Bach has insisted that the organisation is not on the wrong side of history following criticism over the potential inclusion of Russian and Belarusian athletes at the 2024 Paris Olympics. But UK culture secretary Lucy Frazer said the IOC's plans were "not credible" after hosting representatives from countries including France, Germany, Poland, the United States and Canada at a summit earlier this month. Ukraine, which was not part of the summit, has threatened to boycott the next Games if the IOC allows Russian athletes to compete. In its statement on what it described as a "grim anniversary", the IOC said it "reaffirms its unwavering solidarity with the Ukrainian athletes", adding: "We all want to see a strong team from the National Olympic Committee of Ukraine at the Olympic Games Paris 2024 and the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026".

"The Olympic Games cannot prevent wars and conflicts. Nor can they address all the political and social challenges in our world. This is the realm of politics," the IOC said. "But the Olympic Games can set an example for a world where everyone respects the same rules and one another. They can inspire us to solve problems by building bridges, leading to better understanding among people. "They can open the door to dialogue and peace-building in ways that exclusion and division do not." The IOC called on federations to exclude athletes from Russia and Belarus following the invasion of Ukraine and banned the nations from the Winter Paralympics in March 2022 - though athletes were allowed to compete under a neutral flag. However, Ukraine president Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Russian participation at the Olympics "cannot be covered up with pretend neutrality or a white flag" - adding the nation has "no place at sports and Olympic competitions" while the invasion continues.



MULTAN: Multan Sultan's player Muhammad Rizwan plays a shot during PSL 8 cricket match between Multan Sultans and Karachi Kings.

Multan Sultans edge past Karachi Kings in yet another PSL cliffhanger

ISLAMABAD (Monitoring DESK): In yet another Pakistan Super League (PSL) 8 cliffhanger, the Multan Sultans narrowly defeated Karachi Kings by three runs on Wednesday to pull off a last-ball victory, with Muhammad Rizwan's maiden PSL century the highlight of the night.

The formidable Sultans finished at 196-2, as the team's in-form skipper Rizwan rained boundaries at the stadium. The right-handed batter, who had already scored two half-centuries from the four matches that the Sultans have played so far in this year's PSL, remained unbeaten on 110 from 64 balls. His knock consisted of 10 fours and four sixes.

The Sultans' skipper got ample support from his opening partner Shan Masood, who scored an impressive half-century (51 runs from 33 balls) before

former Pakistan captain Shoaib Malik dismissed him. The aggressive Rilee Rossouw walked in next, making 29 runs from 21 balls before he was dismissed by Mohammad Omar.

However, the Kings had an apt response for the Sultans as well, giving them a run for their money. James Vince smashed the Sultans' bowlers all around the park, scoring an impressive 75 runs from 34 balls. He smashed seven boundaries and six sixes before he was run out by Usama Mir.

Mir was instrumental in picking up the first wicket for the Kings, trapping opener Matthew Wade leg before wicket when he scored only 20 runs from 14 balls. Haider Ali disappointed by making only 12 runs before Khushdil Shah dismissed him.

Kings' skipper Imad Wasim remained unbeaten on 46 runs from 26 balls,

taking the fight to the Sultans by smashing five huge sixes. Needing five runs off the last ball, Wasim was unable to finish the game for the Kings with a six, managing only a single run off the last ball.

Ever since losing the opening match of the tournament to Lahore Qalandars, the Sultans have won four consecutive matches. The 2021 PSL champions have beaten Islamabad United, Peshawar Zalmi, Quetta Gladiators, and the Karachi Kings in a row.

The Kings, on the other hand, started the tournament on a low note, losing three consecutive matches to Zalmi, United, and the Gladiators. However, Imad Wasim's side found form in its last match against arch-rivals Qalandars, beating them convincingly by 67 runs to win their first match of the tournament.

FG Polo, MP register victories as 2nd President Polo Cup continues

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): FG Polo and Master Paints (MP) registered victories on the second day of the 2nd President of Pakistan Polo Cup 2023 sponsored by Takmeel Square here at the Jinnah Polo Fields on Wednesday.

Raul Laplacette shone in FG Polo's 6-4 triumph over Diamond Paints in the first match of the day. Raul Laplacette was in sublime form and amused the spectators with his excellent polo skills and techniques as he fired in five fabulous goals. Mian Abbas Mukhtar also played well and converted one goal in FG Polo's tally. Chulo Corti banged in a brace while Nico Roberts and Mir Huzaifa Ahmed struck one goal each for Diamond Paints.

FG Polo started the match with two back-to-back goals to earn a 2-0 lead but Diamond Paints bounced back with a conversion of a 40-yard penalty to reduce the margin to 1-2. Diamond Paints dominated the second chukker by thrashing in two back-to-back goals to gain a slight 3-2 lead but FG Polo scored an equalizer to level the score at 3-3. In the third and fourth chukkers, FG Polo team turned the tables by converting three goals against one by Diamond Paints to win the match by 6-4.

Manuel Crispo excelled in Master Paints' 8½-6 triumph over DS Polo in the second match. In-form Manuel Crispo did the magic with mallet and polo pony and fired in four fantastic goals while Pelagio Balazaidi and Agha Musa Ali Khan thrashed in two goals each for Master Paints. Hissam Ali Hyder though played extremely well as he converted five impressive goals and Bilal Haye struck one, yet their efforts couldn't yield fruit for DS Polo.

Both the teams started the match well but Master Paints played a bit better polo to take a slight 3-2 lead just before the end of the first chukker. DS Polo dominated the second chukker by slamming in two goals to take a slight 4-3 lead. Master Paints made a strong comeback by firing in four fabulous goals against one by DS Polo to gain a 7-5 lead. Both the sides scored one goal each with Master Paints, having a half goal handicap advantage, won the match by 8½-6. Two important matches will be played tomorrow (Thursday).

Anderson: England bowler returns to top of Test rankings

LONDON (Agencies): England's leading wicket-taker James Anderson has returned to the top of the International Cricket Council's Test bowling rankings.

The seamer returned match figures of 7-54 in the first-Test win in New Zealand to end Australia captain Pat Cummins' four-year reign at the top. At 40 years 207 days, Anderson is the oldest bowler to hold top spot since Australian Clarrie Grimmett in 1936.

It is the sixth time he has been number one, most recently in 2018. India spinner Ravichandran Ashwin moves into second after taking 14 wickets in the first two Tests against Australia, while Cummins drops to third.

Anderson has 682 Test wickets, third on the all-time list behind Sri Lanka spinner Muttiah Muralitharan (800) and late Australia great Shane Warne (708).

During the first Test in Mount Maunganui Anderson and Stuart Broad became the most successful bowling partnership in Test history, passing Warne and Glenn McGrath's record of 1,001 wickets. The second Test starts in Wellington on Friday (22:00 GMT Thursday).

New Zealand v England: Ben Stokes will miss end of IPL for Ireland Test: England captain Ben Stokes will miss the end of the Indian Premier League in order to prepare for the Test against Ireland at Lord's.

The four-day Test - England's last before the Ashes - starts on 1 June, four days after the IPL final. All-rounder Stokes, 31, was bought by Chennai Super Kings for £1.6m in December's auction. "I'll be making sure I give myself enough time to get back and play the Ireland game," said Stokes.

Jofra Archer, Mark Wood, Harry Brook, Jonny Bairstow and Joe Root are the other likely members of England's Test squad taking part in the IPL, which runs from 31 March to 28 May. Last year New Zealand's Trent Boult went from playing in the IPL final on 29 May to the first Test against England at Lord's four days later. Stokes said he will have discussions with the England players over what they feel they need to do in order to be ready for the series against Australia, which begins on 16 June.

"Those five games are obviously the big one of the summer and you've got to think about what lads want," said Stokes. "You also have to think about is if something was to happen in the Ireland game and we lose someone for the Ashes. "It's just one of those where you have to weigh up the options of what the individual person actually wants out of that week against the need to play in that game."

Stokes will make his return to the IPL this year after missing the 2022 edition. In his last game in the competition, for Rajasthan Royals in 2021, he suffered a broken finger that would eventually require two operations and contributed to him taking a break from cricket later that year. Stokes was speaking in Wellington before England's second Test against New Zealand on Friday (22:00 GMT Thursday). The tourists are looking to clinch the series after winning the first Test in Mount Maunganui by 267 runs.

Real Madrid mount stunning fightback to thrash sorry Liverpool 5-2

LIVERPOOL (Agencies): Vinicius Junior and Karim Benzema scored twice as Real Madrid produced another stunning Champions League fightback from 2-0 down to thrash Liverpool 5-2 in the first leg of their last 16 tie at Anfield on Tuesday.

Darwin Nunez and Mohamed Salah had given the hosts a perfect start in a repeat of last season's Champions League final. But Vinicius struck twice to level by half-time and, after Eder Militao had given Carlo Ancelotti's men the lead, Benzema's double put the holders well on the way to the quarterfinals.

Madrid's 1-0 victory when the sides met in Paris last May was overshadowed by chaotic scenes outside the Stade de France that put the lives of supporters at risk.

An independent report into the organizational failings published last week found UEFA to bear "primary responsibility" for failures which "almost led to disaster".

To rub salt into the wounds of supporters, UEFA had initially tried to pin the blame on fans for arriving late despite tens of thousands having been held for hours outside the stadium.



The Liverpool support responded by drowning out the Champions League anthem with a chorus of boos, while a series of banners in the Kop stand took aim at UEFA and the French authorities.

Once the action got underway, the players produced the spectacle expected of a clash between two clubs with a combined 20 European Cups. Liverpool have suffered a huge hangover from missing out on both the Premier League and Champions League by

the finest of margins last season.

Jürgen Klopp's men sit eighth in the Premier League but briefly turned back the clock to explode out of the blocks. Nunez produced a magical finish to flick home Salah's pass inside four minutes.

Thibaut Courtois broke Liverpool hearts in Paris with a string of stunning saves that earned the Belgian man-of-the-match.

Madrid overcame two-goal deficits to Paris Saint-Germain and Manchester City on their road to a

14th European Cup last season and were forced to do so again by their normally solid goalkeeper. A loose touch from Courtois handed Salah Liverpool's second on a plate as the Egyptian became the Reds' all-time top goalscorer in European competition with 42.

But the defending champions again showed remarkable powers of recovery to turn the tie around in little over 30 minutes of play. Vinicius was the match-winner in last season's final and now has five goals in four appearances against Liverpool. The Brazilian flashed a shot into the far corner to get the comeback started on 21 minutes.

Madrid still needed some desperate defending from Dani Carvajal and Militao to prevent Salah and Nunez restoring Liverpool's two-goal lead in a goalmouth scramble.

But another calamitous error from one of the world's leading goalkeepers gifted Madrid an equalizer when Alisson Becker's attempted clearance bounced off Vinicius and into an unguarded net. Only a brilliant last-ditch challenge from Andy Robertson prevented Rodrygo from putting Madrid in front before halftime.



In brief

IRSA releases 108,600 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 108,600 cusecs water from various rim stations with an inflow of 65,600 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1469.12 feet and was 71.12 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 18,400 cusecs while outflow as 50,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1116.20 feet, which was 66.20 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 18,600 cusecs and 30,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 62,700, 44,600, 31,100 and 6,100 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 16,700 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 4,100 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Wednesday notified a power suspension programme for Thursday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM. Islamabad Circle, Abpara, Shakraparian, Gulshan Jinnah, Koral, Sohdran Road, Navy, New Aziz Chowk, Fazal Ghimal, SES, I-10/2, G-13/1, D-12/2, Shahpur, Company Bagh, Gharidal, MCM, Kotli Satian Balawara, Mangyal, Anguri, NCP, Shahdara, Shahpur, Khayaban Iqbal, Peer Sohawa, Quaid-e-Azam University, Punjab House, Buri Imam, Mandala, Athal, I-8/4, I-8 Center Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Kashmir Road, Adamji Road, Rahmatabad, I.I, CBR, I, Parkview, MSF, KH Road, Defense Road, Padyal, Shah Jeevan, RA Bazar, Chowk Pandori, DHA Valley, Radco, Kaler Syedan, Lahtrar, II, New Chowah, Fazal Ahmed, Nara Matore, Mandra, Industrial, Bahar Kalyal, Nishan Haider, CB Khan-2, Park View, Morgah, RBISE Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Commercial Center, New Mulpur, Shakrial, Gulzar Quaid, Muslim Town, Zafarul Haq, Iqbal Road, II, Sarafa Bazar, Jinnah Road, Rajahabad, Dhok Najo, Asghar Mall, Azizabad, Masryal Road, Madina Colony, Radio Pak, Nast Road.

Dry weather to prevail in country

ISLAMABAD (APP): Mainly dry weather is expected in most parts of the country during the next 24 hours, according to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD). While cold weather will prevail in hilly areas during the night and morning hours. According to the synoptic situation, continental air was prevailing over most parts of the country. During the last 24 hours, dry weather prevailed over most parts of the country, while cold in the northern parts. The lowest minimum temperatures recorded were Kalam -07 C and Leh -05 C.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Saudi Arabia Mr. Nawaf Bin Said Al-Malki called on Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf at Parliament House.

Shazia stresses for more efforts to ensure transgenders' rights and financial empowerment

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety and Chairperson of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Shazia Marri Wednesday called for initiating more efforts to address enormous challenges being confronted by the transgender community, ensuring their rights and financial empowerment.

She expressed these views while speaking at a seminar titled: "Financial Inclusion among Transgender Community in Pakistan", organized by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SPDI). The minister said that BISP has exempted the condition of minimum Proxy Means Test (PMT) score for the transgender community in view of the socio-economic hardships and exclusion being faced by them.

BISP has introduced Hybrid Social Protection Scheme for transgenders to educate and help them in better utilizing their financial resources. She reiterated the need for social awareness and acceptance for the community to encourage them to register with NADRA which will also facilitate them in accessing BISP assistance. Executive Director, SDPI, Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri said that transgenders are the marginalized among the marginalized communities. He called for bringing them into the mainstream to alleviate their economic hardships.

He stressed the need for creating avenues for transparent targeted subsidies for their financial inclusion and empowerment. He also hailed the

increase in BISP stipend for transgender persons. Unless transgenders are not financially strengthened, their economic potential cannot be tapped to catalyze their social inclusion, he added.

Reem Sharif, Transgender Rights Expert at the Ministry of Human Rights and Advisor at Tahafuz, Punjab Police, said so far 3,100 out of 5,700 transgenders have been registered with NADRA while the rest are avoiding it due to the fear of social stigma. She said that predominantly transgenders do not earn from legal sources which is a big hindrance in their way of having access to financial services. She reiterated that the transgenders demand equal respect and dignity, the right of education without discrimination, protection from harassment and sexual exploitation.

Bindiya Rana, a transgender activist and President of Gender Interactive Alliance (GIA), said that the Government of Pakistan has facilitated the transgender community in getting CNICs, but the international community is not properly aware of it, which is creating additional hurdles.

She pointed out that due to lack of awareness of Pakistan's laws on transgenders, they are often barred from international traveling and even for Hajj and Umrah. Highlighting the issues confronting the transgender community, she said that there is no designated ward in hospitals or a dedicated place in hospitals for them.

Transgenders are still facing problems in accessing banking services,

she added. She suggested including transgenders in Census survey teams so that they might identify transgender households. She stressed on creating awareness to fight social stigma and increasing acceptance and assimilation of transgender community.

Dr Shafqat Munir, Deputy Executive Director (Policy), SDPI said that transgender community is facing the challenge of identity and lack of social acceptance based on their identity. He said that being born with a particular gender is beyond anyone's choice whereas accepting and respecting someone irrespective of gender is one's own choice.

He called for ensuring access to education and financial inclusion to mainstream the transgenders in society. Shahana Abbas Shani, Transgender Rights Activist, said that it should be ensured that the transgender community has got its CNICs with their identification.

Similarly, it should also be ensured that they are being facilitated in receiving educational and financial services, she maintained. She stressed the need for a tailored policy in consultation with the transgender community and customizing it based on the realities and customs of the country. Farwa Qureshi, Transgender Rights Activist, said that dissent and rejection from the family force transgenders to move out of their houses at a very young age. She further said that social rejection and lack of access to education and employment force transgenders to get involved in illegal occupations that must be addressed.

Amin inaugurates 'Gokina Smart Village Project' in federal capital

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Syed Amin Ul Haque here on Wednesday inaugurated 'Gokina Smart Village Project'. The pilot project comes under the umbrella of Smart Villages of Pakistan, a nationwide initiative launched by the MoITT in 2021 together with Universal Service Fund (USF), International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and Huawei.

Lauding the efforts of USF, ITU and Huawei, the minister said, "It is anticipated that the pilot projects and the Smart Pakistan Village initiative as a whole will help overcome key challenges that people in rural areas face such as limited access to healthcare, education, financial, and digital services, unemployment and lack of income-creation opportunities, gender gaps, and a rural-urban divide exacerbated by uneven technology proliferation.

The Smart Village Pakistan Projects will be initiated in all provinces very soon." Highlighting the Gokina Smart Village Project details, Amin said that three priority areas were identified through the needs assessment study in Gokina, a valley settlement located 21 kilometers from Islamabad. Initially, one Smart Village will be established in Islamabad, followed by one each in Punjab, Balochistan, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Gilgit-Baltistan. Education-Gokina village has a high school for boys and for girls. However, it was found that there were no science teachers, particularly in girls' school, which created hurdles for students in getting benefits both, in terms of learning as well as competing for the future professional opportunities. The project has identified an e-education provider (Tele-Taleem) to bridge this gap.

The minister said that there was a medical center in the village with limited to no

medical services available. The health worker would be responsible to provide very basic health advice and services to the community members. It was also highlighted that the biggest challenge in getting access to health services was that it was time consuming, as it involved commuting to Islamabad. The project has identified an e-health provider (Sehat Kahani) to bridge this gap. Digital Skills & Entrepreneurship- It was found that there was a clear need and demand for digital skills enhancement and entrepreneurship, whereby community members can utilize a hybrid model of digital as well as non-digital tools to become entrepreneurs in the identified areas like fashion, stitching, handicrafts and other home businesses for women. Modern agricultural skills, chef skills for local youth, marketing of products and access to finance and market for existing and upcoming

businessmen in the communities was also highlighted. Speaking on the occasion, NADRA Chairman Tariq Malik said,

"After the success of Mobile NADRA vehicle, we are excited to launch the NADRA Motorcycle Services - starting from Gokina Smart Village, and shall soon be initiated all over Pakistan - where people will be able to avail all NADRA facilities close to their homes, such as family registration certificate, child registration certificate, and more."

Earlier in his opening remarks, Haaris Mahmood Chaudhary, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of USF said, "Gokina Smart Village project is an exemplary model of how we envision the future of digital inclusivity in Pakistan. Sustainable digital growth is key to accelerating rural development and supporting the socioeconomic stability of individuals.

Raja reaffirms fraternal ties with Saudi Arabia

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speaker National Assembly, Raja Pervez Ashraf here on Wednesday said that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia had enjoyed long standing fraternal ties rooted firmly in common religion, shared values and culture.

"Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have stood by each other, through thick and thin" he said this while taking to Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki who called on him.

He reiterated that Pakistan remained firmly committed to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia as the country attached great importance to its relationship with Saudi Arabia; and the people and government of Pakistan deeply appreciated the support provided by Saudi Arabia to Pakistan during hard times.

Additionally, the recent leadership level exchanges had been extremely successful in diversifying avenues of cooperation between both the brotherly countries, the speaker added.

He said, that Pakistan deeply valued KSA's support on FATF, bilaterally and

through GCC.

The role played by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the OIC for important Muslim causes, especially on Palestine, Kashmir and Afghanistan had been very crucial, he added.

The two sides expressed satisfaction over the current level of cooperation and stressed the need to further enhance it in various areas of mutual interest.

During the meeting, the ambassador extended an invitation to the speaker to visit Saudi Arabia.

The speaker accepted the invitation and expressed hope that the visit would further deepen relations, through exchange of delegations. The speaker while taking the opportunity, congratulated the ambassador on the occasion of Saudi Arabia's Founding Day, and expressed his best wishes for the continued progress and prosperity of the Kingdom. The ambassador thanked the speaker for his kind words and reiterated the Kingdom's commitment to further strengthening its deep-rooted ties with Pakistan.

'Political stability, national consensus need of hour'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed of Pakistan Muslim League- Nawaz (PML-N) Wednesday stressed the need for a national consensus and political stability to steer the country out of the current economic and political challenges.

Talking to a private news channel, he said it is the need of the hour to initiate collective efforts to combat economic challenges as the country's stability was an important task in the present situation.

"Some political leaders were trying to create chaos and anarchy in the country to take political benefit", he

said, adding, however, they should shun such attitudes in the larger interests of the country.

All political parties and national institutions should focus on developing consensus as Pakistan is passing through a critical situation in its march toward the future, he added.

Replying to a question, he said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was striving hard and working day and night to steer the country out of the crisis.

"Imran Khan's government got historic loans in last four years, but did not spend a single penny on development works and for

the welfare of the common man," he commented.

The PTI-led government had destroyed the country and continued to loot the national wealth for four years, he added.

The people could compare the performance of Imran Khan and Nawaz Sharif during their regimes in the past, he said, adding, PML-N is still committed to bringing Pakistan on the path of development.

Replying to another question, he criticized the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan had caused great damage to Pakistan's foreign policy and economy.

'Development of technical skills among youth pivotal for their economic uplift'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Rana Tanveer Hussain Wednesday said that the development of technical skills in the youth was pivotal in enabling them to become more productive partner of national development.

"All technical institutions in Pakistan need to play their part in equipping the youth of the country with the latest skills for achieving self sufficiency", he stated during a signing ceremony of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

The MoU was inked between National University of Modern Languages (NUML) and the National Skills University Islamabad (NSU) to exchange skill based and language proficiency trainings among each other. Speaking on the occasion, the minister reiterated the resolve of the present government to transform youth into skilled employees.

Highlighting the problem of language barrier that Pakistani labour faces in foreign countries, Rana Tanveer hoped the MoU and the subsequent trainings of the youth would enable them to become productive citizens and enhance their demand in

the foreign countries.

The minister was briefed that as per the MoU, the National Skills University would provide different skills-based technical education to NUML students in which they could develop expertise. Similarly, the NUML will provide national and international language proficiencies to the students at National Skills University Islamabad and its Muridke Campus in related languages.

NUML can also provide translation and interpretation services on demand to National Skills University.

Rana Tanveer was briefed that NSU and NUML would hold joint educational and research activities in addition to seminars, lectures, conferences, workshops and symposia. The scope of cooperation will also include special short-term and long-term academic programs and capacity training sessions and reciprocal visits of senior management of both the institutions. Rana Tanveer congratulated NSU and NUML on the signing of the MoU while hoping this would prove as an important milestone towards employment generation through equipping the students with the latest skills and language expertise.

PTI's court arrest campaign only aim to 'spread chaos, anarchy in country': Kayani

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to the Prime Minister for Economy and Energy, Bilal Azhar Kayani on Wednesday claimed that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leadership only wants to create anarchy and chaos in the country as Khan Sahib's so-called 'Jail Bhao Tehreek' would be the worst-failed event ever which is being started with bail applications.

"Imran Khan's political narrative was only based on 'hate' against Pakistan Muslim League and Pakistan People's party for his personal interests," he said while speaking on PTV News.

He said the PTI chief had launched the court arrest campaign but on the other hand, he himself submitted an application for bail. Replying to a question, Kayani said Imran Khan's four-year government had brought the punishment of economic destruction and inflation in the country, adding, it would take time to get rid of the devastation caused in the last four years.

To another question, he said PML-N always showed respect for the courts and its leadership presented themselves for accountability. The PML-N leadership faced fabricated cases during PTT's tenure, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Education Rana Tanveer Hussain chairing a meeting after MoU signing Ceremony between National Skill University and National University of Modern Languages.

Over six million children vaccinated in polio drive

ISLAMABAD (APP): An immunization drive to vaccinate over six million children under the age of five against the incurable polio virus has concluded in different parts of the country.

According to health officials, in Lahore, Faisalabad, and the seven districts of southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Bannu, D.I.Khan, Tank, North Waziristan, Upper South Waziristan, Lower South Waziristan and Lakki Marwat, the vaccination campaign targeted all children. Children in 30 other districts with union councils bordering Afghanistan, Afghan refugee camps, and areas that see frequent population movement, were also reached with the life-saving vaccine. Federal

Minister for National Health Services, Abdul Qadir Patel said that after January's nationwide vaccination campaign, this second drive was meant to provide added protection to children and stop the virus from circulating in our communities.

"Until we eradicate polio from Pakistan, it is crucial to ensure repeated vaccination for children under five to build their immunity against this infectious paralytic disease. We will not give up and there will be another campaign in March and more throughout the year because we must protect our children," he said.

He added that this is a crucial year for polio eradication in Pakistan because the country needs to meet its

global commitment to interrupting the transmission of wild poliovirus in 2023.

"We have been very successful in most parts of the country and now we are aggressively fighting the poliovirus in the last few districts where it remains. In the February campaign, we immunized nearly 6.3 million children," he added.

National Emergency Operations Coordinator Dr Shahzad Baig said the poliovirus travels with under-immunized people, which is why this campaign was specifically designed to vaccinate vulnerable children in communities that have frequent population movement and in Afghan refugee camps.

Women declare IE’s support

JAWZJIAN (Agencies): Hundreds of women in Jawzjan declared their support for the Islamic Emirate and the Islamic hijab. The women of Jawzjan, conducted a program under the title “we, the ladies of Jawzjan, support any decisions of supreme leader Sheikh Hibatullah Akhundzada” in any condition, at any time and in any place”. The participants of this ceremony termed the decisions of supreme leader as the source of progress for the society.

Forest to be rehabilitated

BADGHIS (Agencies): Agriculture officials said that 10,000 hectares of pistachio forest would be rehabilitated. The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock in a statement on Wednesday said that the pistachio forest will be rehabilitated under the framework of the ministry’s infrastructure projects in Abkamari district. The Provincial Agriculture Director Akhunzada Abdul Hai Munir said that a delegation has been appointed for the survey of the project.

Violating human rights: EU considers sanctions on IEA authorities

KABUL (Khaama Press): Annalena Baerbock German Foreign Minister has announced that after consultations with the European foreign ministers in Brussels, the EU is considering imposing a new set of sanctions on the Taliban authorities for repressing women in Afghanistan. German Foreign Minister has said that Afghan women and girls are currently faced with “systematic and gender-based restrictions” in the war-torn country. Germany, France, and the Netherlands in particular have proposed the introduction of sanctions on Afghanistan’s de facto authorities. “The entire world sees

with open eyes that the Taliban authorities are implementing extensive human rights restrictions on women and girls in Afghanistan,” Baerbock said. She further added that “this subject matter will be discussed in the next round of EU foreign ministers’ meetings. Erasing women from international humanitarian aid organizations is not acceptable. We as the European Union cannot and do not want to support the fact that humanitarian aid should be solely distributed by men for men.” It is believed that the new set of sanctions by the EU will affect the delivery of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. The supreme

leader of the Taliban, Hibatullah Akhundzada in November introduced a number of gender-based restrictions that barred women and girls from the right to get an education, work for the government and non-government aid organizations, or attend sports and other public activities. The latest moves prompted worldwide criticisms from aid organizations, human rights groups, and the international community, however, the Taliban-run administration has not yet reversed its rigid policies in this regard. Instead, the ruling regime emphasizes implementing strict Islamic Sharia laws in all walks of life.

Over 80,000 drug addicts collected: MoI



KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Interior said that more than 80,000 drug addicts were collected from across the country after the Islamic Emirate swept into power. Speaking at a press conference in Kabul on Tuesday, the Interior Ministry’s spokesman, Abdul Nafay Takor, said that the over 5,000 people have been arrested on charges of being involved in drug dealing. He said that more than 200 drug factories have been destroyed. “After the (Islamic Emirate took power), the drug addicts were collected. They are 82,000, of whom 26,850 have been

collected from Kabul,” Takor said. A spokesman for the Ministry of Public Health, Sharafat Zaman Amerkhail said there are a total of 60 rehabilitation centers with 10 of them dedicated to women and children in the country. He said that more than 28,000 drug addicts have been treated. “The Ministry of Public Health based on its plan and commitment over the past one and a half years in 34 provinces of the country, has activated the rehabilitation centers for drug addicts. It has a public awareness conference about addiction. It has held meetings at local levels for

countering narcotics and it also released public awareness in printed pieces,” Amerkhail said. “We are thankful to these people for all the services they provided. We hope they would be cooperative in the maintenance of the city,” said Nematullah Barakzai, an official at the Kabul Municipality. The Interior Ministry vowed to have a plan on track to identify the lands which are being cultivated with poppy in rural areas.

27 new districts to be established

KABUL (Agencies): The Interior Ministry of Afghanistan said that 27 newly founded districts in the country administrative will be added. In a statement, the Ministry of Interior said that these districts have been established in Helmand, Farah, Baghlan, Faryab, Sar-i-pul, Ghor, Badghis, Paktika, Zabul,

Turkish envoy meets Afghan Acting FM

KABUL (Khaama Press): Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi, Acting foreign minister of Afghanistan, met with Cihad Erginay, the Turkish ambassador in Kabul, to discuss enhancing bilateral relations. Muttaqi again extended the Afghan government and people’s condolences for the recent earthquake to his Turkish counterpart. He also assured that the government and the people of Afghanistan stood in strong solidarity with the people of Turkiye. He reiterated that Afghanistan would continue to assist its Muslim Turkish brothers as much as possible. More than 41,000 people have died in a devastating earthquake in Turkey. So far, Afghanistan has extended the aid of \$110,000 to the earthquake Turkish victims and \$55,000 to the Syrian people. On the other hand, Ambassador Erginay expressed his gratitude for the support, love and solidarity he has received from the people throughout Afghanistan. They added that 41,000 people have already died, and the death toll is expected to rise, making this earthquake appear to be the deadliest in the history of Turkey, according to a statement from the Ministry. Both sides emphasized the need for ongoing cooperation as they continued to go into detail about their respective political, economic, and other issues of interest.



KABUL: Turkish Ambassador Cihad Erginay meeting with Afghan Acting Foreign Minister Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi.

Work-for-food program begins in Badakhshan

B A D A K H S H A N (TOLONews): Local officials in Badakhshan announced the beginning of a work-for-food program. They added that in this six-month program, which includes irrigation and development of green areas, work will be provided for nearly 800 people, most of whom are in need.

“In the first month, the municipal administration will do the same thing, strengthening the green area in Faizabad,” said Mohammad Ismail Sami, financial head of the Municipality in Badakhshan. Meanwhile, some workers called on the Islamic Emirate to provide permanent work.

“We are so happy about working here,” said Zaki, a Badakhshan resident. “Four bags of flour, wheat, or something else is given us, and we work for them, we are so happy for this process,” said Abdul Khalil, a Badakhshan resident. “We want work so have some food, everyone is

poor and needs work to find food,” said Jamaluddin, a Badakhshan resident. “We asked the government for work, we want to work, we do not want charity,” said Saifullah, a Badakhshan resident. These people work 12 days a month and receive food that is worth 5,000 Afs, provided by the WFP.

Officials: 11 unfinished projects included in annual budget

KABUL (TOLONews): The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs said that eleven unfinished projects from past years that are near to completion will be included in the development budget for 1402 (solar year). According to a statement from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister of Afghanistan for Economic Affairs, these projects include roads, water supply networks, and health centers, and work will start soon. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Finance, said it had has asked the PM’s economic deputy to complete those projects that are already 50 to 80 per-

cent complete. “The Budget and Treasury department of the Ministry of Finance analyzed all unfinished budget projects and chose eleven large and small projects from them that are located in the cities and neighboring provinces, and they sent the list to the economic deputy of the PM and it has been confirmed by them,” said Ahmad Wali Haqmal, the Ministry of Finance’s spokesman. “The infrastructure projects that will be started in the provinces are aimed at achieving self-sufficiency in Afghanistan and can play an important role in the economic development of the coun-

try, in creating employment and in reducing unemployment,” said Abdul Latif Nazari, deputy of the Ministry of Economy. Meanwhile, the Chamber of Industry and Mines asked the Islamic Emirate to start other halted projects as well, praising the start of infrastructure projects as a positive move. “We hope that the government will take practical steps to work on half-finished projects and start and pay serious attention to new projects,” said Mohammad Karim Azimi, executive director of the Kabul Chamber of Industries and Mines. An economist said that

the beginning of unfinished projects in the nation creates jobs for citizens and is crucial to the growth of the country’s economy. “If domestic products are used in these projects, this will not only promote the Afghan industry and market, without a doubt, the beginning of infrastructure and development projects will lead to the creation of jobs,” Abdul Nasir Reshtia, an economist said. According to government figures, hundreds of projects in various Afghan provinces are still unfinished, and the World Bank has not made the decision to resume work on these projects.

Putting sanctions would not be in interest of anyone

KABUL (Agencies): The country’s Acting Interior Minister, said during in a meeting with Japan Ambassador in Kabul “Sanction policy would not be in the interest of anyone, problems could be address through dialogue and understanding”. The country’s Interior Minister, Khalifa Sirajuddin Haqqani, met with Takashi Okada, Ambassador of Japan in Kabul, according to the Ministry’s statement. Praising Japan’s assistance to Afghanistan, Interior Minister said that economic sanctions and banking restrictions have harmed our people. “Sanction policy” does not benefit anyone, only dialogue and understanding can solve problems, unfortunately, the world is pun-

ishing the common people with its political stance against us, which is not fair, added Haqqani. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is working hard to address the problems and to have a safe Afghanistan and a safe region in the world, he said. “If the international community gathers with good intentions, there is a lot of hope that the current space of mistrust will be replaced and a language of understanding will emerge” he added. For his part, ambassador Okada expressed hope that there will be no ban to girls’ education in the next school year. He vowed cooperation to address the economic problems and existing challenges in Afghanistan.

Acting minister meets WHO, UN teams

KABUL (Agencies): The Acting Public Health Minister, Qalandar Ebad met with representatives of World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF. During the meeting, the two sides discussed about better coordination and cooperating in the field of health services. According to another report, Mr. Ebad also met with a representatives of UNICEF and representatives of institutes providing health services. The health minister stressed close coordination between the Ministry of Public Health, UNICEF, and institutes providing health services in the country. Representatives of UNICEF and the mentioned institutes assured the Ministry of Public Health of their cooperation regarding better coordination with each other.

Nuristan, and Kandahar provinces. The establishment of these districts has been approved by the Prime Minister of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan after the proposal of the Ministry of Interior, added to the statement. The Ministry of Interior Affairs is tasked to determine the boundaries and centers of these districts with the advice of the residents of the region.

Nationwide tree planting campaign begins in Kabul

KABUL (TOLONews): The first nationwide tree-planting campaign started in Kabul. The Kabul Municipality officials emphasized the importance of trees in the city and said that 600,000 saplings will be planted in the capital in the coming year. “In 1402 (Solar year), Kabul municipality plans to plant 600,000 seedlings, including fruit-bearing and non-fruit-bearing trees as well as ornamental flowers in this city,” said Mohammad Khalid Sajestani, deputy of the Kabul Municipality’s Urban Services and Environmental Affairs. The Kabul Municipality asked citizens to cooperate with the institution in maintaining the city’s cleanliness and greenery.

“Let’s all get together for the purpose of protection and greenery and help with cleaning and other aspects,” said Abdul Wakil Mutawakil, head of Greenery for Kabul Municipality. “We plant saplings, they should cooperate with us and take care of it, and help us water it, and not break the saplings,” said Mohammad Nazir, an employee of Kabul Municipality. Kabul residents welcomed the efforts of the Kabul Municipality. “We need greenery, society needs it, and what the government has begun is a very good process and people should cooperate,” said Ahmad Shoaib, a resident of Kabul. “They should appoint



employees to protect the parks,” said Ehsanullah, another resident of

Kabul. According to statistics of Kabul municipality, this institution planted

more than 200,000 saplings in Kabul in 1401 (solar year).

Pneumonia cases up in Ghor; hospital faces bed shortage



FEROZKOH (Pajhwok): Hospital sources in western Ghor province have acknowledged surge in the number of children suffer-

ing from pneumonia in, while families of infected children complained against the shortage of bed in the Provincial Hospital.

Officials said the hospital capacity was 200 beds in which 80 beds were allocated for children. Sakina, 48, who brought

her grandchild from the Shahrak Muhajarin village of Ferozkoh to the Provincial Hospital, told Pajhwok Afghan News her grandchild hospitalized from the past 6 days and nights due to pneumonia infection. She said bed shortage in the hospital was a serious issue and her grandchild was provided treatment on a shared bed with three more infected children. Sakina said: “I brought my this grandchild six days and nights ago to the hospital, he is sick and doctor said that he is infected with pneumonia, you can see yourself there is not bed for patients and each bed is allocated to up to six patients, there is no

place to sit, what should we do?” While complaining due to economic issues, she said, her family managed to get medicines for the ill grandchildren bearing a lot of hardship and difficulties. She added: “The hospital did not provide us free medicine and we do not have money to buy it, my son daily work and purchase medicine with the money he earned so that my grandchildren recover. The price of medicine is high and one cannot find original medicine as well.” Suraya, from Dawlena district is the mother of another child, who is infected from pneumonia and is hospitalized in the Provincial Hospital.

Suraya said: “I came from Dawlena district, there no bed for the patients, few patients lay on one bed.” Some other individuals who brought patients to the hospital shared similar complaints. Officials and doctors of the hospital acknowledged the beds shortage issue for the patients suffering from pneumonia. One of the doctors, Baba Jan Najib told Pajhwok: “Unfortunately the weather is very cold in Ghor province during this winter and we see a hike in pneumonia cases compared to the previous years. Cold weather is the main reason of respiratory diseases, there are too

many patients in children’s ward, we currently host over 180 children in this ward.” The lack of space is another challenge in this hospital, so we place more than one child in each bed of the hospital, he said. Hospital Director Dr. Abdul Ahmad Noori said the figure showed that the cases of pneumonia were still on the rise among children while the hospital is facing the shortage of beds. He said: “Unfortunately the pneumonia cases are on the rise due to the cold wave of winter but luckily the fatality rate is lower comparing to the fatality figure of last year. During the past year 52 children

died from respiratory diseases while we had only 41 fatalities during the past ten months”. According to the figure of the hospital, since the beginning the current year, over 4,000 children were admitted to the hospital for treatment which show a significant decrease in compare to the past year. He accepted that the shortage of beds was a challenge for them but the personnel of the hospital attempted to reach to all of the patients. The beds shortage problem had been conveyed to the officials in the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) and urged to provide more beds to the children ward, he added.

Balochistan minister accused of Barkhan murders arrested

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Balochistan Minister for Construction and Communications Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran Wednesday was arrested in connection with the gruesome murder of three people, the police said — as the bullet-riddled bodies were found in a well in the Barkhan district.

Meanwhile, the heirs of victims of Barkhan incident continued their sit-in in Quetta on Wednesday. The heirs of the deceased have appealed to the government that a case should be registered against Provincial Minister for Communication and Works Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran.

They also demanded of the government that five missing persons should be recovered immediately. They threatened to continue their sit-in till acceptance of their demand. It was the second day of their protest sin-in. The protesters have unveiled their six-point demands. They have demanded suspension of provincial minister, besides his arrest. They said they won't accept any judicial commission. They further said a case should be registered against Abdul Rehman Khetran. The five missing persons should also be recovered.

The protesters further said that a judicial commission led by a Balochistan High Court judge should be constituted to probe the incident. Meanwhile, after the Barkhan murders, Balochistan Chief Minister Abdul Quddus Bizenjo on Wednesday directed police to recover the abducted children of Khan Muhammad Marri from Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran's private jail.

CM Bizenjo has issued directives to additional chief secretary home, IGP Balochistan for the recovery of abducted children and women. The development came after Khetran's son released the pictures of the 'abducted children' on social media. The pictures posted on Inam Khetran's social media showed the children including the ones who had been killed and others who are reportedly alive.

The set of pictures showed the children working somewhere, whereas, a photo showed an abducted girl. Inam Khetran

said that the remaining children of Khan Muhammad Marri are still in the captivity of his father – the Balochistan minister Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran. He claimed that Marri's elder daughter is currently present in a house in Barkhan and the son was present in a house in Quetta.

Earlier, police raided the minister's house in the Patel Bagh area to recover the abducted five children of Khan Muhammad Marri. The police spokesperson said that women cops also took part in the raid. During the raid, police searched the whole house including the guestroom. The alliance of Marri tribes including the heirs of the victims staged a sit-in along with the bodies in the Red Zone of Quetta.

The sit-in of the Marri alliance is being led by its chairman Jahangir Marri. While talking to the media, Jahangir Marri said that several tribals were allegedly kept in the private jails of the provincial minister Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran for four years. Marri said that the police did not register the First Information Report (FIR). He added that Khetran is part of the Balochistan government and they want to demand justice from the Centre. He announced that the sit-in will be continued until the provincial minister Khetran is not arrested.

Balochistan Home Department constituted a joint investigation team (JIT) under the supervision of DIG Loralai Division to probe into the cold-blooded murders in Barkhan. The Balochistan Home Department appointed Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Loralai Division as the JIT chairman while other members include Senior Superintendent Police (SSP) Investigation Quetta and the representative of the Special Branch Barkhan.

Three bullet-riddled bodies of a woman and her two sons were recovered from a well by police in Balochistan's Barkhan district. Police said that the slain woman was the wife of a citizen namely Khan Muhammad Marri and the other bodies were identified as her two sons. Police detailed that all three victims were killed in the firing, whereas, the woman's face was horribly distorted by pouring acid on it.

Torkham border remains closed on fourth day

F.P. Report

LANDIKOTAL: Torkham border crossing,that was closed four days ago after situation went tense remained closed on Wednesday.

Several protest rallies took place in Landikotal and Torkham arranged for the reopening of the busy border point between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Officials said backdoor talks were continue with the Afghan authorities at various level but yet they were not sure that when Emarat-e-Islami could be convinced to reopen the border with Pakistan.

In the first rally, Labourers and transporters walked in the Torkham town and chanted slogans in the favour of free movement via Torkham border. Labourers union president Farman Khan Shinwari custom agents association leader Qari Nazim Gul said that they want peace with Afghanistan. They said both countries were depended on each other and due to the border closure and have lost million of dollars in the past few days. Farman said both the governments should resolve the issues through table talks. He sais war and conflict was the solution for any issue.

Meanwhile, traders, transporters,coaches drivers and civil society members also arranged a walk in Torkham.They were holding white flags and demanded the reopening of Torkham border. They said Afghan government must bring relaxation in its stance and talk to Pakistani counterparts. They said in the first phase Afghanistan must allow pedestrians so that the thousands of passengers waiting on both sides of the border could move to their distinctions.

Torkham transporters union president Haji Azeemullah Shinwari said they could not afford the border closure. He said if Afghan government not reopened the border they would be compel to divert their businesses to other cities of Pakistan.

Meanwhile, hundreds of trucks loaded with different goods including vegetables and fresh fruits were seen parked on the Peshawar-Torkham road. Afghan authorities had closed the border four days ago after Pakistan denied entery to an Afghan patient who was traveling to Peshawar for medical treatment. Later, Afghan border police traded gun fire in which a Pakistani border guard was also injured.

Pakistani delegation reaches Kabul

ISLAMABAD (INP): A Pakistani delegation led by Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has arrived in Kabul for talks with officials of the interim Afghan government on security-related matters, the Foreign Office confirmed on Wednesday.

“A high-ranking delegation led by the Minister for Defence is in Kabul today to meet with officials of the Afghan Interim Government to discuss security-related matters including counter-terrorism measures,” it said in a tweet. The delegation met with the acting deputy prime minister of Afghanistan Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar.

The delegation includes Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) chief Lt Gen Nadeem Ahmed Anjum, Pakistan's Special Representative for Afghanistan Mohammad Sadiq, Foreign Secretary Asad Majeed Khan, and Kabul mission head Ubaid Ur Rehman Nizamani. In a separate statement, the Afghan Council of Ministers said the two sides discussed economic cooperation, regional connectivity, trade, and bilateral relations.

“Pakistan and Afghanistan are neighbours and should have cordial relations. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan wants expansion of commercial and economic relations with Pakistan as such relations are in the interest of both countries,” the statement quoted Mullah Baradar as saying. He also asked the officials to release Afghans being detained in detention facilities in Pakistan. Baradar further added that passengers at Torkham and Spin Boldak should be well-facilitated, with special consideration being given to emergency patients.



LAHORE: PTI central leaders making victory signs after arrest during Jail Bharu Tehreek.

PM for early completion of uplift projects in Islamabad

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed the authorities concerned to ensure timely completion of development projects in the federal capital besides carrying out the third-party validation of every project.

The prime minister, chairing a meeting to review the development projects in Islamabad, formed a review committee to expedite work on the development projects, particularly for early completion of the projects of public interest. He instructed the authorities to extend the best possible facilities to residents of the federal capital.

The prime minister, who was also given a briefing on the development projects in the capital city, was told that Rs 10 billion would be spent for uplift of Islamabad's rural areas. He directed to ensure round-the-clock work on the development projects and carry out third-party validation of every project. He instructed for the early completion of Bhara Kahu bypass and also sought a report from the Capital Development Authority on the introduction of solid waste management system for Islamabad.

Prime Minister Shehbaz said that work on public transport projects should be expedited and the parking issues in the city should be addressed without any delay. He also directed

the CDA for the early execution of projects meant for overseas Pakistanis by maintaining an international standard. Moreover, the projects for overseas Pakistanis should be made transparent by introducing an online system. He also called for extending maximum facilities to the expatriates to attract their investment in the country.

The prime minister said that the overseas Pakistanis were a precious asset for Pakistan and no laxity in their projects would be tolerated. The prime minister sought a report on the uplift of the rural areas and the development of infrastructure there. It was told that Rs10 billion would be spent on the uplift of rural area of Islamabad under which the development schemes of solid waste management, sewerage, rehabilitation of roads and public transport would be executed.

The participants of the meeting were briefed on the ongoing projects including Bhara Kahu bypass, 7th Avenue Interchange, Margalla Avenue, 11th Avenue, IJP Road, Islamabad Expressway, and parking plaza. It was told that round-the-clock work was being done on Bhara Kahu bypass. The prime minister ordered the project's early completion for it being a public interest project and no laxity in this regard would be tolerated.

The meeting was told that 7th

Avenue Interchange and Margalla Avenue had been completed while IJP road's expansion would be completed by March 23, this year. Moreover, the 11th Avenue and 1st phase of Islamabad Expressway would be completed by mid of this year and the parking plaza and 2nd phase of Islamabad Expressway would be completed by this year-end.

The CDA chairman briefed the prime minister about the feeder routes and a bus terminal. It was told that the CDA would build a national terminal of international standard and three satellite terminals through the investment of the private sector. Besides, 13 feeder bus routes would be introduced within 90 days as four feeder routes were already functional.

It was told that around 200,000 people travel through Islamabad's public transport system. The prime minister was also apprised of the steps being taken by the CDA regarding the resolution of the parking issues. It was told that the Authority was building parking plazas in sectors I-8, G-9, F-10, F-8 and Blue Area. With a capacity of 5,000 cars, these parking plazas would address the parking problems. Federal ministers Ishaq Dar, Rana Sanaullah, Advisor to PM Tariq Bajwa, ex-federal minister Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, ex-MNA Hanif Abbasi, Anjum Aqeel and senior officers attended the meeting.

Election schedule: PHC order AGP to appear

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Syed Arshad Ali ordered Attorney General of Pakistan (AGP) to submit reply and appear in Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf writ seeking elections within 90 days while adjourned further hearing till 28th February, on Wednesday.

Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Amir Javeed argued that writ petition become infructuous after announcement of 9th April for elections by

President of Pakistan because PTI demanding schedule of polling for provincial assemblies. He added that at this stage writ didn't maintainable and argued that he will place his arguments as reserved and will be forwarded in accordance with upcoming situation.

PTI's lawyer Shumail Ahmad Butt argued that President of Pakistan has announced schedule for elections but the writ seeking to direct Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to perform his constitutional obligation in this regard.

In the meantime, Justice

Syed Arshad Ali remarked that you are demanding schedule for elections which is announced by President and observed that if Governor also declare date for polling then it will create further complexities. However, PTI's lawyer argued that if they want to hold election as per Presidential schedule then it is right otherwise they are willing to contest the writ petition before court.

Meanwhile, ECP lawyer Mohsin Kamran argued that President has already requested the commission for consultation but it was withdrawing because consultation didn't mandatory.

SC hears Khan's appeal against amends to NAB laws

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The federation's counsel has adopted the stance before the Supreme Court that no fact has been pleaded in the petition of former prime minister Imran Khan, while appeals against the amendments to NAB law are pending before the Islamabad High Court (IHC).

A three-judge bench, headed by Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial, and comprising Justice Ijaz ul Ahsan and Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah on Wednesday heard former Prime Minister Imran Khan's petition against the amendments in the NAO, 1999.

During the hearing, Justice Mansoor questioned is there NAB law or general or generic law in other countries particularly in India specifically for the elimination of the corruption.? Is there any report that harbouring impression that this is an exceptional law (NAB)? Is there any report by anyone or an agency on the trajectory and performance of the NAB that this body has been good for the country, he further asked.

Makhdoom Ali Khan, representing the federation said how the petitioner has locus standi to invoke the Article 184(3)?, while was the author of the law (amendments). The counsel said when the petitioner has not participated in the vote against the bill then how he could challenge it before the court. Why he had not opposed the bill in the parliament. The petitioner has not pointed out how these acts are ex-facie discriminatory?

He added that the CMA filed by the petitioner contains 16 challenges, which includes that the law is made with retrospective affect, change of presumptions, reference being sent to the NAB chairman, standard of proof, displacement of presumption, shifting the burden on prosecution to help the accused to walk scot-free, and the change of evidence and reduction of punishment. The chief justice noted that the rule of law and access to justice are also fundamental rights.

32 KP senior police officers including 2 RPOs replaced

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Thirty-two (32) senior police officers including Senior Superintendents of Police (Operations) Peshawar and SSP Traffic Peshawar have been replaced in a major reshuffle in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police, said a notification issued here by the office of the Inspector General of Police (IGP) on Wednesday.

According to the notification, Lt (Retd) Nasir Mahmood Sathii PSP (BS-20) has been posted as Regional Police Officer (RPO), Malakand. He will assume charge on arrival in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa while his predecessor Mohammad Sajjad Khan PSP (BS-19) has been transferred and posted as DIG Security and Survey Special Branch KP in his own pay and scale.

Similarly, Saqib Ismail Memon PSP (BS-20) DIG Special Branch has been transferred and posted as Additional IGP Special Branch in his own pay and scale and Sher Akbar PSP (BS-20) as Additional IGP CTD in his own pay and scale. He will assume charge on arrival in KP.

Furthermore, Abdul Ghafoor Afridi PSP (BS-20), who has been posted as RPO D.I. Khan will also assume charge on arrival in KP. He will replace Muhammad Saleem PSP (BS-19) who has been transferred and posted as DIG Intelligence Special Branch KP in his own pay and scale while Asif Iqbal

Mohmand PSP (BS-20) DIG Operations KP has been transferred and posted as DIG Investigation, CPO in his own pay and scale, Muhammad Suleman PSP (BS-19) AIG Operations has been transferred and posted as DIG Internal Accountability Branch, CPO in his own pay and scale. He has replaced Irfan Ullah Khan, who has been posted as DIG Operations in his own pay and scale.

Najeeb-ur-Rehman Bugvi PSP (BS-19) has been to KP and posted as District Police Officer (DPO) Mardan while Imran Shahid PSP (BS-1) who was awaiting posting has been posted as DIG CTD in his own pay and scale.

Dr Muhammad Iqbal PSP (BS-19) DPO has been put at the disposal of CTD KP, Haroon Rasheed Khan PSP (BS-18) DPO has been posted as SSP Operations, Peshawar, Abdul Rauf Babar PSP (BS-18) DPO as DPO D.I. Khan, Muhammad Shoaib PSP (BS-18) DPO D.I. Khan has been put at the disposal of CTD KP, Ziauddin Ahmad PSP (BS-18) DPO Lakki Marwat as DPO Bannu, Shahzada Omar Abbas Babar PSP (BS-18) SSP Traffic Peshawar as DPO Kohat, while Khan Zeb PSP (BS-18) DPO Karak, Imran Khan PSP (BS-18) DPO Buner and Lt Cdr (Rtd) Kashif Aftab Ahmad Abbasi PSP (BS-18) SSP Operations Peshawar have been put at the disposal of CTD KP.

Ms Ayesha Gul PSP

(BS-18) SP Investigation CCP Peshawar has been transferred and posted as SSP

Coordination Peshawar while Farhan Khan PSP (BS-18) who was awaiting posting has been posted as DPO Buner while Muhammad Ashfaq PSP (BS-18) AIG Complaints and Enquiries CPO has been posted as DPO Lakki Marwat and Bilal Ahmad PSP (BS-18) Additional SP Kohat has been posted as DPO Torghar while Qamar Hayat PP (BS-18) Director Police Training School, Mansehra has been transferred and posted as SSP Traffic Peshawar in his own pay and scale, Falak Niaz PP (BS-18) SP Special Branch KP as AIG Operations KP in his own pay and scale while Iftikhar Shah PP (BS-18) SSP Special Branch has been posted as DPO Karak.

Similarly, Arbab Shafullah Jan PP (BS-17) Acting DPO Torghar has been put at the disposal of Commandant Elite KP, Dr Muhammad Umar PSP (BS-18) SDPO Hayatabad Peshawar has been transferred and posted as Acting SP Faqirabad CCP Peshawar in his own pay and scale, Arshad Khan PP (BS-17) Acting SSP Traffic Warden, Swat as acting SP Warsak, CCP Peshawar in his own pay and scale the service of Luqman Khan PP (BS-17) SDPO Town CCP Peshawar and Amjid Ali PP (BS-17) SDPO Maidan Lower Dir have been put at the disposal of CTD KP.

won't do what has happened [in the country] in the last 10 months.” The coalition government came into power after overthrowing the Imran Khan-led PTI government through a vote of no-confidence in last April. Lamenting the state of the economy, the deposed premier said: “Industries have shut down and people have become unemployed. You and your facilitators are responsible for this inflation.”

Reiterating his claim, Khan said that the leadership of the coalition government, after coming into power, had their corruption cases quashed. Coming back to his court arrest campaign, the PTI chairman said: “The Jail Bharo movement has been started from Lahore. It was initiated to break the chains of fear.”

He added that the “nation is now ready for a revolution” and will not be “fooled”. In the wake of

sedition cases filed against his party leaders including Fawad Chaudhry, Azam Swati and Shahbaz Gill, Imran Khan on February 4 announced 'Jail Bharo Tehreek'.

Slamming the PM Shehbaz-led administration, the ousted prime minister said: “The nation is ready to take to the streets. Our goal is that the rule of law and Constitution should prevail in the country, not the jungle's law.” The cricket-turned-politician said that his party began the ‘Haqiqi Azadi’ (true freedom) movement on April 10 last year. “My Haqiqi Azadi movement is to free the country from traitors.” Speaking about the possibility of the upcoming election in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) while castigating the interim setup in the two provinces, the PTI chief said: “The caretaker government cannot exist after 90 days.