

Six terrorists arrested
E.P. Report
KOHAT: The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) in an intelligence based operation on Friday apprehended six terrorists including two commanders from Kohat. According to CTD, information was received about the presence of terrorists in Kohat—following which an operation was conducted and six terrorists including two commanders were arrested.

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PTI moves LHC
LAHORE (Agencies): PTI has moved the Lahore High Court seeking the formation of a judicial commission to probe audio leaks. PTI leader Yasmin Rashid filed a plea with the LHC through her lawyer Rana Mudasir. The interior ministry, defence ministry and others have been made respondents in the case. The plea stated audio tapes of senior PTI leadership are being leaked which is a sheer violation of fundamental rights.

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Collective efforts vital for stability: Apex Committee

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Central Apex Committee, which met here Friday with Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in chair, agreed that the elimination of terrorism, economic revival and political stability were interlinked.

Since Pakistan cannot afford internal instability, national solidarity, unity and collective efforts were the need of the hour. In order to achieve these targets, national consensus should be evolved and hurdles in its way should be removed, a press release issued after the apex committee meeting here said. The meeting was attended by the Chief of Army Staff, Federal Ministers including Ministers for Finance, Interior, Information and Broadcasting, Law and Justice, Chief Ministers of all provinces including Gilgit Baltistan, Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Heads of Civil and Military Intelligence Agencies, Secretary Interior, All Chief Secretaries, Inspectors General of Police of all provinces including AJK, GB and Islamabad and Coordinator National Counter-terrorism Authority (NACTA).

During the meeting, the terrorist incidents particularly the incident of Peshawar Police Lines Mosque of January 30, 2023 and Karachi Police Chief Office incident on February 19 and the later on situation were reviewed

in detail. The representatives of intelligence agencies briefed the participants on the overall security situation and on the action taken against the terrorists.

Inspector General of Police Sindh informed about the details of the attack on the office of Karachi Police Chief. The meeting participants saluted all the law enforcement agencies including armed forces, Rangers, Frontier Corps, Counter Terrorism Department and police for showing exemplary bravery and courage against terrorism and paid tribute to the martyred officers and jawans.

They considered the issue of non-availability of funds approved in the past for Karachi Police and security and directed that all obstacles in the ways of projects concerning police, counter terrorism department and security should be removed without any further delay. Protection of national security and life and property of people was the basic constitutional responsibility which should be performed with national passion, sincerity, focus and the best of abilities, they noted.

They said the federal government would extend full cooperation and assistance to the provinces for fulfilling the responsibility of ensuring peace and security. The meeting considered the role of media especially social media during the incidents of terrorism and

operation of security forces. It was briefed that during operation of the security forces such information was also telecast from which terrorists and their facilitators could have benefited and could have impacted the security operation, putting the lives of officers and jawans in danger. It was suggested that guidance should be taken from the SOPs and regulations concerning cyber space and terrorism in other countries of the world.

In this context, with the consultation of media houses and all relevant stakeholders a suitable procedure should be followed so that in an emergency situation rumours, misleading information and fear among public could be stopped and there should be no difficulties in carrying out the security operation. The participants also agreed that in case of an emergency situation, a focal person should be given the responsibility to disseminate facts to media and the public. They also reviewed progress on the implementation of the National Action Plan and the decisions taken in the last meeting of the apex committee. A committee headed by Federal Minister for Law and Justice informed about the progress made in the investigation against terrorists, and in taking measures for making the process of prosecution and sentencing effective.

Pak receives \$700m from China bank

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): In a positive development, the State Bank of Pakistan-held (SBP) foreign exchange reserves registered a major boost on Friday as the nation received \$700 million from the China Development Bank.

"Alhamdulillah! Funds \$700 million [were] received today by [the] State Bank of Pakistan from [the] China Development Bank," Finance Minister Ishaq Dar announced on Twitter. Pakistan has been struggling to pay off its extraordinarily high levels of external debt and barely has enough dollars to cover less than three weeks' worth of its imports, and at such a critical time, the \$700 million deposit from China will act as a lifeline for the cash-strapped country.

The coalition government has been struggling to boost SBP-held foreign exchange reserves — which currently stand at \$3.25 billion as of February 17. However, amid the delay in the revival of the \$6.5 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme, the government continued to face difficulty in increasing the reserves.

Taking to his Twitter handle, Dar announced that the money, which would bolster the country's diminishing foreign exchange reserves, is expected to arrive at the SBP this week. So in totality, Pakistan is eyeing the re-financing of Chinese loans up to \$2 billion by the end of February or the first week of March 2023. Pakistan also hopes to reach a staff-level agreement with the IMF this week. However, the global lender would need another one and a half months before calling a board meeting and approving the \$1.1 billion tranche.

Pakistan has taken painful fiscal consolidation measures to unlock funding from a \$6.5 billion IMF bailout. Experts believe that even with the IMF programme resumed, it was unlikely that the nation's economy would get back on track. Continued programme performance and funding are subject to significant risks, especially in the run-up to this year's elections. A debt readjustment is becoming a greater possibility sometime around 2023-2024. Pakistan's external debt servicing obligation for the ongoing fiscal year 2022-23 is \$23 billion, of which \$6 billion has been repaid and \$4 billion rolled over, leaving \$13 billion yet to be funded. The country also has further repayment obligations of \$75 billion during FY24-26.

PM calls for unity to make Pakistan an economic tiger

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday said that setting aside personal likes and dislikes and forging national unity was a must to alleviate poverty and make Pakistan an economic tiger. The prime minister, chairing a review meeting on the implementation of the National Action Plan attended by civil and military leadership, said national unity was the only way forward to save Pakistan and make it a great nation.

He told the participants that after a terrorist attack in Peshawar on February 3, the civil and military authorities had held a seven-hour long session and took several decisions. He also after an attack on the Karachi police office, the personnel of Sindh police, Rangers and Pakistan Army bravely fought the terrorists. He also prayed for high ranks in the paradise for the soldiers martyred during the operation. The prime minister said after the terrorist attack on the Army Public School of Peshawar, the national leadership had formulated a National Action Plan. He said that time Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had invited all the national leaders including those "who did not want to see the matter straightforwardly" however, the decisions were made to revive peace in the country.

He told the participants that after the Peshawar attack, the government also invited all the stakeholders but that particular party did not bother to attend the meeting. "They still want to resolve the matter on the streets that was highly condemnable," he remarked.

The prime minister said Pakistan currently faced economic challenges and expressed the hope that the situation would improve after the matters with the International Monetary Fund were finalised in near future. He maintained that though the government was compelled to accept strict IMF conditions, the state of Pakistan was above all. Even the government's coalition parties also put their political interests at stake for the

sake of the country and to improve the economic situation.

He said that cooperation by the friendly countries was no less than Allah's blessing, but the foremost priority should be to put our own house in order otherwise no one would come up for help. Mentioning the killings and arrest of terrorists during different military actions, Prime Minister Shehbaz said the security agencies were making their efforts to ensure the security of citizens.

"If we act egoistically in this situation too, and compromise over Pakistan, this is not politics," he commented. The prime minister said for the security of future generations, it was a must for all to realise the sensitivity of the situation. He recalled that Pakistan had sacrificed around 83,000 lives of its soldiers, politicians, and their families, and common citizens to restore the "peace for the world."

PM, various leaders discuss political situation in separate meetings: Various political leaders including Member National Assembly (MNA) Chaudhry Ehsan-ul-Haq Bajwa, former Members Provincial Assembly (MPAs) Sufi Akram, Zahid Akram, President of PML-N Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhel and former Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman separately called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif here on Friday.

During the meeting with MNA Chaudhry Ehsan-ul-Haq Bajwa and former MPAs Sufi Akram and Zahid Akram, matters relating to the relevant constituencies as well as political situation were discussed. During the meeting with President of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, Jaffar Khan Mandokhel, matters about the progress on development project initiated on the direction of the Prime Minister and the positive public reaction in that respect were discussed. The political situation in Gilgit Baltistan was discussed in detail during the meeting with former Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman.

Pakistan, Uzbekistan sign \$1b trade deal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Among other developments, Pakistan and Uzbekistan Friday signed \$1 billion trade agreement at Inter-governmental Commission (IGC), which will encourage exchange of goods and services and will also ease process of trade.

The 8th Session of Pakistan-Uzbekistan Inter-governmental Commission (IGC) on Trade-Economic and Scientific-Technical Cooperation was co-chaired by Minister of Investments, Industry and Trade, Uzbekistan, Laziz Kudratov and by Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar in Uzbekistan, according to press statement received here.

The commission mainly focused on bilateral economic cooperation in various sectors including commerce and trade, banking, industries and production, investment, textile industry, energy, oil and natural resources, transportation and communication, agri-

culture and tourism and culture development. The continuous efforts by both countries to encourage closer ties, especially in the fields of trade, transport, banking, and agriculture was appreciated by the Uzbek side.

On the occasion, Ishaq Dar appreciated the deeper interests by the Uzbek side and strengthening of the relationship and lauded progress already made in the field of transport, trade and welcomed Uzbek side to explore the areas in automobiles, information technology and natural minerals. Both the sides, emphasized that there was huge untapped potential in investment cooperation and bilateral trade.

Furthermore, the IGC recognized the importance of closer collaboration in order to bring sustainable development through technology, innovation, and economic partnership. The IGC aims at increasing economic diversification, sustainable growth, building supply

chain resilience, and robust regulatory environment. The Commission expressed satisfaction on the bilateral trade volume between the two countries and desired to enhance it further in the future. Moreover, Uzbekistan showed commitment for enhancing bilateral connectivity through diverse modes.

Among others, the meeting was attended Special Adviser to Prime Minister (SAPM), Tariq Bajwa, SAPM to Finance Minister, Zulfiqar Younus, Federal Secretary Economic Affairs Division, Dr. Kazim Niaz, along with other ministry representatives from Pakistan and from Uzbek side, the session was attended by Minister of Sport and Youth Policy, Hamraev Oybek Nematovich and Chairman Chamber of Commerce of Uzbekistan, Ikrarov Adham Ilhamovich. Both the parties agreed to hold the ninth meeting of the Pakistan-Uzbekistan Inter-governmental Commission next year in Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing a meeting of central Apex Committee.

Jail bharo tehreek' enters third day

RAWALPINDI (INP): Leaders and workers of the Pakistan Tehreek Insaf (PTI) Rawalpindi chapter volunteered their arrest as the party's 'Jail Bharo Tehreek' for Haqqeqi Azadi' entered day 3 on Friday.

After Lahore and Peshawar, the campaign reached Rawalpindi, where PTI leaders Fayaz ul Hassan Chohan, Sadaqat Abbasi and Zulfi Bukhari voluntarily surrendered themselves to police. The movement kicked off on Wednesday from Lahore where core leadership from Punjab, including Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Asad Umar, Senator Azam Khan Swati, and Omar Sarfaraz Cheema gave court arrests.

The 'court arrest' drive was launched in protest over "violations of the fundamental rights", "abuse of the Constitution", "unprecedented inflation" and "economic meltdown". Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan lauded PTI's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) leadership for a massive turnout in 'Jail Bharo Tehreek'.

The former prime minister Imran Khan in his tweet congratulated the KP PTI parliamentarians for leading the 'Jail Bharo Tehreek' from the front. He wrote, "Today was a massive turnout led by PTI's KP leadership for the Jail Bharo Tehreek. Congratulations to our KP PTI parliamentarians for leading from the front and to our workers for their janoon (passion) and commitment."

Terrorist killed in Balochistan

RAWALPINDI (Agencies): A terrorist was gunned down by security forces Friday during an Intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Balochistan's Awaran district, the Inter-Services Public Relations said in a statement. According to the statement of the military's media wing, troops approached the operation after receiving a "credible lead" with regards to the presence of a terrorists' hide-out. These terrorists, as per ISPR, were involved in recent Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attacks in the area.

"A heliborne force was used to sanitise the area which surprised the terrorists," the statement read. The forces also seized a large cache of weapons and ammunition in the operation, the ISPR said. "Security forces of Pakistan will continue to thwart any attempt by inimical elements to disrupt hard-earned peace in the province," the military media wing mentioned.

A day earlier, too, security forces gunned down eight terrorists during a sanitisation operation in Balochistan's Mazaaband Range. ISPR stated that the terrorists attempted to ambush a convoy of security forces in the Kech District of Balochistan on Wednesday evening.

"While alert and combat-ready troops not only foiled this cowardly attempt without any loss of life, they also immediately commenced a follow-up operation to hunt down the fleeing terrorists using ground and aviation assets," read the statement.

Election date suo motu Ruling parties request SC to form full court

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Three ruling coalition parties — Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) — on Thursday asked the Supreme Court to form a full court to hear the suo motu notice taken by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial on the delay in the announcement of a date for elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The request was made in a joint statement read out by lawyer Farooq H Naek, on behalf of the three parties when the nine-member bench resumed the hearing of the suo motu notice today. The PPP lawyer also requested Justice Ijaz Ul Ahsan and Justice Sayyed Mazahar Ali Akbar Naqvi to recuse themselves from the nine-member bench currently hearing the suo motu notice.

The bench is headed by CJP Bandial and comprises Justice Ahsan, Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Munib Akhtar, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Naqvi, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Athar Minallah. At the outset of today's hearing, the attorney general told the court that they had not received the copy of the court order which is why all parties did not appear today.

At this, CJP Bandial remarked that the purpose of today's hearing was to inform the relevant authorities about the suo motu notice. On this point, Naek came before the bench and read out the joint statement of PPP, JUI-F and PML-N regarding their objections about the bench. The lawyer said that both the judges had made their observations on the matter when they heard Ghulam Mehmood Dogar's plea regarding his removal as Lahore police chief.

The counsel also shared the dissenting note of Justice Mandokhail. Naek stated

that they were objecting to the two judges' inclusion in the "interest of justice, fair play and to protect the fundamental right to a fair trial and due process as guaranteed under Article 10A".

On this, Justice Minallah asked the lawyer if he felt there was a need to form a full court for the case. "Matter of election is of public [importance] there should be full court on this," responded Naek and formally appealed for a full court to hear the suo motu notice on the delay in elections. Meanwhile, the counsel for Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rashid said that the judiciary is being ridiculed on social media since yesterday and urged the court to look into this matter.

At this, CJP Bandial said that this matter will be looked into later. "Prepare for the case," the CJP told the attorney general. However, Naek interjected that the matter pertaining to the bench formation and the objections surrounding it should be resolved first. "The decision was made on February 16 and the notice was taken on February 22," said the CJP, adding that taking suo motu notice falls under the chief justice's jurisdiction. He said that the petitions by Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly speakers are clubbed with the suo motu.

The court is also looking into the questions raised in the petitions filed by the speakers, he added. Justice Mandokhail said that political matters should be resolved in the Parliament. "Tell your political parties why should the court hear these cases?" he added. At this, the PPP's lawyer said that he will seek instructions from his party on this matter. "Today the Constitution knocked on our doors which is why we took the suo motu notice," remarked the CJP as he adjourned the hearing till Monday 11:30am.

Full court should hear case about dissolution of PAs: Asif

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Friday demanded the Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial to form a full court to hear the suo motu notice case regarding delay in the announcement of a date for elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Speaking here in National Assembly, the minister said that a bench comprising nine judges is hearing this case but the matter is of utmost importance and the full court must consider it. "I do not want to give the impression that Parliamentarians are trespassing in the jurisdiction of the judiciary but I, as a political worker, demand to resolve this complicated situation which is being faced by the country during the last 7-8 months," he added.

Asif said that a full court must start from the Panama case and give a decision which would have a great impact on the future of the country. All the stakeholders must be listened and such a solution be given which should be a roadmap for all. "There are some ex-judges like Justice Muneer Hussain and Riaz Sheikh who are criticized but others like Saeed uz Zaman Siddiqui and Nazim Siddiqui are known for their dignity," he said and appealed to the judiciary to review why some amongst them are criticized yet.

He said that the territory of parliamentarians was trespassed in past and our leadership was also victimized. "We would also say that some of them (judges)

had not fulfilled responsibilities assigned to them", he added. Khawaja Asif said that a constitutional crisis was being faced because of re-defining Article 63-A of the constitution. He recalled the decision of the apex court about lifetime disqualification of the ex-Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and said that there would be no precedent of disqualification of a person of an institution by another institution.

The minister said there have been direct and indirect confessions by the people who remained involved in disqualification case of Nawaz Sharif and the full court of the apex court should start from the Panama case. Asif said that politicians are always blamed who serve the people by considering it as 'worship' but other elites are not named who enjoy during their services.

He said that the salary of a Member of the National Assembly is Rs 1,68, 000 only and some of them even come on foot from Parliament lodges to National Assembly because they cannot afford life style like rich persons. "But there are some elites for whom traffic remains stuck for 15 minutes and the curfew-like situation is imposed on their movement," he said adding that only politicians are criticized despite this on-ground reality.

Khawaja Asif said that a person was imposed on the country and he destroyed moral values and violated the constitution and law of

the country. He said that National Assembly was dissolved with consensus of the President after observing the success of no-confidence motion which was our right as per the constitution.

The minister said those who sponsored former prime minister Imran Khan were being written in history and was a lesson for them. "They brought wrath to the country. The judiciary should not set precedents of such kind as is being set currently," he added. He said the country was bleeding due to perpetual crisis for last 7-8 months. "Imran does not come out of his home, gets pre-arrest bail and then directs his party workers to offer their arrests. Imran's medical record has not been done yet as he went to his own hospital," he added.

He said that Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was executed due to a decision of judiciary while Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif was also disqualified due to another decision of the judiciary. "If there are allegations on us then they are also not free from such blames. But there are some politicians whose names would be always taken with honor," he added. He said that Parliament had been always restricted to perform its accountability role and incumbent head of Public Accounts Committee (PAC) Noor Alam Khan did not get successful to make accountability of certain institutions which he wanted.

(Continued on Back Page)



Ahsan Iqbal stresses modernising civil services for progress of nation

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiative Ahsan Iqbal has said that civil services should be modernised and bureaucrats should be given training on modern lines in three branches including Foreign Services, Finance and Economics and Media to run the country in a better way.

Addressing the concluding ceremony of the 32nd Senior Management Course (SMC) and 117th National Management Course (NMC) held at the National Institute of Management here on Friday, he said that the world was changing with each passing day and the country would have to change with the pace of the world's developments to tackle these changes.

He suggested that a training school for bureaucrats like the National Defense University should be estab-

lished in which education, training and research should be focused and a special certificate should be given to those bureaucrats who pass out from the school. He said that the best bureaucrats should be brought in the school as trainers and special approval should be obtained from the Ministry of Finance in this regard.

He said that modern education like artificial intelligence should also be taught to the bureaucracy. The minister said that bureaucrats should know how they could work for progress of the country. He listed six suggestions for the purpose. Number one is introduction and implementation of peace and harmony in society and the second one is to provide regulatory to the governments by the bureaucracy, he said.

The minister said that the current governing model is out-dated and only that bureaucrat would be serve

the country successfully who would make a team by taking the community, business and society on board. For the 4th one, he said that a good coordination among the interior, foreign, finance and other departments play a vital role in the country's progress whereas it was observed that the officer of one department delayed the file of the other department.

Sharing the fifth suggestion, the minister said that bureaucrats should learn how to deal the public with pleasant gesture with an impact of pleasure for people, adding that people would give more taxes if they were happy with the government.

He said that the last and sixth suggestion was that the civil services personnel should learn new things and remain updated with the fresh knowledge, as the knowledge about everything gets outdated after every five to seven years.

Nadeem Memon held first meeting with the Directors of the department

F.P Report

KARACHI: Nadeem Memon, the newly posted Secretary of Information Department, Government of Sindh, said that modern technology should be used effectively for timely and prompt delivery of information, so that the public can be informed timely about the performance of various departments of Sindh government through mass media.

Presiding over a meeting held in his office on Friday with the Directors of the Information Department immediately after taking

charge of his post Secretary Information Nadeem Memon further said that for the best projection of projects of public importance, constant and all-time communication should be maintained with newspapers, TV channels and other relevant media.

He directed to ensure effective and timely refutation and clarification of negative news related to any department.

Information Secretary Nadeem Memon said that the Information Department is actually the face, eyes and ears of the government, so the officers of the

Information Department have to perform their duties diligently and actively. He said that soon after taking charge of his office, he will also visit the press club and the offices of print and electronic media to ensure the strong, effective and efficient relationship between various media outlets and the information department of the government.

In the meeting, the officers of different sections of the Information Department given briefing about the performance of respective departments and answered the questions of the Secretary Information.

Director Admin and Account Muhammad Yusuf Kabooro, Direcort Film Akhtar Ali Surhiyo, Director Legal Syed Mohammad Azeem Shah, Director Publications Mansoor Rajput, Director Press Aziz Hakro, Director Advertising Imtiaz Joyo, Director Mirpur Khas Hizbullah Memon, Director Electronic Media Muizuddin Peerzada, Director Reference and Research Riaz Memon, Director Social Media Faisal Farooqui and Director Press Information Hasan Asghar Naqvi also attended the meeting.

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF PAKISTAN. (Appellate Jurisdiction)

NOTICE

Subject: - CIVIL PETITION NO. 767 OF 2022 ETC.

Federal Government Employees Housing Authority through its Director General, Islamabad and others ...Petitioner(s)

Versus, Ednan Syed and others ...Respondent(s)

- To,
1. Atif Humayun Son of Humayun Akhtar, resident of (i) House No.282-A & 228-A, Street No.40, Sector F-10/4, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.2 in CP.767, 4549, 4547 of 2022, Respondent No.4 in CP.4545, 4546 and Respondent No. 4 in CMA No.4803/2022) and (ii) House No.5, Block 6-D, Sector G-9/2, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.4 in CP No.4548 of 2022)
 2. The Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Works, Block-B, Pakistan Secretariat, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent in CP.767, 857 to 859, 861 to 868, 4545 to 4549, 1273, 1416, 6616/2021and CMA No.4803/2022)
 3. Fazal Subhan, Resident of House No.1235, Street No.49, Phase-III, Bahria Town, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.1 in CP.857/2022)
 4. Muhammad Asghar Saeed, Resident of House No.8, Street No.10, Block H, Soan Garden, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.2 in CP.857/2022)
 5. Khumar Gul, Resident of House No.9-C, Street No.2, Sector F-7/3, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.3 in CP.857/2022)
 6. Mukarram Shah, Resident of House No.1415, Street No.52, Phase-III, Bahria town, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.4 in CP.857/2022)
 7. Sheeraz Nasir, Resident of House No.510, Sector G-10/4, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.5 in CP.857/2022)
 8. Muhammad Naeem Jan, Resident of House No.8-F, IESCO/WAPDA Officer Colony,G-7/4, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.6 in CP.857/2022)
 9. Muhammad Sumair, Resident of House No.15/Cat-III, Chashlum Colony, Chashma Barrage, **Mianwali**.
(Respondent No.7 in CP.857/2022)
 10. Wazir Ghulam Hussain, Resident of House No.9, Street No.3, River Garden, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.8 in CP.857/2022)11. Muhammad Afzal Awan, Resident of House No.36, Street No.45, H-Block, Soan Garden, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.9 in CP.857/2022)
 12. Muhammad Mubbashir Iqbal, Resident of House No.462, Street No.107, Sector I-8/4, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.10 in CP.857/2022)
 13. Khalid Mahmood, Director (MIS), Office of the Military Accountatn General, Kashmir Road, Rawalpindi Cantt. **Rawalpindi**.
(Respondent No.11 in CP.857/2022)
 14. Akhtar Bano, Resident of House No.176-B, Street No.36, Sector F-10/1, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.12 in CP.857/2022)
 15. Muhammad Asif, Resident of House No.350, Street No.68, Sector E-11/3, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.13 in CP.857/2022)
 16. Saqib Mansoor, Resident of House No.172/2, Aziz Bhatti Road, **Lahore**.
(Respondent No.14 in CP.857/2022)
 17. Khalid Mehmood, IMPC Sector H-8/2, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.15 in CP.857/2022)
 18. Muhammad Latif, Resident of House No.1070, Street No.95, Sector I-10/1, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.16 in CP.857/2022)
 19. Hasssan Muhammad (late), Through his son Muhammad Zakria resident of M. Ali Street Islamia Colony Mansignwala, Kot Radha Kishan, District **Kasur**.
(Respondent No.17 in CP.857/2022)
 20. Muhammad Tanzeel Murtaza, NCP, QAU Campus, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.18 in CP.857/2022)
 21. Faqir Muhammad Tahir, Jhalaar New Officer's Colony, Saddar **Lahore Cantt**.
(Respondent No.19 in CP.857/2022)
 22. Muhammad Nauman Farooqi, Assisnatn Professor, IMCB, H-9, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.20 in CP.857/2022)
 23. Khaliq uz Zaman Nadeem Satti, Resident of House No.16, Street No.22-A, Block-G Naval Anchorage, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.21 in CP.857/2022)
 24. Muhammad Pervaiz Butt, Resident of House No.96, Street No.01, Near Supreme Bread Factory Misrial, **Rawalpindi**.
(Respondent No.22 in CP.857/2022)25. Muhammad Javed, Resident of House No.B-215, Gulistan Colony, **Wah Cantt**.
(Respondent No.23 in CP.857/2022)
 26. Kashif Iqbal, Resident of House No.24, Street No.148, Sector G-13/4, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.24 in CP.857/2022)
 27. Iftikhar Ali Mian, Resident of House No.KH-187, Shakeeb Street Defence Road, **Rawalpindi**.
(Respondent No.25 in CP.857/2022)
 28. Sher Muhammad, Resident of House No.330, Zeenat Block Allama Iqbal Town, **Lahore**.
(Respondent No.26 in CP.857/2022)
 29. Tahir Ramzan, Resident of House No.131, Street No.34, Sector I-10/2, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.27 in CP.857/2022)
 30. Ikramullah, Village and P.O. Dalazak **Peshawar**.
(Respondent No.28 in CP.857/2022)
 31. Muhammad Sadiq Jaffar Hashmi, Resident of House No.42-3-A-II, Township, **Lahore**.
(Respondent No.29 in CP.857/2022)
 32. Muhammad Ishaq Shah, Resident of Village Adhwal, District and Tehsil **Rawalpindi**.
(Respondent No.30 in CP.857/2022)
 33. Amjad Khalil, Resident of (i) House No. DG-1356-GF, Street No.2, Babar Colony, Dhoke Gangal, Near EFA School **Rawalpindi**, (ii) Allabad, Post Office Malikwal Tehsil Bhalwal, District **Sargodha**
(Respondent No.31 in CP.857/2022)
 34. Muhammad Asif Shahzad, Jhallar New Officer's Colony, Saddar **Lahore Cantt**.
(Respondent No.32 in CP.857/2022)
 35. Muhammad Sharif, CMA, HIT, **Taxila Cantt**.
(Respondent No.33 in CP.857/2022)
 36. Amina Khatoon, House No.425-C, Street No.28, Sector G-6/1-2, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.34 in CP.857/2022)

37. Amjad Khan, House No.D-168, EHS Colony, Hazara Road, **Hasanabdal**.
(Respondent No.35 in CP.857/2022)
38. Syed Mudassar Hussain, Ministry of Inter Provincial Coordination, 2nd Floor, Kohsar Block, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.36 in CP.857/2022)39. Nasrullah, House No.754-E, Sector III, Mohammadi Chowk, Khayaban-e-Sir Syed, **Rawalpindi**.
(Respondent No.37 in CP.857/2022)
40. Khaleeq Ahmad, Resident of (i) House No. Z-41, Street No.15, Dhok Ratta, **Rawalpindi** (ii) Darbar Sharif, Tehsil and District **Attock**.
(Respondent No.38 in CP.857/2022)
41. Muhammad Aamir Iqbal, IMCB, Bhara Kahu, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.39 in CP.857/2022)
42. Shahid Mehmood, House No.566/18, Street No.9,Alaabad, **Rawalpindi** (ii) FG Boys Secondary School Peshawar Road, **Rawalpindi**.
(Respondent No.40 in CP.857/2022)
43. Zafran Ahmad, House No.NE-562-B, Muslim Colony, Tipu Road, **Rawalpindi**.
(Respondent No.41 in CP.857/2022)
44. Faisal Bilal, House No.945, Street No.38, Sector G-15/1, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.42 in CP.857/2022)
45. Shafigat Ahmed, Street No.14, Near Madni Masjid, Koral Chowk, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.43 in CP.857/2022)
46. Imtiaz Khan, House No. F-2, PTCL Colony, Pajaggi Road, **Peshwar Cantt**.
(Respondent No.44 in CP.857/2022)
47. Rashid Mehmood, National Heritage & Culture Division, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.45 in CP.857/2022)
48. Muhammad Faizan Ali, House No.32, Street No.170-D, Sector G-7/3-2, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.46 in CP.857/2022)
49. Fahad Khan Jadoon, House No.282-C, Street No.88, Sector G-6/1-4, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.47 in CP.857/2022)
50. Umar Farooq, Son of Zahoor Ahmad (Member FBR, retired) resident of House No.64, Street No.4, CMA Colony, **Lahore Cantt**.
(Respondent No.1 in CP.858/2022)
51. Najeeb ur Rehman Abbasi, Son of Rehman Khan resident of Apartment No.501, Park Towers, Sector F-10/3, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.1 in CP.859/2022)
52. Muhamamd Abdul Basir, House No.67, Street No.20, Sector G-8/1, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.1 in CP.861/2022)
53. Muhammad Tariq Saeed Hijazi, Son of Chaudhary Fazal Muhammad resident of House No.20, Main Embassy Road, Ata Turk Avenue, Sector G-6/4, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.1 in CP.863/2022)
54. Muhammad Azam Khan, Son of Muhammad Sarfraz Khan resident of House No.63, Block C, Phase 1 DHA **Lahore**.
(Respondent No.2 in CP.863/2022)55.
55. Raja Muhammad Farooq Khan, Son of Raja Feroz Khan resident of House No.263, Block Street No.9, Mohallah Shahzad Town, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.3 in CP.863/2022)
56. Najeeb Khawar Awan, Son of Sabir Muhammad Awan resident of House No.224, Street No.19, Sector G-10/2, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.4 in CP.863/2022)
57. Shahid Masroor Gul Kiani, Son of Col. Rtd. R.G.B Kiani resident of House No.814-C, Street No.51, Main Double Road, National Police Foundation, Sector E-11/4, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.5 in 863/2022 and Respondent No.6 in CP.1416/2022).
58. Mian Shabbir Anwar son of Mian Hayat Bakhsh, Additional Secretary (Retired), resident of House No. 2-B, Street No. 23, F-8/2, **Islamabad**. (Respondent No.1 in CP. 864/2022)
59. Sanaullah, Son of Wali Muhammad, Ambassador Rtd. resident of House No.9, Street No.9, Safari Villas-i-Bahria Town, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.3 in CP.1273/2022 and Respondent No.2 in CP.864/2022)
60. Shair Bahadur Khan, Son of Muhammad Rafiq Khan resident of House No.20, Main Embassy Road, Ata Turk Avenue, Sector G-6/4, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.1 in CP.863/2022)
61. Muhammad Siddique Sajid, Son of Wali Muhammad resident of House No.34/1-E, Street No.22, Sector G-10/2, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.1 in CP.867/2022)
62. Imtiaz Ahmad Khan, Son of Muhammad Zamir Khan resident of House No.256, Street No.11, Sector G-15/2, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.2 in CP.867/2022)
63. Muhammad Aslam, resident of (i) Village and Post office Roopwal, Tehsil Talagang, District **Chakwal** (ii) Dhoke Bhira, Post office Sarang Tehsil Talagang, District **Chakwal** (Respondent No.2 in CP.867/2022)
64. Razia SultanaTaher, Daughter of K.B Abdur Rehman, BS-21 Officer of Pakistan Customs Service/ Director General Customs (Retired) c/o Taher Furnishing Company 3-Edward House, Opposite Hotel Metropole Abdullah Haroon Road, **Karachi**.
(Respondent No.1 in CP.868/2022)
65. Muhammad Azam Khan, Son of Muhammad Sarfraz Khan, resident of House No.63, Block C, Phase-I, DHA, **Lahore**.
(Respondent No.3 in CP.1416/2022)
66. Raja Muhammad Farooq Khan, Son of Raja Feroz Khan resident of House No.263, Street No.9, Mohallah Shahzad Town, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.4 in CP.1416/2022)
67. Najeeb Khawar Awan, Son of Sabir Muhammad Awan resident of House No.224, Street No.19, Sector G-10/2, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.5 in CP.1416/2022)
68. Shahid Masroor Gul Kiani, Son of Col. Rtd. R.G.B Kiani resident of House No.814-C, Street No.51, Main Double Road, National Police Foundation, Sector E-11/4, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.5 in 863/2022 and Respondent No.6 in CP.1416/2022)
69. Atif Hussian, resident of House No.228-A, Street No.40, Sector G-9/2, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.4 in CP.4546/2022)
70. Ednan Syed, Resident of House No.518 CC & 528 CC, Street No.6 Phase No.4, DHA **Lahore**.
(Respondent No.1 in CP.4549 of 2022, Respondent No.3 in CP.4548/2022 and Respondent No. 3 in CMA No. 4803/2022)
71. Javed Akhtar Malik, resident of House No.5, Block 6-D, Sector G-9/2, **Islamabad** (Respondent No.3 in CP.4549/2022, Respondent No.5 in CP.4548/2022 and Respondent No.5 in CMA No.4803/2022)
72. Muhammad Jahangir, resident of House No.6A, Street 54A, Sector F-7/4, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.4 in CP.4549/2022, Respondent No.6 in CP.4548/2022 and Respondent No.6 in CMA No.4803/2022)
73. Sajjad Ali, resident of House No.357-B, Sector 14, Sector F-10/2, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.5 in CP.4549/2022, Respondent No.7 in CP.4548/2022, and

- Respondent No.7 in CMA No.4803/2022)
74. Hammad Javed, resident of (i) House No.84-B, Street A-2, Block A, Sector 0/9-9, **Islamabad** (ii) House No. 518 CC, Street 6, Phase 4, DHA, **Lahore**.
(Respondent No.6 in CP.4549/2022, Respondent No.8 in CP.4548/2022, and Respondent No.8 in CMA No.4803/2022)
 75. Osman Syed, resident of House No.518 CC, Street 6, Phase 4 DHA, **Lahore**.
(Respondent No.7 in CP.4549/2022, Respondent No.9 in CP.4548/2022, and Respondent No.9 in CMA No.4803/2022)
 77. Muhammad Ali, resident of House No.115, Babar Block, New Garden Town, **Lahore**.
(Respondent No.8 in CP.4549/2022, Respondent No.10 in CP.4548/2022 and Respondent No.10 in CMA No.4803/2022)
 77. Muhammad Tahir, resident of House No. 356-A, Street 37, Sector 11/3, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.9 in CP.4549/2022, Respondent No.11 in CP.4548/2022 and Respondent No.11 in CMA No.4803/2022)
 78. Ahmad Arsalan, Resident of House No.11, Canal Bank Phase 1, Extension Judicial Colony, **Lahore**.
(Respondent No.10 in CP.4549/2022, Respondent No.12 in CP.4548/2022 and Respondent No.12 in CMA No.4803/2022)
 79. Muhammad Usman Mirza, resident of House No.196-A, Mohalla Rustam Park, Multan Road, Lahore Teshil Lahore City District **Lahore**.
(Respondent No.11 in CP.4549/2022, Respondent No.13 in CP.4548/2022, and Respondent No.13 in CMA No.4803/2022)
 80. Asif Parvez, Son of Muhammad Sadiq resident of Thalla Syedan P.O Jhangi Syedan, Tehsil and District **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.2 in CP.6616/2021)
 81. Arshad Mehmood, Son of Muhammad Sadiq resident of Thalla Syedan P.O Jhangi Syedan, Tehsil and District **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.3 in CP.6616/2021)
 82. Riasat Mehmood, Son of Muhammad Sadiq resident of Thalla Syedan P.O Jhangi Syedan, Tehsil and District **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.4 in CP.6616/2021)
 83. Khalid Mehmood, Son of Muhammad Sadiq resident of Thalla Syedan P.O Jhangi Syedan, Tehsil and District **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.5 in CP.6616/2021)
 84. Mst. Nasreen Begum, Daughter of Muhammad Sadiq resident of Thalla Syedan P.O Jhangi Syedan, Tehsil and District **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.6 in CP.6616/2021)
 85. Mst. Yasmin Begum, Daughter of Muhammad Sadiq (wife of Shaukat Ali) resident of Thalla Syedan P.O Jhangi Syedan, Tehsil and District **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.7 in CP.6616/2021)
 86. Mst. Riffat Shaheen, Wife of Asif Pervaiz resident of Thalla Syedan P.O Jhangi Syedan, Tehsil and District **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.8 in CP.6616/2021)
 87. Mst. Nighat Shaheen, Wife of Riasat Mehmood resident of Thalla Syedan P.O Jhangi Syedan, Tehsil and District **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.9 in CP.6616/2021)
 88. Muhammad Azeem, Son of Ghulam Raziq resident of Thalla Syedan P.O Jhangi Syedan, Tehsil and District **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.10 in CP.6616/2021)
 89. Mst. Nasreen Akhtar, Widow of Ghulam Raziq resident of Thalla Syedan P.O Jhangi Syedan, Tehsil and District **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.11 in CP.6616/2021)
 90. Chanwaiz Khan, Son of Ghulam Muhammad resident of Thalla Syedan P.O Jhangi Syedan, Tehsil and District **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.12 in CP.6616/2021)
 91. Saqib, Son of Chanwaiz Khan resident of Thalla Syedan P.O Jhangi Syedan, Tehsil and District **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.13 in CP.6616/2021)
 92. Masood, Son of Aurangzeb resident of Thalla Syedan P.O Jhangi Syedan, Tehsil and District **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.14 in CP.6616/2021)
 93. Land Acquisition Collector, ICT, G-11/4, Mauve Area. **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.15 in CP.6616/2021)
 94. Masood, Son of Aurangzeb resident of Thalla Syedan P.O Jhangi Syedan, Tehsil and District **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.14 in CP.6616/2021)
 95. The Secretary, Ministry of Interior, Government of Pakistan, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.17 in CP.6616/2021)
 96. The Director General, Pak PWD, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.18 in CP.6616/2021)
 97. The Inspector General of Police, Islamabad Capital Territory, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.19 in CP.6616/2021)
 98. The Secretary, Parliamentary Affairs, Law and Justice, **Islamabad**.
(Respondent No.20 in CP.6616/2021)

Take notice that the above cited Civil Petition along with connected cases came up for hearing before the Court on 14.02.2023 and following order has been passed:-

"With reference to the order of previous date the Court Associate informs us that while some progress has been made with regard to service of the respondents, there are some who remain yet to be served, especially in view of the fact that in pursuance of order of the previous date a large number of leave petitions were registered that will be heard together. Service is held good on all respondents who have been served since the previous date. Repeat notice on all unserved respondents in order to complete the service phase. Let service also be effected by way of publication in two national 'Dailies', one in English and one in Urdu, in their editions as published for Islamabad/Rawalpindi. Office is directed to note that the publication will be made for all the leave petitions by way of one omnibus notice to be published and expenses for the publication will be borne by the petitioner authority in CP 767 of 2022. To come up for hearing on 8th March, 2023. "

Take further notice that the above noted case is fixed for hearing before the Court on **08.03.2023** at **9.00 a.m.** or soon thereafter as may be convenient to the Court house at Islamabad.

You are, therefore, required to appear before the Court on **08.03.2023** either in person or through Advocate-on-Record duly appointed by you in accordance with the Supreme Court Rules, 1980, failing which these petitions will be heard ex-parte as against you. Islamabad, the 24th February, 2023.

(NOOR MUSTAFA SHAH)
ASSISTANT REGISTRAR (CIVIL-II)
FOR REGISTRAR **PID(I) 5316/22**



Jail Bharo balloon of PTI deflates: Amjad Afridi

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Provincial Information Secretary Pakistan Peoples’ Party, Amjad Afridi on Friday said the balloon of Jail Bharo movement has been deflated as the PTI chief Imran Khan was seeking bails rather than going to jail.

In a statement issued to media here, Amjad Afridi said in such movements, bails in all cases have to be withdrawn but PTI leaders were running to obtain pre and post arrest bails from the courts.

In some districts, Afridi said, despite announcements by the police to the leaders of PTI, no one came out of the home to join the Jail Bharo Tehreek. He said the majority of the PTI leadership has taken refuge in hospitals in the name of treatment.

The roads were forcibly blocked and disorder was created by the PTI workers causing hardship for the general public in reaching their destination. Ironically, he said not a single PTI worker or leader presented himself for imprisonment in Peshawar, which was a big question mark on the standard of PTI. He said the PTI workers who used to threaten the district administrations and police, were now begging for not to be arrested. He asked the PTI chief whether his sons Qasim and Sulaiman will also join the Jail Bharo Tehreek. These actions of PTI, he said, were only meant to weaken the democratic institutions and create political disorder in the country, adding such tactics were destined to flop.

Bridge in Shangla awaits reconstruction

PESHAWAR (APP): Kormang Bridge, connecting 0.1million people of three union councils of Shangla district still awaited reconstruction after its destruction in 2005 earthquake.

It’s been around 18 years, this bridge was destroyed in the earthquake of 2005 and despite release of funds and work started on this important connectivity source, the bridge was in dilapidated condition posing threat to its crossers, said Ashfaq Ahmad, a former member of union council.

He said funds were released for reconstruction of this bridge in 2008 however when work on ERRA projects was closed the project could not be completed. The former PTI government took charge of completing this project and restarted work on Kormang Bridge, Ranyal Bridge and Mian Killay Road but still these projects were not completed, creating multiple problems for the locals in reaching their destinations.

On the recommendation of former Labor Minister KP, Shaukat Yousafzai, funds amounting to Rs40.5 million were released for Kormang Bridge but the project still remained uncompleted. Ashfaq said local people were faced with great hardship due to unavailability of the bridge and forced to cross the bridge on foot. He said school children, especially the patients, were facing trouble in crossing the bridge as the bridge was not worthy to bear the load of vehicles.

KP govt to modernize agriculture sector, says Qasuria

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: KP Caretaker Minister for Agriculture and Livestock, Abdul Haleem Khan Qasuria has said that the Agriculture Department would be provided with modern machinery.

He was addressing a joint meeting of the officers of Agriculture Department and growers at Ratta Kulachi, D.I. Khan on Friday. Besides, Director General (DG) On-Farm Water Management, Javed Khattak, DG Agriculture Engineering, Engineer

Nasim Javed, Project Director Gomal Zam Command Area Development Project, Yasin Wazir and officers of the agriculture, livestock, water management, fisheries and Gomal Zam Dam Project, local growers also attended the meeting at large.

The provincial minister said that besides bringing modernism in the agricultural sector, the provision of latest machinery will also increase agriculture production in the province. He further said that rehabilitation of the flood affected

canals and water courses is in progress, saying that water courses would be restored soon.

The provincial minister said that different seminars would be organized for creating awareness about agriculture among the farmers and vowed to utilize all available resources for bringing maximum barren land under cultivation in the province. Similarly, he said that free food and facilities would be provided for hatcheries and vowed to ensure quality and timely completion of all ongoing agriculture sector projects.

Civil society applauds rise in taxes on local cigarettes

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Blue Veins, a local NGO working in Peshawar, and Provincial Alliance for Sustainable Tobacco Control Khyber Pakhtunkhwa applaud the recent massive increase in federal excise duty on sales of cigarettes by the Government.

The press statement commended the price hikes, saying that price measures are the most effective way of discouraging tobacco consumption and shows Government’s commitment to public health.

The recent issuance of a Statutory Regulatory Order (SRO) on February 14, 2023, has revised the taxes on locally produced cigarettes, with FED doubled on cigarettes that have an initial price on the packaging exceeding 9000 per 1000 cigarettes, to 16500/- per 1000 cigarettes. This move is expected to generate billions of rupees in revenue for the national

exchequer while discouraging smoking among children.

The press statement says that increasing the price of cigarettes is a recommended measure under the FCTC to reduce tobacco consumption and its harmful effects on health, as it can discourage smoking and generate revenue to fund public health initiatives. The Research shows that increasing the price of cigarettes is one of the most effective ways to reduce tobacco use.

Qamar Naseem Program Manager Blue Veins said, “There is strong evidence that increasing the price of cigarettes is an effective way to reduce tobacco use. When the price of cigarettes is higher, people are less likely to start smoking and more likely to quit. This is because higher prices make it more expensive for people to maintain their tobacco habit, which can be a significant financial burden over time.”

“Additionally, higher

prices can discourage young people from starting to smoke in the first place, as they may be less able to afford it,” he added. Zahoor Ahmad, a child rights expert and member of the Provincial Alliance for Sustainable Tobacco Control Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said, “The decision by the government to increase cigarette prices is an important step towards reducing tobacco use, particularly among vulnerable populations like youth and low-income individuals.”

Amna Afridi a young women’s rights activist from Khyber Agency said, “We applaud the government for taking this important step towards promoting public health and reducing the harms associated with tobacco use. We also encourage the government to continue to prioritize public health by implementing other evidence-based policies, such as smoke-free laws and restrictions on tobacco advertising.”

Superintendent Prison seeks action against PTI workers

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Superintendent Peshawar Prison has sent a letter to Sharqi police station for taking action against PTI workers who posed a threat to the security cordon and attempted to enter the jail.

The letter issued to Sharqi police on Friday said some PTI workers staged a mass protest in

front of Gate-1 of the Central Prison Peshawar and disturbed the administration for hours. Some of the protesters even crossed the fence along the roadside and incite others to do the same.

Central Prison Peshawar is a highly sensitive security installation. This action of PTI workers may lead to some

untoward incidence as hundreds of hardcore militants and dangerous criminals are confined to this prison.

The letter asked the police to take legal action against the intruders, pictures of whom were attached, and patrolling may be increased to avoid recurrence of such a situation.



PESHAWAR: Adviser to KP CM Rehmat Salam Khattak offering dua after inaugurating tree plantation drive.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister for Industries Adnan Jalil giving gift to a child at Thalessemia Center in Alkhidmat Hospital.

Commissioner reviews services available at SDC

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Commissioner Peshawar Division, Mohammad Zubair visited Service Delivery Centre (SDC) at Deputy Commissioner Office and reviewed services available at various counters of the centre on Friday.

Besides, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Peshawar, Shah Fahad, other officers of the district administration were also present on the occasion. On the occasion, the Divisional Commissioner was given a detailed briefing regarding the performance of district administration.

The Commissioner also visited the old record room at Tehsil Building and inspected the ongoing beautification work on it. During visit to SDC, the Deputy Commissioner briefed him about services available to the people. He also met with applicants and after collecting first-hand information from the visitors about their problems and directed the staff for their immediate redressal. Speaking on the occasion, the Commissioner Peshawar directed the officers and staff of the district administration to perform their duties with honesty and provision of maximum relief to the people by disposing of their work.

Dry weather to persist in most KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Provincial Meteorological Center Peshawar on Friday predicted that dry weather is expected in most districts of the province, while cold and partly cloudy in upper districts and hilly areas.

Isolated light rain-thunderstorm with light snowfall over the hills is also expected in Chitral, Upper Dir, Upper Swat, Shangla, Kohistan, Battagram, Kohistan and Mansehra districts during evening/night. During the last 24 hours, dry weather occurred in most districts of the province, while cold in upper districts and hilly areas. The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in centigrade at different stations of the KP were Peshawar City 29/10.

Balahisar Fort: An icon of South Asian history

PESHAWAR (APP): Being one of the oldest living cities of South Asia, Peshawar always bore strategic credentials due to its geographical location and a source of attraction for invaders to establish and strengthen their dynasties. With a history of over 2,500 years, the city was considered a gateway to the subcontinent and of pivotal importance for all kings, monarchs, warriors and invaders who ruled this region.

Therefore, these rulers constructed forts across the sub-continent as their power strongholds for the safety of their people and to safeguard them against external aggression including the mighty Balahisar Fort. Situated opposite Jinnah Park (old Cunningham Park) on main GT Road, Balahisar spreads over an area of 15.4 acres and is built of red bricks with 92 feet in height. It reminds the visitors of the rulers of various dynasties who stayed here before marching to the sub-continent to gain geopolitical strength and trade advantages from the rich lands of the subcontinent.

“In the past, most of the invaders and warriors including Afghans Muslim rulers, Mughals, Sikhs and British used to first conquer Balahisar fort before proceedings to Punjab and other parts of the subcontinent,” said Bakhtzada Khan, senior research officer, KP archaeology and museums department. “Recent excavations at Gor-Kathri Peshawar have ascertained city’s history dating back to 2,500 years,” he said. “But, discussing this history was incomplete without mentioning the historic fort of Balahisar. It seemed to be as old as the city of Peshawar itself.”

The old main entrance of Balahisar directly faces the GT road that links Peshawar with Afghanistan and Central Asia on the west, and extends towards Pushkalavati (Charsadda) in the North and Hund and Taxila on the East. Several branches of the past Bara River used to flow through interior Peshawar with one among them probably near the Balahisar Fort.

Renowned historian, Dr A.H. Dani in his book “Peshawar-Historic City of Frontier (now Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa)” wrote that when Huien Tsang, a Chinese traveller, had visited Peshawar in 630 AD, he spoke of a “royal residence” i.e. Balahisar. According to Dr Dani, a channel of old Bara River surrounded by a high spot perhaps comprised Balahisar and Inder Shahr and the present elevated Balahisar could have been the citadel.

The Chinese word “Kung Shing” is used for its significance and is explained as the fortified or walled portion of a town where the royal palaces used to be situated. This shows that the royal residence formed the nucleus of a Citadel, which must have been further protected by a moat. In 11th century AD, Raja Jaipal, a ruler of the Hindushahi dynasty was defeated in Peshawar’s vicinity and commander Mehmd Ghaznavi had garrisoned the fort with his army. “There were different opinions about the origin of the fort but mostly Mughals were believed to be the architects of present Balahisar,” Bakhtzada said.

According to renowned historian Abul Fazl, Balahisar was redesigned and built by Mughal emperor Zaheeruddin Babar in 1526. However, after overthrowing emperor Humayun by Shershah Suri, the Afghans destroyed the fort. “When he was staying in it, Hanyun decided to rebuild the fort to use it for his conquest of India at a later stage and himself supervised its rebuilding,” he said. Balahisar was also used by Hari Singh Nalwa as a royal residence for Maharaja Ranjeet Singh during Sikh rule.

“The Afghan Durrani rulers used it as their winter camp in early 19th century and named it “Balahisar” a Persian name, meaning high fort,” Bakhtzada said. “Later on, Sikhs renamed it as Samargarh in 1834 but the name remained unpopular.” Balahisar remained a key settlement for successive rulers and witnessed the rules of Hindu Maharajas, Ghauris, Ghazanvis, Tughlaqs, Mughals and Sikhs. The fort also remained the residence of the Afghan king, Ahmed Shah Durrani and his son Taimur Shah Durrani.

However, after death of the latter in 1793 AD, the Durrani rule weakened and Sikhs captured Peshawar and Balahisar in 1834 after the battle of Nowshera. Firstly, the Sikhs destroyed a major portion of the fort but later regretted it and Sher Singh, on orders of his father Ranjeet Singh, erected the fort with unbaked bricks.

On entrance of the main courtyard of Balahisar, a Sikh period inscription can be seen at the arch gate. This is the only inscription available today in Balahisar, which reads, “Victory to Porak. This was built by Raja Bikramajit and was named Samir or Samar Garh.” At the time of Sikh Shahi annexation to British rulers in 1849, Balahisar had mud walls.

The British replaced its structure with red bricks in its present shape and kept troops in Balahisar till the cantonment was laid out in Peshawar. “When the Afridi tribesmen launched a massive attack on Peshawar city in 1930 in a bid to overthrow colonial rulers, the fire of British artillery dispersed them from Balahisar,” Bakhtzada said. The architectural wonder has always been the centre of attraction for local and foreign tourists and visiting dignitaries presenting a rare view of its huge battlements and architectural designs. Balahisar also has an honour of hoisting the national flag on August 14, 1947 and later served as Frontier Corps (FC) headquarters.

Canopy trees on GT Road sides to be planted

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Director General, Environmental Protection Agency, Anwar Khan has said that canopy and fruit trees would be planted on GT road sides to counter the challenge of growing air pollution.

Addressing a function here, the Director General said canopy and large fruit trees on GT road sides from Chamkani Peshawar to Nowshera would be planted during spring season due to its significance in the combating air pollution and making the environment clean.

PM austerity steps: A landmark initiative to reduce burden on exchequer

PESHAWAR (APP): The massive austerity measures announced by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif are being termed a need of the hour to overcome the prevailing economic crisis and would surely help reduce the economic burden on the national exchequer.

The decision of members of the federal cabinet not to draw salaries, allowances and other perks and privileges was largely hailed by people from a cross section of the society in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and declared it a major step forward in the right direction to give support to an under-stressed economy. Ikhtair Wali Khan, PMLN KP Spokesman and former Member Provincial Assembly told APP on Thursday that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his cabinet members have set a great example for others to follow and expressed the hope that all provinces would replicate it in letter and spirit for the best interest of Pakistan.

He claimed that Imran Khan’s

government had left behind economic landmines for the coalition government after seeing that his game was over. He said Imran Khan Govt has artificially kept prices of the petroleum products and dollars low as compared to international market rate, resulting in an extraordinary burden on the country’s economy and increasing price-hike and inflation.

“The Imran Govt did not know how to run the economy and changed several finance ministers. When the PTI Govt ruined the national economy and ran out of money, the incompetent rulers of PTI escaped by dissolving the KP and Punjab assemblies,” he claimed. He further claimed that when Imran Khan realised that his government will not survive any longer, he badly damaged all important sectors including energy, water, agriculture and economy so much that it will take years to recover. “It was clearly written in the contract Imran Khan made with the

IMF in 2019 that the subsidy on petrol would be abolished.” He said the coalition government was left with no viable option but to renegotiate with the IMF for revival of the said agreement to save the country from an imminent bankruptcy and default.

To overcome the massive inherited economic damages, he said the coalition government took bold decisions for revival of the national economy without taking their political outcome into consideration and the Prime Minister’s massive austerity measures would greatly help slash expenditures besides saving Rs200 billion annually for Govt kitty. Senior economist and financial expert, Ms Sumbal Riaz highly appreciated all members of the federal cabinet for their key decision to pay utility bills from their own resources and return all the luxury vehicles, use economy class during abroad travelling and not to stay in five stars hotels in foreign visits

besides slashing of current expenditure by 15 percent by all the federal government’s divisions, departments, subordinates and other government entities.

She said imposition of ban on purchase of luxurious vehicles, withdrawal of extra security vehicles from the cabinet members, reduction of TA/DA allowances of the officials, establishment of a single treasury account besides opening of government offices at 7.30am during the summer season would significantly help reduce expenditures and save financial resources.

Welcoming the government decision regarding non creation of new division, unit, district, or tehsil at federal level and allotment of only one plot to government servants besides single dish in official functions except for foreign dignitaries was a significant step forward to cut down expenditures. ANP leader and former environment minister Wajid Ali Khan while appreciating the

PM’s austerity measures said that the PTI government has ruined the economy and energy sector and Imran Khan was responsible for the current high price hike and inflation in the country. He claimed that the improper planning and poor selection of plantation sites of the billion trees afforestation project washed away by the last year flood had exposed the PTI’s good governance claims. Wajid said the billion trees project has been taken over by the NAB which spoke volume of the Imran Khan anti corruption slogans.

Wajid Ali Khan alleged that PTI had destroyed the energy and power sector as evidence of washing away of many micro macro power stations in northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by last year’s flood. Except BRT project, he said PTI has failed to start any mega uplift project during its last ten years rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. However, he said that the ill-planned BRT corridor had turned Peshawar into a traffic jam, making the lives of

Peshawarties miserable.

“The motive behind the start of Jail Bharo Tahrik by Imran Khan was to please the dissident workers and leaders of PTI, who were unnerved over premature dissolution of KP and Punjab assemblies” he said. He said the PTI leadership was known for making aimless hue and cry for political gains and reiterated that Imran Khan’s loyalists would face people’s wrath after Tosha Khan and PTI’s foreign funding scandals.

Wajid said it was behind his understanding that PTI on one side dissolved the two provincial assemblies and on other was demanding reelection in these provinces besides contesting for national assembly seats in by election. The experts said that wrangling between political forces would serve no purpose rather would weaken democratic institutions and urged Imran Khan to immediately call off his uncalled for jail bharo movement and sit with the government for election reforms.



In brief

Two die in mishap

CHILAS (PPI): Two people including the driver died when an oil tanker plunged into a deep ditch while on its way to Rawalpindi from Gilgit on Friday. The incident took place near Karakoram Harban Highway when the tanker was going to Rawalpindi from Gilgit. As a result, two passengers including the driver lost their lives in the incident and another one was injured. According to the rescue officials, the injured has been transferred to Chilas Hospital.

Two killed, one injured F.P. Report

SHANGLA: Two persons were killed and one injured when an oil tanker veered off and plunged into a ravine on Karakoram Highway, Upper Kohistan. According to Police Station Harban, oil tanker that was en route to Rawalpindi from Gilgit veered off and fell into a gorge within limits of Harban. Two persons who were residents of Hunza were killed in the incident and another injured in the incident. The injured was rushed to Chilas Hospital for emergency treatment and is stated to be in stable condition.

Man shot dead in Mastung

MASTUNG (PPI): One person was gunned down by unidentified gunmen near Dasht Degari cross area of district Mastung in Balochistan province on Friday. According to rescue sources, unidentified gunmen shot dead one person near Dasht Degari cross area of district Mastung. The body of victim, identified as Haji Mian Khan Pirkani, 55, son of Haji Azmat Khan Pirkani resident of Killi Pirkani Dasht, was taken to Sandeman Provincial Hospital, Quetta for completion of codal formalities. The body was handed over to the heirs after fulfilling necessary medico-legal formalities. The incident has created a mourning atmosphere in the victim's house. Further investigation was being conducted by the concerned authorities.

Accused gets death sentence

MIRPURKHAS (PPI): Judge Ghulam Qadir Taniao of the First Additional Sessions and Model Criminal Court sentenced an accused to death and life imprisonment after the kidnap and rape case of a teenage girl filed against him was proved. He was also fined of Rs200,000 in the case. According to the case, accused Sajad had kidnapped the girl, Seema, aged 14 years, raped and then killed her. The case was registered at Women Police Station in 2021. In view of the statements and evidences, the accused was sentenced to death under Section 364-A and life imprisonment under Section 376.

'Inquiry into private prisons'

QUETTA (PPI): Senior leader of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Senator Mushtaq Ahmed, has said that the incumbent provincial government was a stigma on the face of Baloch nation. Demanding the authorities to form a judicial commission for conducting inquiry into private prisons and the incident of Barkhan, he said that it was not known as to why the administration was had kept a silence without taking action against perpetrators. These views were expressed by him while addressing participants of protest camp set up at Fayyaz Sumbal Shaheed Chowk, red zone area of the provincial capital to express solidarity with attendants of protest and convey condolence.

Tableeghi congregation

Large number of people come to Bannu

F.P. Report

BANNU: People thronged the Bakkakhel town of Bannu to participate in the three-day tableeghi congregation on Friday. A large number of faithful from Lakki Marwat, Karak, North Waziristan, DI Khan, Tank, Kohat and other parts of the province have started arriving Bannu to take part in the religious gathering.

A tent city has been set up near the Hamza Tableeghi markeez in the town where the authorities with support of elders of Tableeghi jamat have made available basic necessities and required items for the faithful. The local administration in consultation with the management of Tableeghi

markeez have finalised all sorts of arrangements for the peaceful conduct of the congregation.

Divisional commissioner Pervaiz Sabatkhel chaired a high level meeting at his office to review arrangements for Tableeghi congregation and ensure provision of all sorts of facilities and basic amenities to the faithful.

At the meeting, Mr Pervaiz directed the bigwigs of district administration and other relevant authorities to put in place all available resources for the peaceful and successful conduct of the religious moot. He asked the authorities to implement the traffic plan in letter and spirit so as to enable people from across the country to reach the venue

of the congregation without facing any trouble. The divisional commissioner said that along with law enforcement personnel, the officials of district administration, health, Rescue 1122, TMAS, civil defence and other departments would remain fully alert during the three day moot.

"Islam is the religion of peace and it teaches us to promote tolerance and brotherhood in the society", he maintained, saying that the religious congregation will prove helpful to promote peace and eliminate evils in the society. He said that tens of thousands of participants would offer prayers for forgiveness of their sins and peace, progress and prosperity of the country.

Waiting room for visitors at PTC Multan inaugurated

Saqib Mushtaq

BAHAWALPUR: Dr. Muhammad Tariq Chauhan, Additional Inspector General of Police Training, Punjab, Lahore inaugurated the hospital and waiting room for guests with his blessed hand.

A 10-bed modern hospital equipped with all the best facilities at the Police Training College Multan and a VISITORS' PLACE for the guests of officers, youths and staff coming to the college was inaugurated by Dr. Muhammad Tariq Chauhan. Additional Inspector General of Police Training Punjab, Lahore congratulated today on 24.02.2023. Deputy Inspector General of Police / Commandant Police Training College Multan Gohar Mushtaq Bhutta and other staff were present.

Police Training College has a capacity of 10 beds simultaneously for patients in the hospital building. The project, approved by the Punjab government, has spent Rs 14.976 million. The hospital has completed its record period in one year. The hospital area is 11 marble. The building includes a ward for patients in addition to the dispensary and medical store.

In keeping with the need for a waiting room for the visiting police training college Multan, a separate alcohol visitors' PLACE has been constructed with all the basic needs containing two halls for male and



female visitors (visitors) in the college. The purpose of this project is to facilitate the visiting guests to meet with young men and staff members in a better environment.

During the visit, Additional Inspector General of Police Training Punjab visited various departments of the institution and expressed special interest in the training provided to the trained officers. He appreciated the performance of the administration of Police Training College Multan on other under construction projects in the institute.

Dr. Muhammad Tariq Chauhan, Additional Inspector General of Police Training Punjab Lahore said in his address that Police Training College Multan is the largest single institution for training

police officers in South Punjab. In which a modern training system has been established to meet the challenges faced by the police in the modern era. This institution has greatly increased its efficiency. And its beautiful and human-friendly environment makes it sad.

The construction of the hospital in the institution will definitely provide the best health facilities to the trainee officers, youths and staff of the college. While the construction of VISITORS' PLACE is one of the practical steps taken by the police for better behavior from the public. Timely completion and excellent construction of both the projects is the result of special efforts and extraordinary interest of Commandant Police Training College Multan.

Tree plantation campaign inaugurated F.P. Report

WANA: In South Waziristan Lower Wana, on the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Lower Waziristan Muhammad Nasir Khan, District Youth Officer Sardar Ali Wazir formally inaugurated the tree planting campaign with the support of the district administration.

ADC Kashmir Khan F&P and others were also present on the occasion of distribution of posts. Addressing the event, District Youth Officer Sardar Ali Wazir said that planting trees is an ongoing charity, by actively participating in the planting campaign and planting trees, the polluted environment can be made clean and transparent. Trees are human-friendly and the adverse effects of climate change can be avoided through increased forestation.

Sardar Ali distributed various plants like apricot, plum, mulberry and apple among the people present on the occasion. On this occasion, the farmers said, that this time saplings will be planted as a continuous charity, which will help prevent climate change with the income. The farmers thanked District Youth Officer Sardar Ali and said that for the first time we are getting fruitful plants, before that we were only given forest plants, which could have been saved from climate change, but there was no income. Most of the people did not like it because of this, this year the planting campaign will be successful with the distribution of fruit trees, and will increase the freshness and beauty of Waziristan.

District Education Office awarded Gold Medal: A grand ceremony was organized by Elementary and Secondary Education in honor of Director Education Hafiz Muhammad Ibrahim, in which the heads of Elementary and Secondary Education Dera Ismail Khan, Deputy DEO Mail Tank, Additional Secretary Sports Iftikhar Shamuzai, General Secretary Management Cadre Imran Jadoon and delegations of teachers association from different districts also participated. DEOs, SDEOs and ASDEOs of Tank Dera Ismail Khan and South Waziristan were also present on this occasion. District Education Officer Female Ghulam Fatima, in her address on the occasion, appreciated the services of Director Education Hafiz Muhammad Ibrahim and paid tribute to him for the ongoing reforms in the Education Department and his efforts to solve various problems of the teachers.

Facilities at Swat PTS need to be strengthened



Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Caretaker Minister for Communications and Works (C&W) Muhammad Ali Shah says that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police established peace by sacrificing their lives, I salute the services of the policemen for peace and serving the soil of the country. "When I got the opportunity to serve Swat as a Nazim, I tried to provide facilities to Swat Police beyond my capacity and was successful.

Different proposals have been made to take measures for the provision of land for the expansion of the police training school, construction of a boundary wall,

and work on the expansion of the Mosque, in this context these proposals will be placed before the current government. In the current situation, it is very important to strengthen the facilities in the Swat Police Training School" said the Caretaker Minister. He expressed these views in his speech as a chief guest at the police passing out ceremony at the Police Training School Mingora. DIG Training Feroze Shah also participated in the event.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Swat Sohail Ahmed and Director Police Training School Swat Noor Jamal along with police officers

and local elders participated in a large number. The chief guest, caretaker minister Muhammad Ali Shah inspected the period and distributed shields among the policemen for the best performance during the training.

The event also saw a display of skill by the passing-out policemen. In his address as Chief Guest, Caretaker Minister Muhammad Ali Shah said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police has become an organized and professional force and is improving with time. He congratulated the policemen who completed the training and hoped they would perform their duties dutifully.

Referral ambulance service opens in Ali Masjid

F.P. Report

JAMRUD: Referral ambulance service was inaugurated here in Rural Health Center (RHC), Ali Masjid, subdivision Jamrud last day.

In this connection a simple moot was organized that was attended by former Member Provincial Assembly (MPA) Bilawal Afridi as chief guest beside District Emergency Officer Syed Shoab Mansoor, Tehsil Chairman Said Nawab Afridi, Emergency Officer Baryal Mukhtyar, scores of

tribal elders, Rescue 1122 workers and members of civil society.

The chief guest cut the ribbon to formally open the facility and offered prayers for its success and later on he inspected the well-equipped ambulance service and was briefed of it. Speaking on the occasion the ex-parliamentarian said that the remote areas of Khyber lacked basic facilities and availability if such kind service was a lucky thing for the residents.

He said that efforts would be made to win facil-

ities being enjoyed by the citizens in other parts of the country. The Rescue 1122 district head said that the rescuers will shift the patients on the authentic doctor's referral slip to any hospital inside the district or Peshawar.

The dwellers of the locality thanked the concerned department for initiating a human well being practice and hoped that will benefit them. It is worth mentioning here that the service has already functioned in health centers across the Khyber.

Flood brings Biodiversity crises in KP

Murad Khan

BIODIVERSITY is essential for human food, oxygen and drinking water but due to the severe flood in June 2022 in the whole country and especially Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province created biodiversity crises, because in this flood countless trees, crops, animals and livestock have vanished, which ultimately created food crises. Due to this flood the expensive hatcheries of trout fish have vanished and the trout fish has been captured in Charsada district at (MondaHeadworks) near Mohmand Dam.

Besides this countless kinds of bird's species, fishes, crops and agricultural land have been badly affected due to this flood, which has created a crisis situation in KP, and the environmental scientists believe that due to these losses our food is directly being affected, but unfortunately the international community is also not helping directly in biodiversity loss due to flood.

The Economic losses are estimated to be in excess of \$30bn, 50 million people have been internally displaced, and more than 400 children have died. According to the livestock department, more than 2 thousand cattle have been washed into flood water, but it seems that there will be a huge loss to livestock in the affected areas and the department is calculating the exact figure.

According to the official report of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Forest Department under 10-BTTP (Ten Billion Tree Tsunami Project) regarding Flood Damages, 2216 Ha of land (estimated worth Rs: 255 million) have been damaged due to flood. The report shows that in region-1 (Banu, Kohat, South Waziristan, Peshawar, Kurram, Orakzai) 968.4 Ha of land have been damaged, the estimated worth of that land is

Rs:108530473. Similarly in Region-2 (Kohistan, Bunir, Haripur) 460 Hectare of 10 BTTP have been damaged, the loss has been estimated at Rs: 41448541. At the same time in region-3 (Kalam, Upper Swat, Dir, Kohistan, Alipur and chitral) 787.88 Ha of Hectare of 10 BTTP have been damaged, the loss has been estimated Rs: 104791932.

BachaZeb (Working as Transmission Engineer for Pakhtunkhwa Radio Bajure) Belongs to swat (As he had three Trout fish forms in Kalam). In a telephonic conversation he said that they have lost three trout fish forms in swat and some hotels also have vanished due to the monsoon flood. "All the three Trout Fish forms were in around 3 kilometers area, and all of them (with their Hatchery) have flowed into flood water, due to which all breeds have been lost. " Mr. Zeb added. He estimated the total loss at more than 50 to 60 million rupees.

Forty-two-year-old Usman Ali belonging to Swat says that the trout forms worth Rs: 300 million, have either died or been washed away in rainwater drains due to the floods in Swat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on August 26. Usman Ali, who has been involved in the trout fish business since 1992, said that in the recent floods 7 of my trout farms have been flooded causing a total loss of 30 million.

According to data obtained under RTI from the Department of Fisheries, Swat, 136 private and two government trout farms in five tehsils of Swat have been completely destroyed by the floods, while 99 more farms have been partially affected by the floods. 159 farms were affected by the flood in Tehsil Matta and the loss was Rs. 70 million and four million. 1 farm in Rs and tehsil Charbagh and the loss is 1 million rupees. In Swat, the trout fish farm as a whole has suffered a loss of 1

billion, 35 crore and 4 million rupees due to recent floods.

Detailed list of losses and damages due to flood in KP issued by PDMA: According to the official details provided by PDMA (Provincial disaster management authority), in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at least 311 people died and 381 people were injured as a result of various accidents due to rains and floods across the province since 15 June 2022. The detailed report says that in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 37,525 houses were completely damaged while 53,943 houses were partially damaged. The total number of house damages are 91,468 across the province. PDMA, District Administration and other relevant departments evacuated 406,538 people to safe places before the floods while 69,775 people were rescued through rescue operation in different districts, 674,318 people have been displaced and 866,363 people have been provided dry food and cooked food.

According to Director General PDMA KP Sharif Hussain, plastic mats to benefit 22456 individuals, apart from it 28,473 blankets, 14,884 kitchen sets, 18,139 hygiene kits, 15,839 water containers, 15,529 plastic mats, 1,640 life-saving jackets, and 12,551 mosquito nets Baskets, 1,660 searchlights and 14,161 pillows have been distributed. PDMA has already released PRs. 1752 million to the District Administrations since July to deal with the emergency situation. As per policy, the fund can be utilized for compensation of the victims and relief activities.

Prof. Dr. Mohammad Nafees, Chairman Department of environmental sciences at University of Peshawar says Biodiversity is very vast field, all kinds of organism, trees, plants, birds, micro-organism, algae, fungi, bacteria and other species came in the term of Biodiversity, all

these living organisms should be present in our environment with a specific ratio, then the routine of human life will be normal, for example we need oxygen, which is provided by plants and trees, similar different species depends upon directly or indirectly on our food. Some species like bacteria, fungi and algae cleans water, earth and air, besides these organisms maintain oxygen, carbon and nitrogen cycles. With the balance of these species it makes a complex system, in which each organism plays an important role.

About loss of Biodiversity due to flood Prof. Dr. Mohammad Nafees said "when flood comes it flows mud from soil, so either it destroys the habitat of countless micro-organisms, birds, fishes or it brings some nutrients due to which their food system destroys, so these organisms get out of the system, ultimately they have directly or indirectly affects our food, water and air."

About the judging criteria of biodiversity loss due to flood, the Chairman Department of environmental sciences said that there are special mechanisms and scientific techniques for each and every organism, besides this we do surveys from people and compare it with old data and we do special monitoring for this purpose.

Regarding the importance of each and every organism in biodiversity he said that if the crow is separated from the system, there will be no decomposition of waste product, besides this there are some organism which helps in greening of soil, if they are destroyed, the fertility of soil will be disturbed, these will affect the crops and plants production, which directly related to our food, environment and economy. So there should be more options present in our environment for oxygen, nitrogen cycle and for our food. Ex. Director National Insect

Museum at NARC (National Agricultural Research Center) Islamabad Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ather Rafi defines Biodiversity as "the distribution of living species in any ecosystem", the biodiversity loss occurs due to flood, construction and other human civilization.

About the help in biodiversity loss from international organizations like UN and CBD (Convention of Biodiversity) DrAther said they are not directly helping the losses due to floods and if they help in the form of compensation, I don't think it reaches the affected people, although there are some organizations who release funds for some conservation projects but unfortunately our country has a political environment rather than a scientific, that's why many important projects have been wasted.

In response to a question "How to minimize biodiversity loss due to flood?" DrAther replied that plantation, public awareness and seriousness are very important, besides this government has established biodiversity Parks and took ban over cutting of trees and hunting of birds and other animals, due to these activities biodiversity conservation is possible.

The Ex-Country head of IUCN (The International Union for Conservation of Nature) Dr Muhammad Rafiq said that flood destroys the basic components of Biodiversity i.e. Animals, Plants, fishes, living organism, forests and in short the rain damage the overall ecosystem. These losses can be calculated by scientific methods, calculations, and pre and post surveys. About the help of international community in this regards he said that there a fund called GEF (Global Environmental Facility) who give funds to Biodiversity and environment related projects globally, but unfortunately due to shortage of technical mecha-

nism, Pakistan gets very little benefits from that fund.

Dr Muhammad Rafiq suggested government should not only takes his rights from international community, but also should properly utilize their own Resource, the govt. should focus on low cost solution, rive forestation and plantation on huge scale, which can be sued for sale purpose in Corban exchange market, besides this every individual should get awareness about the importance of our planet, ecosystem, plants and trees. We should change our attitude and behavior's regarding climate and Biodiversity, because Biodiversity is nature, which is directly depending upon our food, water and oxygen.

It is very difficult to calculate the exact amount of Biodiversity loss due to flood, but there will be in thousand stories about biodiversity loss after sometime. The global organization working on Biodiversity CBD (Convention on Biodiversity) in its last meeting COP (conference of parties) held in Canada in the end of December 2022, fixed a huge amount for different sectors of biodiversity, the scientist working on biodiversity had expressed concerns as they did not discuss the loss and damages of biodiversity due to natural disasters like flood, because they are of the view that countries like Pakistan which are on the frontline of climate and environmental changes should be awarded special funds in order to take concrete steps to safeguard biodiversity in their respective countries and if proper steps were not taken on time, there will be biodiversity crises in the whole universe, which will ultimately badly effect the basic necessities of life like food, water and oxygen for human being.

The writer is Radio producer and freelance Journalist, who tweets on @Muradonline123



Dems consider break with tradition to get Biden more judges

WASHINGTON (AP): Even as Democrats celebrated the 100th judicial confirmation of Joe Biden's presidency, they are clamoring for more - and some are flirting with ending a century-long Senate practice to help make it happen. The rising friction over what in Washington parlance is known as the "blue slip" is creating tensions on the Senate panel that handles judicial nominations and prompting stern warnings from Republicans about a dangerous escalation in the partisanship that already dominates the judicial confirmation process.

The clash over Senate procedure could have major ramifications for Biden as he seeks to fill as many court vacancies as possible during the final two years of his term. Agghast at the speed with which Republicans approved judges during the Trump era, Democrats have made the confirmation to the courts a top priority, vowing to fill every seat possible. Their focus on the nominations is even greater now that Republicans control the House and can stall much of Biden's broader legislative agenda. Since at least 1917, the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee has sent a blue-colored form, or "blue slip," to the senators representing the home state of a judicial nominee. A blue slip returned with a positive response signals the senator's approval of moving forward with a nomination hearing. But if the blue slip is not returned or comes back with a negative response, that means the home state senator objects, which can doom the nomination. Republicans during Donald Trump's presidency determined the lack of a positive blue slip would not stop them from moving forward with considering appellate court nominees - and they did so 17 times. Democrats were livid, pointing out that Republicans blocked several of President Barack Obama's appellate nominees by declining to return a positive blue slip.

Now, Democrats are being encouraged to follow suit and do away with the blue slip when it comes to the district judges whose courts serve as the starting point for federal civil and criminal cases. "In many respects, it is an archaic holdover from a different era," said Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn. "I think we're maybe reaching the point of deciding whether it will be continued." Advocates for doing away with the blue slip say fast action is critical if Democrats want to have the kind of success Trump had in year three of his presidency, when he secured more than 100 judicial confirmations out of 231. They believe Democrats can't afford to wait months on Republican senators to give their go-ahead for a nominee. Besides, they argue, if Democrats don't

do away with the blue slip now, Republicans will abolish it when they return to the majority. "Democrats would be chumps to say, 'Oh well, we're not going to do this because it's a tradition,'" said Russ Feingold, the former three-term Democratic senator from Wisconsin who now serves as president of the American Constitution Society. The group is a liberal counter to the conservative Federalist Society. The New York Times editorial board also weighed in recently, saying it was "far past time" for the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee to end the blue slip practice.

The chairman, Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., has clearly heard some of the concerns voiced by progressives. He has made it a point recently to emphasize how Democrats submitted 130 positive blue slips for district court nominees during the Trump presidency, but so far, Republicans have only done so about a dozen times. That's essentially because Biden has been filling judicial vacancies of predominately Democratic-appointed judges in blue states. Soon, it will get harder. There are about 40 district court vacancies that will require a blue slip from at least one Republican senator. Many of those vacancies don't have a nominee yet, and Durbin is clearly sending a signal to GOP senators to work expeditiously with the White House on submitting prospective nominees. Durbin said he wants to continue with the blue slip tradition, but he's adding a caveat: that they aren't used for "discriminatory purposes" to block consideration of nominees based on race, gender or sexual orientation.

His comments have alarmed Republican senators. Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., said the blue slip courtesy is "very much at stake and at risk here." He also questioned how Durbin is going to discern the motivations of Republican senators if they object to a nominee. "The last thing left in this body that makes the Senate the Senate, in my view, and gives a senator a say about a consequential decision in their state that will last a lifetime is the blue slip process," Graham said. "So I would just hope we could agree, if possible, that no matter how frustrated we get, we're going to honor this system." So far, only one Biden nominee for a district court has had their nomination derailed because a senator withheld a blue slip, William Pocan, nominated to the Eastern District of Wisconsin. Republican Sen. Ron Johnson withheld his blue slip, saying he had heard concerns from the Green Bay legal community that they needed a judge locally based and active in their community.

Florida executes man for 1990 murder while a fugitive

STARKE, Fla. (AP): Florida executed a man for murdering a woman in 1990 after he escaped from prison, stabbing her to death in a shopping mall parking lot in an attempted carjacking. Donald Dillbeck, 59, was pronounced dead at 6:13 p.m. after receiving a lethal injection at Florida State Prison, the governor's office said. He had been convicted in the murder of Faye Vann, 44, in Tallahassee near the state Capitol.

The execution was Florida's first in nearly four years and the third under Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis. By comparison, his immediate predecessor, current US Republican Sen. Rick Scott, oversaw 28 executions. Vann's children, Tony and Laura, released a statement after the execution: "11,932 days ago, Donald Dillbeck brutally killed our Mother. We were robbed of years of memories with her, and it has been very painful ever since." They thanked DeSantis for carrying out the execution, saying it "has given us some closure."

The curtain between the

death chamber and the viewing room opened. When asked if he had any last words, Dillbeck said: "I know I hurt people when I was young. I really messed up." He also criticized DeSantis. The execution began at 6:02 p.m., and Dillbeck closed his eyes shortly thereafter. He breathed deeply for a few minutes while his body shook. By 6:07 p.m., his mouth hung open, and he appeared to stop breathing. Dillbeck was 15 when he stabbed a man in Indiana while trying to steal a CB radio, court records show. He fled to Florida, where Lee County Deputy Dwight Lynn Hall found him in a Fort Myers Beach parking lot. While Hall was searching him, Dillbeck hit the deputy in the groin and ran. Hall tackled him and, as the two wrestled, Dillbeck took Hall's gun and shot him twice.

Dillbeck was 11 years into a life sentence for killing the deputy when he walked away from a work release assignment catering a meal for a seniors event, according to court records. He then bought

a paring knife and walked to Tallahassee. Vann was waiting for her family when Dillbeck approached her car with the knife and demanded a ride, saying he'd forgotten how to drive, court records show. Vann honked the horn, tried to drive off and fought back that Sunday afternoon, but Dillbeck stabbed her more than 20 times and slit her throat, court records show. He crashed the car a short time later and was captured after running from the scene.

Despite a prior escape attempt and an assault on another prisoner, Dillbeck had been placed in a minimum security facility. A furious Republican Gov. Bob Martinez fired three corrections officials and sought to implement rules to ensure prisoners with life sentences would be held in more secure settings. Florida's Supreme Court earlier this month denied appeals claiming he shouldn't be put to death because he suffers from fetal alcohol syndrome and it was cruel and unusual to keep him on death row for more than 30 years before his death warrant was signed.

Charges dropped against detainee

SAVANNAH, Ga. (AP): Prosecutors have dropped charges of assault, obstruction and other counts against a Georgia jail detainee after video from security cameras showed him being beaten by sheriff's deputies who rushed into his cell. The decision to dismiss charges against 41-year-old Jarrett Hobbs came several months after an investigation following the video's release in November led to the arrest of three Camden County deputies on battery charges in the jail beating.

"When the video came out, it was abundantly clear that Mr. Hobbs was not the aggressor," Harry Daniels, a civil rights attorney representing Hobbs, said. Daniels said Camden County officials had also agreed to pay Hobbs a "significant monetary settlement" rather than face civil claims in a lawsuit. He declined to give the dollar amount. John Myers, the county's attorney, confirmed a settlement but gave no further details. Hobbs of Greensboro, North Carolina, was booked into jail in coastal Camden County for traffic violations and drug possession charges Sept. 3. Later that day, a security camera recorded deputies charging into Hobbs' cell and pushing him against a wall before repeatedly punching him in the head and neck. Another camera recorded Hobbs being hurled against a wall and pinned to the floor.

Hobbs was charged afterward with aggravated battery, simple assault and obstruction of law enforcement officers. A court filing by prosecutors dismissed those charges, citing "insufficient evidence" against Hobbs. Also dropped were the traffic and drug counts that initially landed Hobbs in jail. Brunswick Judicial Circuit District Attorney Keith Higgins had no further comment on the case, said Cheryl Diprizio, his executive assistant. Hobbs' beating at the Georgia jail came to light after federal authorities in North Carolina looked into his September arrest. They wanted to determine whether Hobbs had violated his probation stemming from his 2014 guilty plea to a charge of conspiracy to commit bank and wire fraud, according to court records.

The jail videos were first obtained by Hobbs' attorney in the federal probation case, Daniels said. Daniels shared the security videos with reporters in November. Sheriff Jim Proctor ordered an internal investigation more than two months after the beating occurred and Hobbs was the only one charged. Higgins, the district attorney, asked the Georgia Bureau of Investigation to get involved. The following week, three Camden County deputies were arrested on charges of battery and violating their oath of office. They were also fired. Two others faced disciplinary action but weren't charged with crimes.

Hobbs is Black. The three deputies charged are all white, according to Capt. Larry Bruce, the sheriff's spokesman. Hobbs was returned to federal prison after authorities determined he violated terms of his probation by leaving North Carolina.

Refugees on Australian detention island sew lips shut in protest

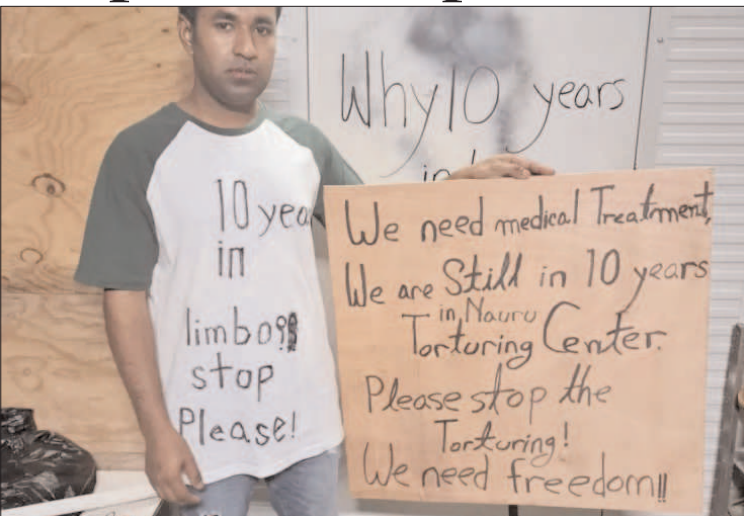
SYDNEY (Agencies): Two refugees on the tiny island nation of Nauru - a five-hour plane journey from Australia in the southwestern Pacific Ocean - have sewn their lips together in protest against their almost decade-long detention on the island. Australia has used Nauru since July 2013 to detain asylum seekers who travel to Australia by boat. Some were also sent to Papua New Guinea's (PNG) Manus Island for processing, with all of them told they would never be allowed to settle in Australia.

The policy has had an extreme effect on refugees and asylum seekers held under its stipulations. About 150 refugees and asylum seekers are currently in Nauru and PNG, with little to no knowledge of when - or, if ever - they will be resettled. The two protesters, Mohammad Shofiqul Islam and Mohammad Kaium, have been detained on Nauru for nearly 10 years.

Mohammad Shofiqul Islam spoke for them both via the WhatsApp messaging service from where they are holding their protest near RPC1, the administrative hub for refugee services and security in Nauru. "We are hunger strik[ing]," he wrote in a message to Al Jazeera. "We closed our lips and we [have] stopped eating and drinking ... we can't speak," Shofiqul Islam said. "We don't eat and don't drink until we get our medical treatment and freedom."

The two men travelled separately to Australia from Bangladesh in 2013, he said, to seek asylum from persecution in their home country. Their boats were intercepted by the Australian navy and they were eventually sent to Nauru. Since 2015, refugees and asylum seekers on Nauru have been detained in the wider island community. But the situation is "not safe", Shofiqul Islam said. "In Nauru, people are treat[ing] us like we are animals - not human," he said. "Here in Nauru, very poor medical treatment," he continued. "And we are not safe here. People ... here, they don't like refugees. They hate us." The abuse and neglect of detainees - in what rights group Amnesty International described as Nauru's "open-air prison" - have been well documented.

Refugees have been medically evacuated following attacks and for the treatment of chronic illness. Mental health is also a serious issue for the detainees. Self-harm and even suicidal behaviour were reported among children held there. The last four of more than 200 children who were once detained on Nauru were resettled to the United States in 2019. Shofiqul Islam has begun the process of applying for resettlement in the US under a 2016 resettlement arrangement between Canberra and Washington. But he has been engaged in the process for more than three years already and neither Shofiqul Islam nor Kaium knows when they will be released. He and Kaium, who is not in the resettlement process for



the US, are desperate to get off the island and end their indefinite detention.

"We need medical treatment ... freedom. We want justice," he wrote. "Why we are 10 years in limbo without any crime? Our hearts are broke[n] now, we can't take anymore. Please help us to get our freedom." Even as Shofiqul Islam and Kaium protest for their freedom and that of other refugees, the Australian government recently signed off on legislation giving it the legal power to continue processing asylum claims offshore and, effectively, solidifying detentions on Nauru. Behrouz Boochani - an award-winning author, former refugee and political commentator - has accused the Australian Labor Party of "lying" about its reasons for utilising offshore processing.

Officially, the offshore detention of refugees and asylum seekers who arrive by boat to Australia is a mechanism for preventing people smuggling. "But that is just something that they [use] to justify this cruelty," Behrouz said, explaining that both of Australia's major political parties, Labor and the centre-right Liberal Party, have created fear around asylum seekers arriving by boat and have used tough immigration policies to win votes. "They hide themselves behind national security," he said. "Believe me, nothing will happen if they release [the refugees on Nauru]," he added.

Behrouz, who was held for six years on Manus before finding refuge in New Zealand, also said there was a lot of money to be made in detaining refugees and asylum seekers. He cited a 420 million Australian-dollar (\$286m) contract agreed earlier this year between the Australian government and a US private prisons operator, Management and Training Corporation (MTC), to run "garrison and welfare" on Nauru. A spokesperson for Australia's Home Affairs Department declined to comment on the cases of Shofiqul Islam and Kaium. They told Al Jazeera that the government "remains committed to regional processing in Nauru" and that those detained on the island had access to medical services, including

for mental health, with "mechanisms in place" to transfer those most in need to Australia or Taiwan.

"Regional processing provides unauthorised maritime arrivals the opportunity to have their protection claims assessed by a regional processing country, and if found to be in need of international protection, support to identify a durable migration pathway," the spokesperson said. "Third country resettlement also supports the Government's no settlement in Australia policy for unauthorised maritime arrivals." There are movements in Australia's parliament to overturn Labor's use of Nauru to detain refugees and asylum seekers. Earlier this month, the Australian Greens party introduced a bill in the Senate that would seek asylum seekers and refugees on Nauru and in PNG immediately evacuated to Australia. The bill would allow asylum seekers and refugees to stay in Australia temporarily, with access to medical assessments and treatment, before being resettled in a third country. Political activist and refugee advocate Ian Rintoul thinks the likelihood of the bill passing is slim.

"I can't see Labor supporting the Greens bill," he said. "Certainly the Liberals will not ... Despite Labor policy, the government is committed to maintaining offshore deterrence policies." Ultimately, he said, Australia should be resettling the refugees and asylum seekers it is holding offshore. Many of them are formally on resettlement pathways to the US, Canada or New Zealand, "but they have all been waiting a long time on Nauru and do not know how much longer they will be waiting", he said. "Of greater concern are those who do not have any third country resettlement option at all," he continued. "These people are Australia's responsibility and should not be left on Nauru indefinitely. They obviously should be transferred to Australia and provided the protection they asked for in 2013." Nearly 10 years on Nauru is already too long, Shofiqul Islam wrote. "Enough is enough," he said. "Please stop torturing us, we can't take any more."

Mexico's president defends controversial electoral reform bill

MEXICO CITY (Agencies): Mexico's President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador has defended a controversial bill that would cut the budget of the country's electoral agency and weaken oversight of campaign spending. "All of this is part of normal politics in a democracy," Lopez Obrador said of the legislation. Lopez Obrador said he expects court challenges to the bill, like those previously filed against many of his administration's reforms. But he added that the legislation would survive them because none of it was "outside the law".

The president, who has long criticised the agency for costing taxpayers too much and paying high salaries, said he will sign the new bill into law even though electoral authorities say it could weaken democracy in Mexico. The bill was approved by Mexico's Senate in a 72-50 vote. The new law would cut salaries and funding for local election offices and reduce training for citizens who operate and oversee polling stations. It would also

lessen sanctions for candidates who fail to report campaign spending.

Mexico will hold its presidential election next year, but Mexican presidents are limited to a single, six-year term by the country's constitution, so Lopez Obrador will not be running. While Lopez Obrador was nonchalant about the court challenges, in the past he has frequently attacked Mexico's judiciary and claimed that judges are part of a conservative conspiracy against his administration. Elections in Mexico are expensive by international standards, in part because almost all legal campaign financing is, by law, supplied by the government.

The electoral institute also issues the secure voter ID cards that are the most commonly accepted form of identification in Mexico, and oversees balloting in remote and often dangerous corners of the country. Protests are already planned against the reform in multiple cities in Mexico, encouraged by the electoral institute itself.

Federico Estevez, a retired political science professor at the Autonomous Technological Institute of Mexico, said the opposition's claims that Lopez Obrador is "dismantling democracy" are exaggerated.

"It's not about undoing democracy. It's a different conception of democracy," Estevez told the Associated Press news agency. "It's more majoritarian, and less dependent on inadequate, unproductive and mistaken elites." Lopez Obrador remains highly popular in Mexico, with approval ratings of about 60 percent. Part of his popular appeal comes from railing against high-paid government bureaucrats, and he has been angered by the fact that some top electoral officials are paid more than the president. Lopez Obrador proposed his legislative initiative, known as "Plan B", in December after he did not obtain enough votes in Congress for even deeper electoral changes that would have altered the size and makeup of Congress.

In Russia-Ukraine war, more disastrous path could lie ahead

MOSCOW (AP): For Russia, it's been a year of bold charges and bombardments, humiliating retreats and grinding sieges. Ukraine has countered with fierce resistance, surprising counteroffensives and unexpected hit-and-run strikes. Now, on the anniversary of Russia's invasion that has killed tens of thousands and reduced cities to ruins, both sides are preparing for a potentially even more disastrous phase that lies ahead.

Russia recently intensified its push to capture all of Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland of the Donbas. Kyiv and its Western allies also say Moscow could try to launch a wider, more ambitious attack elsewhere along the more than 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line. Ukraine is waiting for battle tanks and other new weapons pledged by the West for it to reclaim occupied areas. What's nowhere in sight is a settlement. The Kremlin insists it must include the recognition of the Crimean Peninsula, which it annexed illegally in 2014, along with the acceptance of its other territorial gains. Ukraine categorically rejects those demands and rules out any talks until Russia withdraws all forces.

While Putin is determined to

achieve his goals, Ukraine and its allies are standing firm on preventing Russia from ending up with any of its land. Experts warn that Europe's largest conflict since World War II could drag on for years, and some fear it could lead to a direct confrontation between Russia and NATO. In recent months, Russian forces have tried to encircle the Ukrainian stronghold of Bakhmut and push deeper into the Donetsk region. Along with fulfilling its goal of capturing the entire Donbas, Moscow aims to wear down Ukrainian forces and prevent them from starting offensives elsewhere.

Bakhmut has become an important symbol of tenacity for Ukraine, as well as a way to tie up and destroy the most capable Russian forces. Both sides have used up ammunition at a rate unseen in decades. Ukrainian military analyst Oleh Zhdanov said Russia has poured more troops and weapons into the Donbas and attacked other areas in an apparent bid to distract Ukrainian forces. "Russia currently has the initiative and the advantage on the battlefield," he said, noting Kyiv's acute shortage of ammunition. Russia has relied on its massive arsenal, and boosted production of weapons and munitions, giving it a

significant edge. While Ukrainian and Western intelligence agencies observed that Moscow is running out of precision missiles, it has plenty of old-style weapons.

But even though Ukraine and its allies expect a wider Russian offensive beyond the Donbas, it could be a gamble for Moscow, which mobilized 300,000 reservists last fall to bolster its forces. Igor Strelkov, a former Russian security officer who led separatist forces in the Donbas when fighting erupted there in 2014, warned that any big offensive could be disastrous for Russia because its preparation would be impossible to conceal and attackers would face a devastating response. He said an offensive would also raise logistical challenges like those that thwarted Russia's attempt to capture Kyiv at the war's start. "Any large-scale offensive will quickly and inevitably entail very big losses, exhausting the resources accumulated during mobilization," Strelkov warned.

Justin Bronk, a senior research fellow at RUSI in London, predicted any Russian offensive would fail, but said it could drain Ukraine's resources and keep it from preparing its own large-scale counteroffensive. "The big ques-

tion is how much damage does the Russian offensive do before it runs out of steam, because that will dictate the Ukrainian position," he said, noting that its aim could be to disrupt Kyiv's ability to stage a counteroffensive. Bronk said Ukraine spent the winter building up its mechanized brigades that had spearheaded autumn counteroffensives in the Kharkiv and Kherson regions and suffered losses.

He said Ukraine has a window of opportunity of six to eight months to reclaim more land, noting that Russia could launch another mobilization to recruit up to 500,000 more troops who could be readied for combat after at least six months of training. Zhdanov said Ukraine could launch a new counteroffensive in late April or early May after receiving new Western weapons, including battle tanks. He predicted Ukrainian forces will likely attack from the Zaporizhzhia region to try to reclaim the ports of Mariupol and Berdyansk and cut the Russian corridor to Crimea. "If Ukraine reaches the Sea of Azov coast, it will nullify all the Russian gains," Zhdanov said, turning Putin's victories "to dust."

Observers see little prospect for talks. Both sides are "irreconcilable

on their current positions," said Bronk. Major Ukrainian battlefield successes this summer could fuel "significant political turmoil in Russia, because at that point, Putin's own position within the leadership becomes very, very difficult to see as tenable," he said. At the same time, if Ukraine fails to reclaim more territory before Russia builds up its troops, it could lead to a "long-term stalemate and sort of a grinding attritional war that just kind of goes on and on," Bronk added, playing into Moscow's plan "to prolong the war and just wait for the West to get exhausted." Fiona Hill, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution who served in the past three US administrations, also saw little prospect for a settlement.

"The Russians are digging in for the long haul. They have no intention of losing," she said. "Putin has made it very clear that he's prepared to sacrifice whatever it takes. His message there is basically saying you can't possibly counteract me, because I'm willing to do whatever and I've got so much more manpower." Hill said Putin is hoping for Western support for Kyiv to dissolve - "that it goes away and that Ukraine is left exposed, and then that Russia can

force Ukraine to capitulate and give up on its territory." Tatiana Stanovaya of the Carnegie Endowment said Putin continues to believe he can achieve his goals by pressing the campaign.

"For him, the only way he admits it can end is capitulation of Kyiv," she said. Putin has repeatedly said Russia could use "all available means" to protect its territory, a clear reference to its nuclear arsenal. Moscow's nuclear doctrine states that it could use those weapons in response to a nuclear strike or an attack with conventional forces threatening "the very existence of the Russian state," a formulation that offers broad room for interpretation and abrupt escalation. Some Russian hawks urged nuclear strikes on Ukrainian bridges and other key infrastructure to force Kyiv and its allies to accept Moscow's terms. Bronk said he doesn't expect Russia to resort to that, arguing it would backfire. "Actually using them generates almost no practical benefits at all and certainly nothing to compensate for all of the costs, both in terms of immediate escalation risk - irradiating things they want to hold on to and be part of - and also pushing away the rest of the world," he said.

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Public institutions, a political scapegoat

PAKISTAN Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senior Vice-President and Chief Organiser Maryam Nawaz has asked the judiciary to assess its basic responsibility before evaluating the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on conducting the general polls in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. During a political gathering in Sargodha, the woman politician went on saying that a cabal of five was responsible for the all current problems in the country. She accused PTI Chief Imran Khan, retired generals, and two former Chief Justices of their alleged complicity against the PML-N government in 2018.

The political temperature is on the rise as the announcement of the date of the elections for the Punjab and KP provincial assemblies triggered a big debate in the country. Meanwhile, the suo motu notice by the Chief Justice of Pakistan and the formation of a larger bench of the apex court prompted new discussions regarding the pros and cons of the recent decision by the Chief Adjuducter. The supreme court's decision was hailed by the PTI-led opposition while the Ministers from the coalition government echoed concerns regarding the bias and partiality of a few members of the larger bench, currently hearing the case of the eligibility for the announcement of the dates for election in provinces.

The recurrent ambushes against democracy by the military dictators and the judiciary's theory of necessity in the past had put the worst effects and set condemnable standards in politics. At the time, most government servants including bureaucrats, generals, and judges as well as lower staff have build up a political allegiance with certain political groups that not only compromised their loyalty to the state but also rendered the respective public institutions divided and dysfunctional. On other hand, a majority of current-day politicians are the product of martial laws or seek favor from the establishment, and judiciary to reach top slots or to stay in mainstream politics. Meanwhile, lies and propaganda, character assassination of opponents, and attacks on the military and judiciary are the favorite tools for politicians to shed off their weaknesses and gain popularity and grab the sympathies of the masses.

Historically, Pakistani society could not develop a constructive political culture over the past seven decades while the absence of merit and political interference in government institutions badly undermined the government institutions and the self-esteem of the bureaucracy. The top executives used to seek good books from the rulers in hope of monetary benefit, plots, and post-retirement incentives. Thus, the constitution has been used to serve the interest of the influential instead of ensuring the writ of the law.

Present-day politics has badly tarnished the image of our national institutions including the military, judiciary, Police, Election Commission, NAB, IB, and the FIA because the higher echelons of those institutions had abused their oath and got involved in politics in the past. Realistically, politicians had adopted a strange philosophy that if a court verdict or election result comes in their favor it is considered a good job of institutions otherwise it is a conspiracy and biased act against them. If the politicians have some grievances with any individual/institution they must use legal options instead of promoting their politics by mocking and harassing public institutions. It is high time that public institutions start working to resume their prestige through self-accountability, and fearless public service, while politicians must do politics on issues instead of inter-loping in the past.

One thing is clear: Putin cannot be allowed to win

Tony Blair

THE Russian aggression in Ukraine must be defeated. The remaining hope of Vladimir Putin is that Western resolve weakens. The US, the UK, the EU, Nato must therefore stay strong. This much is obvious. This was the invasion of a peaceful country, with a democratically-elected president, which posed no threat to its neighbours and which, whatever its internal tensions, abided by the norms of the international community.

The idea that Nato provoked this aggression is absurd. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Nato offered Russia a partnership; Presidents Yeltsin and Putin were invited to Nato summits; the G7 was the G8 including Russia; and Putin himself, certainly in the early days, wanted good relations with the West and to concentrate on economic reform.

What "provoked" the invasion of Ukraine was not Nato's desire for conflict. That much is clear from the degree to which Europe was prepared for such a conflict, for example in reducing its reliance on Russian gas (in other words, not at all). The cause of the invasion is illustrated by my own conversation with Putin, before leaving office, who by that point had given up on reform and democracy and had embraced nationalism and dictatorship. I tried to reason with him, following a discussion with then-American President George W. Bush, that whether Ukraine joined Nato or not should be up to them. "It's their choice", I said. "It's not their choice", he replied. "They're with us."

Putin believes that the Soviet Union had the wrong ideology but the right geo-politics. It's an

imperialist vision completely at odds with the existence of the independent nation states of Eastern Europe, the Balkans and Central Asia. And that is why he must be stopped. His original war aims have disintegrated. His strategy

flict to end by negotiation; others are for the defeat of Russia. In reality, there should be no difference between these two positions. Everyone wants the conflict to be over, and

Russian leadership that they cannot win. That, however long it takes, their aggression will be defeated. That their analysis of Western weakness is misplaced and their only

Ukrainians need and our supply of them. In fact, there are dangerous shortages of some essential materiel and those supplies and the capacity to manufacture them need to be ramped up, for our own future defence as well as

of the next wave of extremism and migration to Europe if we do not coordinate and focus Western policy.

We should keep engaged with China but with clarity and firmness. President Xi has said to several leaders I have spoken to that he was not told of Putin's plans to invade. Maybe. They're making clear they will not support the use of nuclear weapons. And they're presenting themselves as offering a route to negotiation. They won't believe that their present ideas on "peace" will be seen as serious by Ukraine or the West.

But their primary audience is the rest of the world which, as I know from my Institute's work in the Middle East, Africa and South East Asia, believes - despite some appearances - that the invasion was foolish and wrong, but which is also desperate for it to end because of the disruption and economic distress it has caused. As a result, it is more open to the siren song that Russia is as much victim as aggressor. We need a concerted strategy to refute this. However, China might yet decide to play a role. Xi's influence with Putin is significant. Not now, but at some point, that may offer an opportunity to bring Russia to an understanding of what is necessary. So we should keep lines open as the EU and US are doing, while making it clear that active support for Russia's war aims will be a red line for our relationship.

This conflict is horrible. But what is at stake is fundamental. We have no alternative but to stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes. Only when Putin understands that our resolve will not wane can we begin to hope that the conflict will end sooner rather than later.

The Russian President has contempt for Western democracy and believes it will exhibit frailty over the long haul. There is an assessment of the state of Western politics as divided: some parts of the West want the conflict to end by negotiation; others are for the defeat of Russia. In reality, there should be no difference between these two positions. Everyone wants the conflict to be over, and understands it won't end in a WWI or WWII-style surrender. But neither option is necessary to demonstrate that the Russian aggression against Ukraine has been comprehensively defeated. But at present, Putin's demands in any negotiation would be utterly unacceptable to Ukraine, which is why President Zelensky has ruled a negotiation out. The only way to get a just negotiated solution to the conflict is to prove to the Russian leadership that they cannot win. That, however long it takes, their aggression will be defeated. That their analysis of Western weakness is misplaced and their only option, therefore, is to withdraw - and never engage in such madness again. President Biden, our own prime ministers, Europe and Nato have shown the requisite determination up to now and that is greatly to be celebrated. We have surprised Putin and possibly ourselves. That determination needs constant reinforcing. There is too big a lag between realising what weapons and munitions the Ukrainians need and our supply of them. In fact, there are dangerous shortages of some essential materiel and those supplies and the capacity to manufacture them need to be ramped up, for our own future defence as well as for Ukraine.

now is a version of what he did in Syria. For over a decade, he has held firm. In that time, Western staying power in Afghanistan and Iraq frayed, and Putin now has Russian interests there secured. The Russian President has contempt for Western democracy and believes it will exhibit frailty over the long haul.

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for Ukraine. The West needs a broader strategy to push back not just against Russian aggression in Europe, including support for the brave people and leadership of Moldova, but also, for example, in Africa.

It's a campaign of de-stabilisation, involving large scale disinformation, the malign actions of the Wagner Group, the provision of arms and even the support of coups. Watch the Sahel. It will be the source

Who's afraid of a Chinese balloon?

Belén Fernández

SOMETIMES on this planet of ours, militaries do silly things. There was that time in 2021, for example, that the United States army accidentally stormed a sunflower oil factory in Bulgaria. That same year, the Italian armed forces erroneously blew up a chicken coop in northern Italy. A bit farther back, in the Battle of Karansebes of 1788, the Austrian army accidentally attacked itself, resulting in some 10,000 casualties. Now, another bizarre military stunt has been pulled on the world stage - but on purpose.

On February 4, a US fighter jet shot down what the United States insists was a Chinese "spy balloon" off the coast of South Carolina; according to China, it was merely a weather balloon that had blown off course. The airborne object was taken out with a Sidewinder missile - which, at \$400,000 a pop, was also the weapon of choice a week later as the US military went about fre-

netically shooting up more unidentified stuff in the sky. Belligerent and huffy pronouncements ensued from the US political establishment, and President Joe Biden refused to apologise for downing the Chinese balloon - while Aviation Week floated the suggestion that one of the unidentified items might have been a cheap balloon reported missing by the Northern Illinois Bottlecap Balloon Brigade, a hobbyist club.

In response to the fate of the Chinese balloon, China's top diplomat Wang Yi categorised US behaviour as "almost hysterical" and urged the US "not to do such preposterous things simply to divert attention from its own domestic problems". To be sure, the US suffers from an abundance of terrestrial issues that are rather more existentially perilous than a balloon off the coast of South Carolina. These range from the lack of a functioning healthcare or education system to the ongoing epidemic of homelessness to the

fact that mass shootings might as well be declared an official national pastime. On February 18, a gunman in a rural Mississippi town fatally shot six people - the latest episode in a never-ending horror show. But, hey, China is the real threat to American "safety and security".

It meanwhile bears emphasising that, even if the Chinese balloon was indeed conducting surveillance rather than meteorological operations, the US reaction is still pretty "preposterous" given the country's own stellar track record of surveilling everyone and everything in the world. This includes decades of particularly aggressive spying against China itself, from the Cold War era of U-2 spy planes up to the present day. Of course, the US's unilaterally endowed right to act as Big Brother-in-Chief extends to the practice of spying on US citizens, too - speaking of "domestic problems". Take the CIA,

which on top of all the energy it expends committing misdeeds abroad somehow also manages to find the time to engage in the unlawful mass surveillance of Americans, with no proper oversight or safeguards against violations of privacy.

Then there is the FBI, which as the American Civil Liberties Union notes has a "long history of abusing its national security surveillance powers", starting with the COINTELPRO programme during the Cold War that "targeted numerous non-violent protest groups and political dissidents with illegal wiretaps, warrantless physical searches and an array of other dirty tricks". Now in the "war on terror" era, the FBI has shown even greater dedication to dismantling basic civil liberties. Muslim communities have been especially persecuted with relentless unwarranted surveillance and plenty of "other dirty tricks" - like when the agency opted to

spend heaps of US taxpayer money paying informants to entrap unsuspecting folks in FBI-manufactured terror plots. Last but not least, the National Security Agency (NSA) has done its own bit for "national security" by presiding over the secret and illegal mass surveillance of Americans, including the interception of phone and internet communications.

Amid all the ruckus over the Chinese balloon, I spoke with a former employee of various prominent defence companies contracted by the NSA and the Pentagon, who requested anonymity. He speculated that Biden was simply endeavouring to appear "tough on defence" with his aerial escapades in order to satisfy the more trigger-happy sectors of the establishment. After all, there is nothing tougher than blowing up a balloon with a \$400,000 missile. The balloon's "guts" are currently being analysed at the FBI laboratory in Quantico, Virginia, where they were

transported after being recovered off the Atlantic coast. Whatever the ultimate diagnosis is, it is safe to assume that we have not seen the end of the preposterousness, particularly given the utterly jam-packed nature of the sky these days, where one can take one's pick of potential airborne menaces.

But freaking out about a Chinese "spy balloon" also discounts all the literal aerial terror that is Made in the USA - from bombing and strafing Afghanistan and Iraq to saturating the heavens with armed drones. In 2011, a CIA drone strike on Yemen extrajudicially murdered Abdulrahman al-Awlaki, a 16-year-old US citizen. Now that the military precedent has been set for frantically blasting balloons and random unidentified objects out of the sky - and as Made-in-USA panic fuels an atmosphere of bellicose Sinophobia - it's time for a reality check. In other words, you might say, it is time to burst America's balloon.

Aljazeera

Keir Starmer's five missions reveal a man serious about being prime minister

Polly Toynbee

ASIDE from being 28% ahead in the polls, a sure sign that a party is on the threshold of power, is its leader receiving a ferocious roasting on the BBC's Today show. Keir Starmer, laying out his "five missions" covering the economy, the NHS, crime, the climate crisis and education, was stress-tested in that boxing ring on Thursday morning. He stood up to it pretty well, as you'd expect of a former chief prosecutor.

The line of attack on him is the one that he will face through the next election: why had he broken the pledges he made in his leadership campaign? Pledges, the BBC's Amol Rajan claimed, are for life, echoing attacks from right and left. The Tory chairman, Greg Hands, said that Starmer would "say anything if the politics of that moment suit him". Momentum said: "His promises lie in tatters, ditched in favour of the

reheated third-way Blairism typified by these latest, vapid 'missions'." Sky asked him after his speech: "Why should anyone believe a word you say?"

The answer, inevitably, is that when the facts change, then policies must change too. Since those pledges there have been Covid, Ukraine and the Liz Truss "kamikaze" budget. Voters may hate U-turns and flip-flops, but they may be convinced by his reply: with energy prices through the roof, would you spend a small fortune compensating shareholders by nationalising energy companies, or choose his windfall tax on excessive profits and his green Great British Energy company, which would work alongside the private sector?

He refuses to repeat a pledge to abolish tuition fees, but promises radical reform (expect a graduate tax). Why? Wait for the education announcement, but expect it to declare affordable childcare and a

return to Sure Start-quality nurseries. Funding is better spent on universal early years interventions than on already successful students in their late teens.

Starmer's speech won't electrify anyone with dazzling new policies, as his missions lay solid foundations on which the manifesto will be built; roof and windows to follow. What strikes anyone who studied him three years ago is the long way Starmer himself has travelled in self-confidence and authority. He looks like a convincing prime minister because he has convinced himself. Boring? Only a bit. But there are worse things to be, as the country knows to its cost from our last two prime ministers.

Look how well his slow, strategic steps have done so far, without splurging too early with promises that are either tired or irrelevant by the next election. In fact, bit by bit, he

has been announcing policies that reflect his principles: 19m homes insulated, the right of trade unions to recruit in every workplace (take heed all those Amazon "fulfilment centres"), VAT on private school fees to fund teachers in state schools, abolishing non-doms to train thousands more medical staff, and 10 experiences every primary-age child will get by age 10.

Personally, I would ban any UK politician from promising "world-leading" or "world-beating" anything: it would be great if we could catch up with the rest. Starmer's promise to bring "the highest sustained growth rate in the G7" may be possible from such a low base, but it feels hubristic: do it first, boast afterwards. Where he scores is his oft-repeated promise of long-term, ambitious plans that will take time, no quick fixes, "as we lurch from crisis to crisis" suffering "a last

gasp of a party caught between a rock of stagnation and the hard place of economic recklessness". On Thursday, right on cue, came a dismal reminder of what Labour will face if it wins the election. The weighty annual report from the Institute for Government on the state of public services landed with a thump, painting a yet more dismal picture of the country's crisis-hit civic and social fabric.

At the next election NHS waiting lists will still be far above 2019 levels, let alone 2010's. "Pupils will not catch up lost learning, and the social care provider market will not be put on a sustainable long-term financial footing... the situation in prisons and courts is arguably worse." The cost of higher pay will be taken from budgets that already "do not provide the level of funding for major improvement".

IFG research unequivocally traces these black holes back to 13 years of auster-

ity, which left the country without the resilience to face Covid and war in Ukraine. Staffing targets are badly missed everywhere, not just in the NHS and care, but schools and police. Just 17% of the target number of physics teachers were recruited in England last year.

Labour's caution in never announcing spending without sourcing the cost is wise: imagine how tough it will be as each new minister arrives in their department to open the books, and the chancellor has to choose between scores of desperate priorities. Talking firmly now about long-term plans and not instant fixes lowers immediate expectations, but raises future ones to a better horizon. This will need two terms in power. The emblem that signifies all that long-term thinking is the 10,000 new places for trainee doctors, who will take 10 years to fill those vacant wards and GP surgeries.

The Guardian

British and American conservatives are drifting apart

David Frost

WHEN we think of the 1980s, we think of two political giants, Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, and their pursuit of freedom - rolling back socialism and the state at home, and standing up to communism abroad. The intellectual and political victory they won was so complete as to seem permanent.

Their close partnership seemed a natural consequence of the close Anglo-American alliance. They didn't agree on everything, but they were certainly driven by the same free-market, anti-collectivist worldview. It also seems relevant at this particular moment to mention their Christian beliefs, which underpinned their emphasis on individualism, personal responsibility, and on right and wrong as a guide to action.

This strong Anglo-American partnership was a core element of Western strength and Western ideas. But it seems to be fading fast. In particular, the exchange of ideas between conservatives here and in the US, the sense of intellectual cross-fertilisation, is the weakest I remember. I think that's a problem. Why is this happening? One problem is the rapid leftward shift of the US political centre of gravity. Until quite recently not just Republicans, but also Democrats, were credible centre-Right parties by European stan-

dards. That's no longer true of the Democrats, and the intellectual debate in the US has changed as a result.

The powers of recovery in US society are strong, but for Americans to turn away from this leftward trend the Right must get its act together. And that is the other problem. In the UK, Conservatism has also drifted left, both economically and culturally. Although different wings of the parliamentary party have different perspectives, it has not been possible to resist the general trend towards high tax-and-spend combined with social liberalism.

In the US, conservative politics is going in a different direction. Traditional Republicanism, derided by some as "Chamber of Commerce Republicanism" for supporting US business rather than US citizens, is declining. The view in the ascendant is what's called "national conservatism" - the growing resistance to the zeitgeist by those who do not see decline as inevitable, and want to revive the US nation state and confidence in its history and culture. These conservatives want more freedom and more free speech, equality of opportunity not of outcome, a push-back on neo-Marxist "woke" views, proper border controls, a restrained foreign policy but one

which sees China as a hostile power, and a revival of the productive power of the US economy. For many, there is also a strong religious component, not so much the familiar gospel evangelicalism but conservative forms of Catholicism, Christianity more broadly, and Judaism.

President Trump gave voice to some (not all) of these views, though he didn't create them. They were given coherence by a group of intellectuals, centred around the Israeli-American professor Yoram Hazony. Now, they are arguably becoming mainstream: at the 2022 "NatCon" conference, Florida governor Ron DeSantis was the keynote speaker. The head of America's biggest think tank on the right, the Heritage Foundation's Kevin Roberts, told delegates: "We [Heritage] are not asking you to join our movement; we are here to join yours." The problem for Anglo-American conservatism is that these ideas are relatively counter-cultural still in the UK. The connection with Trump and all the associated baggage doesn't help. It's also true that some in the NatCon movement advocate politics which free marketers like me are less comfortable with, like industrial policy, protectionism, and isolationism. There is a cultural element, too. Even now, British Conservative politicians

aren't always comfortable with an aggressive "anti-woke" agenda, and tiptoe around the language of nation and country that comes naturally to Americans.

But they need to be less purist and engage with the politics of our great friend and ally as they are, rather than as we would like them to be. There is clearly some overlap between national conservative ideas and those advocated in these columns, ideas with which actual and potential Conservative voters, particularly new 2019 voters, seem to have quite a bit of sympathy. That is why I am speaking at the first "NatCon" conference in the UK in May, along with other UK politicians including Michael Gove, Miriam Cates and Danny Kruger. I do so also because we have to get comfortable talking about the politics of nationhood. Brexit is a constitutional and economic project to revive our nation state, to bring back home the power to build our own society in our own way, or it is nothing. British conservatism will never be identical to America's. But both varieties are rooted in the same traditions, of freedom, individualism, and limited but effective government controlled by the people. That's why it is troubling, indeed sad, that they risk drifting apart. Conservatives of all kinds will, I hope, do all they can to bring them back together.



Energy crisis exposes deep grievances in Uzbekistan

UZBEKISTAN, Central Asia's most populous nation, has had the coldest winter and longest energy shortages in memory. In December and January, at the height of the crisis, people around the country told VOA the government was failing at its basic function - delivering gas and electricity "when most needed." "I've never been this angry with the state. It has no value for me right now," said

Navbahor Imamova

Energy Ministry that the system is going through extensive reforms have been met with skepticism. "What reforms? This year's deficiency has been wider and longer than ever," said 30-something Sherzod, waiting in a line at least two kilometers long to refuel his car outside Tashkent. "If we are reforming, should not conditions be improving? It's been like this all winter."

lawmakers told VOA they were aware of the issues. A February 9 investigative report by Radio Liberty, VOA's sister organization, exposed corruption in Uzbekistan's oil and gas sector with hundreds of pages of documents, highlighting that the key beneficiaries "are opaque companies controlled by Uzbek and Russian political insiders, including a billionaire confidant of Russian President Vladimir Putin." Radio Liberty's findings

We burn coal and wood. Power cuts are daily occurrences here," said Sharifa, 45, a mother of two. "Perhaps those in the capital feel some empathy toward the people of the valley now." The Uzbek parliament remained a passive observer throughout the crisis without any hearings on this predicament. Several lawmakers told VOA they were aware of the issues. A February 9 investigative report by Radio Liberty, VOA's sister organization, exposed corruption in Uzbekistan's oil and gas sector with hundreds of pages of documents, highlighting that the key beneficiaries "are opaque companies controlled by Uzbek and Russian political insiders, including a billionaire confidant of Russian President Vladimir Putin."

Diyor, 28, an IT specialist in the capital, Tashkent, who like others in this article asked to be identified by only one name for fear of retaliation.

"I understand many of our problems require time to solve, but I refuse to cope with no gas or power at home," said Diyor "Shouldn't the state ensure the supply of at least one of these? We pay for them!" Authorities have attributed the problems to the unprecedented cold weather - what Uzbek media have termed an "anomalous winter" - but the public has not been satisfied with that answer.

"I came back from Europe two years ago believing that Uzbekistan was taking the right direction," said Yunus, 34, another angry Tashkenter. "I trusted President Shavkat Mirziyoyev when he said we were building a new Uzbekistan. But Uzbekistan has not had gas and electricity for weeks. The government does not seem to care." Walking through Tashkent's central neighborhoods alongside Tashkent Mayor Jakhongir Artikhojayev in December, the president scolded his subordinates for not serving the population. "Because of some irresponsible officials, our entire system gets denigrated," he said. Artikhojayev was fired a month later.

The government admits this has been a brutal season, with low gas pressure, power cuts and fuel shortages. The Energy Ministry has blamed a long list of factors for the problems: supply not meeting demand, infrastructure failures, production reductions because of extreme cold, import halts, and political and economic challenges. On January 24, Tashkent signed a "road map" with Russia's Gazprom that, as Uzbekistan's Energy Minister Jurabek Mirzamahmudov put it, aims to assess existing pipelines and logistical-technical options. "If they bring the gas to our door for an acceptable price, we will take it, otherwise not," Mirzamahmudov said of the arrangement.

Explanations from the

Throughout January, in Tashkent and other places, VOA heard rural and urban Uzbeks cursing the state and its leadership - not just privately, but on public transportation and in restaurants and teahouses, stores and salons, schools and universities, on the streets and in municipal offices. Rural dwellers said they prepare themselves mentally and practically for some cuts each winter, but this year the cities have also experienced shortages. Frustrated residents "felt helpless" when providers asked them to be patient.

"We have been waiting for days," said Kamola, 32. "Water lines are frozen without energy. I feel like we are in this crisis forever and this system does nothing." These residents did not see new appointments made by Mirziyoyev during the crisis as steps toward a solution. "Where is gas? Where is power? I heard Mirziyoyev. ... Good that he admits the failures of his government, but words won't warm us," said Barchinoev, 60, whose family moved to a newly constructed rental equipped with a generator. "Costly for sure, but we have grandchildren." "Why have my parents and grandparents been shivering at home?" asked Fatima, 21, a university student who is unhappy about her studies moving online and her siblings missing school. "It's -20 Celsius out. No gas, and the voltage so low that we can't even use an electric heater."

The situation started to improve in early February, with warmer temperatures. But long lines and hours of waiting for fuel persisted. But in the Ferghana Valley in eastern Uzbekistan, home to more than 10 million people, there was limited sympathy. "We've long been living in such harsh conditions. We burn coal and wood. Power cuts are daily occurrences here," said Sharifa, 45, a mother of two. "Perhaps those in the capital feel some empathy toward the people of the valley now."

The Uzbek parliament remained a passive observer throughout the crisis without any hearings on this predicament. Several

infructed the public. The Uzbek government has refuted some parts of the report, claiming that it misinterpreted agreements with investors, specifically the terms and costs. Energy Minister Mirzamahmudov said the country's more than 250 energy fields are run by the state-owned Uzbekneftegaz, not the Russian companies.

But Tashkent has yet to respond to other findings in the report, which said the Mirziyoyev administration "was warned as early as three years ago that his ambitious projects to boost gas and oil output were riddled with problems." It also said a secret interagency study had warned that "multibillion-dollar deals struck under the president's major energy initiatives risked the country's energy security."

Political analyst Kamoliddin Rabbimov, who discussed Radio Liberty's findings with the officials, said "the system must be as transparent as possible, explaining the deals and investments." Rabbimov is also urging the public to refrain from emotional outrage. Yet he appreciates the social media debate and diverse opinion in today's Uzbekistan. "Critical thinking is on the rise in our society," he wrote on Facebook. "Deeply rooted fear in our social mindset is diminishing."

People freely expressing and sharing views on political issues, he argued, needs to be reinforced. In a society that has long lived under authoritarianism, citizens questioning their leaders is nothing but reassuring. Ilyos Safarov, known for his wide-ranging political coverage on Kun.uz, a leading private media outlet, welcomed the government's willingness to explain its position. "But the lack of expertise in crisis management and fear-driven practices exacerbate the situation," he wrote on Telegram. Like Rabbimov and others, including some in the government, Safarov said the authorities must be accountable to the public and address critical questions on time.

VOA

Germany's treasured autobahn hits a bump in the road

Paul Hockenoss

HORSEPOWER-FLUSH automobiles and the 7,200-mile highway system that accommodates them - called the autobahn - are part and parcel of national mythology in Germany. But driving on the autobahn, long stretches of which forswear any speed limit at all, can be a chilling experience for the timid. I'm not a slow driver - and indeed am a native of the US, a country that too mythologizes the open road.

But it's utterly disconcerting when, ticking along at a brisk 75 miles per hour, somebody blows by me on the left and then disappears over the horizon as if I were driving a lawnmower. For decades, German drivers (overwhelmingly male ones) have relished this ostensible perk of limitless speed, many in precision-engineered automobiles with such storied names as Volkswagen, BMW and Mercedes Benz.

Now, the climate crisis is prompting Germans to rethink their relationship with the autobahn, long feted as the crème de la crème of highway systems. (Adolf Hitler did not start the project, as often cited, but rather embellished it - to propaganda-rich fanfare.) Germany's transportation sector's carbon emissions, say experts, are attributable overwhelmingly to cars and trucks - and the higher the speed of a car, the greater the emissions.

What's the purpose of four or five-lane thoroughfares in an epoch when new gas-and-diesel burners will, if the EU parliament has its way, be banned by 2035 anyway? Of course, Electric Vehicles (EVs) require good roads, too. But because their horsepower and top speeds are often lower, they require less superhighway - and more charging stations on well-kept roads. An e-car's high speed, while impressive, still generally pales to the motorheads I see

on the autobahn pushing 140 miles per hour. Also, with limited resources, the burning question in Germany at the moment is whether tens of billions of euros earmarked for new and broader autobahn wouldn't do more good building out cycling highways, like in the Netherlands, or an improved high-speed, densely networked rail service.

Ultimately, the proclivities of the car zealots have no place in the 21st century when we're racing against the clock to decarbonize our economies. The European Union is toiling to sink emissions by at least 55% by 2030, while Germany wants to better that by another 10%. Moreover, we're locked in an energy showdown with Vladimir Putin's Russia.

Yet the EU's transport emissions have shot up steadily for years, slowed only temporarily by the Covid-19 pandemic. In Germany, the trend is even worse: transportation's share of emissions in the national footprint rose almost by half between 1990 and 2022. While emissions in almost every other sector, including industry, have fallen, Germany has the most cars on the road of any EU country (almost 49 million). And while its EV sales are soaring, government dreams of having 15 million registered battery-installed vehicles by 2030 are expected to fall far short. This is why the International Energy Agency, a global energy forum, urges Germany, as well as every other country with an automobile culture, to embark immediately on a sustainable transportation revolution. The EU's Green Deal foresees Europe as the first carbon neutral continent in the world by 2050. And just this month, the EU Commission proposed a zero-emissions target for new city buses by 2030 and 90% emissions reduc-

tions for new trucks by 2040.

But Germany is stalling, with the heavy-set automobile manufacturers and their powerful lobby staunchly behind the unrepentant car lovers. The automobile-friendly corner - which includes one political party, the liberal Free Democrats - pays lip service to the benefits of trains, bikes and electric mobility. But it fights tooth and nail against reducing subsidies for long-distance automobile commuters and the prioritizing of low-carbon investments over more, wider, faster autobahn. In six locations in Germany - including in Berlin, practically straight through my family's backyard - new auto-bahn lengths are being planned or built.

The Free Democrats, who are part of Germany's ruling government coalition, along with Social Democrats and the Green Party, make the audacious argument that more autobahn would relieve traffic jams, which provoke popular ire and cast large emission footprints. Preposterous, responds mobility expert Urs Maier of the Berlin think tank Agora Verkehrswende. "Studies and experience show definitively that the more road you pave, the more traffic you'll get. Initially, it makes driving easier and more attractive, but after a short time you'll have the same traffic jams as before but only on more lanes," he told me. Environmentalists, on the other hand, insist that the key to bringing mobility emissions under control is moving private and commercial traffic from the road to rails. (German long-distance trains are largely electrified and boast less than a quarter of a car's footprint).

But Germany's rail network - once a source of national pride - has suffered greatly from years of neglect under the various Angela

Merkel-led governments between 2005 and 2021. Underinvestment has caused the number of delayed and scratched trains to soar, understandably incensing train travelers (whom I noticed during my Christmas-time trip to the in-laws tend to blame the current government for the fiascos.) The Greens in particular preach the virtues of sustainable mobility and insist that investment in an effective and tightly networked train system is the answer - as well as affordable fares. During the pandemic summer of 2022, the federal government decreed the issue of 9-a-month all-Germany ticket valid for all buses, metros and regional trains from the Baltic Sea to the Alps. The ticket was a smashing success, at least in terms of sales: 52 million in total.

Yet, even though many more people were traveling in (jammed) trains, the limited offer didn't mean that folks who adore their cars and the autobahn were any less loyal to the objects of their affection. A wide-ranging shift away from internal combustion engines isn't going to doom either road travel or the autobahn. Instead, Germany's highways could be reimaged: a slimmer autobahn for e-cars, e-buses and e-trucks with regular high-speed charging stations, or in the future electric roads.

With some 70,000 charging stations for electric vehicles across the country, Germany hopes to rapidly scale up that number to 1 million over the next decade. Five decades after the German band Kraftwerk's 1975 hit "Autobahn" was released, its repetitive message - intended to evoke the monotony of traveling on the highway itself - isn't at risk of becoming obsolete in the near future. "We drive, drive, drive on the Autobahn. We drive, drive, drive on the Autobahn."

standing of the supremacy of universal laws, not invented "rules," traditional values, religious and cultural norms, and respect for genuine, not loosely interpreted, human rights. The Kingdom is one of the states that have their own voice and the right to make sovereign decisions. This is especially valuable in the turbulent modern world, with its ongoing, uncompromising struggle for the future of our civilization, where everyone's voice, especially the reasonable ones, should be taken into account. For Russia, a country that sacrificed millions of its citizens' lives while fighting inhumane German Nazism, the desire for peace and good neighborliness with all nations is organically inherent. We never rejected dialogue, even with our principal opponents, but we are not ready to succumb to rough dictates and pressure. I think that such a vision is close to our Saudi partners as well.

Riyadh is taking a balanced approach regarding the Ukrainian crisis, and we highly appreciate this position. We are aware of the proposals of Saudi friends to mediate in the settlement of the conflict by political and diplomatic means. Such gestures of goodwill could be in demand in due course. I would like to emphasize that the history of our official relations with the Kingdom goes back to the 1920s. In 1926, our country was the first to recognize the united Saudi state created by King Abdulaziz. I am convinced that our shared capital, accumulated over the past century, is a solid foundation for further progress toward a strategic partnership with Saudi Arabia in the interests of our friendly nations.

The truth is on Russia's side

Sergei Kozlov

DURING his address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on Tuesday, President Vladimir Putin stressed that "one year ago, to protect the people in our historical lands, to ensure the security of our country and to eliminate the threat coming from the neo-Nazi regime that had taken hold in Ukraine after the 2014 coup, it was decided to begin the special military operation. Step by step, carefully and consistently we will deal with the tasks we have at hand."

For the last eight years, the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics have been living under undisguised aggression, blockade and attempts at forceful and economic suffocation. Thousands of civilians became victims of Ukrainian neo-Nazis, tens of thousands became disabled, hundreds of thousands were forced to flee their homes. Russia could not but react to the genocide of the population of these regions, doomed to physical destruction.

As Putin noted: "We were doing everything in our power to solve this problem by peaceful means, and patiently conducted talks on a peaceful solution to this devastating conflict. Behind our backs, a very different plan was being hatched. As we can see now, the promises of Western leaders, their assurances that they were striving for peace in Donbas turned out to be a sham and outright lies." It is a well-known fact that Russia has always been open to constructive dialogue with everyone interested in peace. At the end of 2021, we formulated reasonable and balanced proposals to the US and NATO on security guarantees. However, all principal points

for us were directly rejected.

Moreover, the Russian leadership had reliable information that, by February 2022, the Ukrainian henchmen of Washington were prepared for another bloody and punitive operation in the Donbas. It was also known about plans to strike the Russian Crimea and Sevastopol. Undoubtedly, we could not allow this to happen. In this regard, ask yourself a question: "Who initiated the conflict?" I will answer with the words of President Putin: "They were the ones who started this war, while we used force and are using it to stop the war." Another important point is that the special military operation takes place in accordance with the fundamental provisions of the UN Charter, which gives states the right for legitimate self-defense in the event of a threat of use of force, which we have exercised. As you can see, Russia follows the true spirit of international law, not some kind of "rules-based order," arbitrarily introduced by the West and its henchmen.

The Middle East is well acquainted with the Western "commitment" to international law: The examples of Iraq, Libya and other countries in the region that have severely suffered from the democratizing exercises of the Westerners are tangible proof of this. Those who stood behind the horrific atrocities against sovereign Arab nations are now shedding crocodile tears over Russia's allegedly "illegal and unprovoked actions," simultaneously introducing absolutely illegitimate sanctions against our country and its people, designed - and this is even openly articulated - to "put in place" or, in other words, to destroy

Russia as a sovereign state. While accusing Russia of far-fetched aggressiveness, the West bashfully omits that wars unleashed in the current millennium by its leader - the US - resulted in almost 900,000 people killed, and more than 38 million refugees. I emphasize, Americans themselves provide these numbers. What kind of humanity or legality can the perpetrators of these mass tragedies talk about?

Russia is not at war with the people of Ukraine, who have always been not only our closest neighbor, but literally a brotherly people. Unfortunately, the population of this fraternal country has become a hostage of the criminal Kyiv regime and its Western masters. To help them free themselves from this maleficent "guardianship" is our sacred duty and responsibility - and this approach of the Russian leadership is fully shared by the Russian people. The Russian Federation has consistently supported the aspirations of the Middle Eastern nations to gain true independence and sovereignty. Our policy has always been focused on the peaceful coexistence of all countries and nations, which we do not divide between the "golden billion" and the others. We do not think that certain regions are a "heaven on Earth" and other parts of the world are "jungles." On the contrary, equality of all members of the international community is an imperative principle of Russian foreign policy.

We highly appreciate the multifaceted and promising relations with Saudi Arabia, our good friend and partner. We are united with the Saudi people by common under-

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PSX loses 130 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bearish trend on Friday, losing 130.75 points, a negative change of 0.32 percent, closing at 40,707.76 points against 40,838.51 points the previous day.

A total of 153,441,220 shares were traded during the day as compared to 150,264,321 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs.4.958 billion

against Rs. 5.772 billion on the last trading day. As many as 330 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 113 of them recorded gains and 189 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 28 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 35,124,759 shares at Rs.1.30 per share; Maple Leaf with 10,541,476 shares at Rs.24.72 per share, and TPL Properties with 7,081,672

shares at Rs.14.66 per share.

Unilever Foods witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.1,317.00 per share price, closing at Rs.19,527.50, whereas the runner-up was Raffhan Maize with a Rs.490.00 rise in its per share price to Rs.8,990.00. Premium Tex witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.43.99 per share closing at Rs.575.00; followed by Ismail Ind with Rs.29.09 decline to close at Rs.480.01.

ICCI to set up facilitation centre for PM's Youth Programme beneficiaries: Bakhtawari

ISLAMABAD (APP): ICCI President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari on Friday said the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) would set up a facilitation centre for the mentorship of Prime Minister's Youth Loan Scheme beneficiaries of the Federal Capital and its surrounding areas.

He stated this in an interaction with Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Youth Affairs Ms Shaza Fatima Khawaja during a cheque distribution ceremony of the PM's Youth Business and Agriculture Loan Scheme,

an ICCI press release said. Ahsan Bakhtawari said Pakistan had a bulge of talented youth, who were its future. It was important to focus on youth development and empower them so that they could utilize their talent and abilities for making the country a strong economy in the region.

He appreciated the government for launching several initiatives under the Prime Minister's Youth Programme, including the Youth Business and Agriculture Loan Scheme to empower the youth of both urban and rural areas. He said the ICCI would

mentor the beneficiaries of the programme to enable them to start their own businesses and play an effective role in the country's economic development. The ICCI has already signed a memorandum of understanding with the PM's Youth Programme to cooperate in the mentorship and support of its beneficiaries to help them start their own businesses. The Youth Program is scheduled to disburse Rs 30 billion among 40,000 young entrepreneurs by June 2023 and half of which will be business loans for small and medium enterprises.

Shipping Activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Four ships namely, Ithomi, CMA CGM Ivanhoe, Hua Wei 8 and Al-Zubarah scheduled to load/offload Cement, Containers, Palm oil, and LNG, berthed at Multi Purpose Terminal, Qasim International Containers Terminal, Liquid Cargo Terminal and Engro Elengy Terminal respectively on Thursday.

Meanwhile, two more ships, Nordic Josephine and Mega I carrying Mogas and Palm oil also arrived at the outer anchorage of the port during the last 24 hours. A total of 05 ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them a containers ship 'CMA CGM Ivanhoe' left the Port on Friday morning, while a bulk cargo carrier 'Sea Power II' is expected to sail on today in the afternoon.

A Cargo volume of 102,246 tonnes, comprising 78,926 tonnes imports cargo and 23,320 tonnes export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 1,668 Containers (599 TEUs Imports and 1,069 TEUs export) was handled at the port during the last 24 hours.

There are 06 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them, 02 ships, Nordic Josephine and Alexis & another ship, Bea Schulte carrying Mogas, Wheat and Containers are expected to take berths at FOTCO, FAP and QICT on Friday, 24th February and two more containers ships, Olympia and Meratus Jayawijaya are due to arrive at Port Qasim on Saturday.



HYDERABAD: A worker drying clay-made items at his work palace.

Pakistan earns \$429 mln by exporting transport services in 6 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan earned US \$429.900 million by providing different transport services in various countries during the six months of the current fiscal year (2022-23) as compared to the corresponding period of last year.

This shows a growth of 14.38 per cent as compared to \$375.840 million earned through the provision of services during the corresponding period of the fiscal year (2021-22), the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

During the months under review, the exports of sea transport services witnessed an increase of 69.63

per cent, going up from \$55.080 million last year to \$93.430 million during the months under review.

Among the sea transport services, the exports of freight services increased by 150.92 per cent from \$31.500 million last year to \$79.040 million whereas the exports of other sea transport services decrease by 38.97 per cent from \$23.580 million to \$14.390 million current year, the PBS data revealed.

The exports of air transport rose by 5.76 per cent going up from

\$308.090 million last year to \$325.830 million during July-December (2022-23).

Among the air transport services, the exports of passenger services increased by 7.30 per cent, from \$201.260 million to \$215.960 million, whereas the exports of freight services surged by 12.56 per cent, from \$14.730 million to \$16.580 million, in addition, the export of other air transport services also increased by 1.29 per cent from \$92.100 million to \$93.290 million.

Meanwhile, the exports of road transport services

during the months under review witnessed a decline of 25.53 per cent by going down from \$8.970 million to \$6.680 million during this year, it added.

Among the road transport services, the exports of freight services increased by 35.06 per cent, from \$1.740 million to \$2.350 million during the fiscal year under review, while other road services dipped by 40.11 percent to \$ 4.330 million from \$7.230 million. The export of postal and courier services also increased by 7.03 per cent, from \$3.700 million to \$3.960 million, the data revealed.

TDAP arranges pre-event for 'Her Hunar' exhibition to be held on March 4-5

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) organized a pre-exhibition event for the upcoming event, "Her Hunar", to encourage women entrepreneurs hailing from northern Pakistan, including Chitral, Swat, Hazara, DI Khan, Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Jammu Kashmir.

TDAP Director General Muhammad Naseer welcomed the participants and provided an overview of "Her Hunar" exhibition. He appreciated the response received from female entrepreneurs and hoped that the event would add value to the women empowerment cause.

TDAP Assistant Director Maryam Mumtaz briefed the audience about the event details for Her Hunar.

She said over 120 female entrepreneurs from GB, AJK, KP, and Islamabad regions would showcase their indigenous products. The exhibition, scheduled to be held on March 4-5, would also include sideline activities of seminars, and training along with an entertaining side of cultural performances of the northern region, traditional cuisine and various fun activities for families and kids said a news release, she added. President of the Islamabad Chamber of commerce & Industry (ICCI) Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari appreciated TDAP for the "Her Hunar" exhibition and assured support of the ICCI for trade promotion activities for the development of women entrepreneurs.

Islamabad Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry President Rizwana Asif appreciated the efforts of TDAP for organizing a women-specific exhibition. Sidra Cheema, and Mahnoor Fatima also supported the TDAP initiative for the development of women entrepreneurs in the north region.



SIALKOT: A skilled worker is cutting thick iron sheet with the help of gas welding at his workplace.

Asian markets mixed, Tokyo boosted by BoJ nominee

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian markets were mixed Friday, with traders still occupied by long-running interest rate worries, though Tokyo rallied after the man tipped as Japan's next central bank head made the case for keeping its ultra-loose policy.

Analysts said the realisation that the Federal Reserve will further hike borrowing costs and hold them there appears to have sunk in among investors, who were betting on a cut by year's end as 2023 began.

That has seen equities across the globe tumble this month after rallying throughout January, and observers warn this could be another bumpy year after the turmoil of 2022.

Focus now is on the release of the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index, the Fed's preferred gauge of inflation. That comes after a forecast-busting jobs report and data showing still-sticky consumer and wholesale inflation.

Thursday saw the release of figures showing fewer jobless claims than expected last week, which added to the view that the labour market remains robust, further complicating the Fed's task of bringing inflation down without hurting the economy.

All three main indexes on Wall Street ended on a positive note -- with the S&P 500 snapping a four-day losing run -- having swung back in the afternoon following a morning slump. Asia struggled again in early exchanges. Hong Kong lost more than one percent and Shanghai was also down with Wellington.

But Sydney, Seoul, Singapore, Taipei and Jakarta rose. Tokyo was the standout, returning from a long weekend and piling on more than one percent as Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's nominee to head the Bank of Japan said its longstanding monetary easing policies were "appropriate".

In a statement to lawmakers, Kazuo Ueda added: "It is necessary to keep monetary easing to support the economy and create an environment where companies can raise wages."

His comments came just after news that Japanese inflation hit a four-decade high 4.2 percent last month, though officials insist the spike is linked to temporary distortions including the war in Ukraine.

Ueda's comments saw the yen swing against the dollar in a narrow range. "There have been high hopes that Ueda will bring a hawkish twist to the BoJ, but early remarks in his confirmation speech say anything but," said City Index's Matthew Simpson.

"Ueda blames cost-push inflation for rising prices -- driven by higher raw materials and wages -- and added that the BOJ responds to demand-driven inflation." Tokyo - Nikkei 225: UP 1.1 percent at 27,398.78 (break)

Hong Kong - Hang Seng Index: DOWN 1.1 percent at 20,125.89

Shanghai - Composite: DOWN 0.3 percent at 3,277.90

Dollar/yen: UP at 134.74 yen from 134.70 yen on Thursday

Euro/dollar: UP at \$1.0605 from \$1.0600

Bank of Japan's next chief says monetary easing 'appropriate'

TOKYO (AFP/APP): The Bank of Japan's long-standing monetary easing policies are "appropriate", its next governor Kazuo Ueda told parliament on Friday, suggesting no sudden changes to the bank's stance when he takes the helm in April.

Under current boss Karuhiko Kuroda, the bank has unleashed a raft of extraordinary ultra-loose policies -- from a negative interest rate to spending vast sums on government bonds -- in a bid to boost the sluggish economy.

It has stuck with these measures over the past year, despite pressure to join the US Federal Reserve and other central banks in aggressively hiking interest rates to tackle soaring inflation.

Ueda, an economics professor, told lawmakers that he saw the "continuation of monetary easing as appropriate", warning of high levels of uncertainty in financial markets and the global economy.

"It is necessary to keep monetary easing to support the economy and create an environment where companies can raise wages," he said in his first public address since being nominated by Prime Minister Fumio Kishida.

INVITING E-BIDDING

Irrigation Department Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Irrigation Division Tribal District North Waziristan invites Technical and Financial (Electronic Bids) on the basis of single stage two envelop system from the Government Contractors/Firms enlisted with Irrigation Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa who have renewed their enlistment and PEC license in relevant category for Solar (EE-11) for the year 2022-23 for the following works:

S.No	Name of Work/ Sub Work	Est:Cost (M)	Earnest Money	Required Category of PEC	Period of Completion	Last date & Time of Submission
(A)	District Development Plan for Lakki Marwat. ADP No. 1131/220691 (2022-23)					
1	Solarization of Irrigation Tube Well Khan Kalla Manzoor Alam Korona District Lakki Marwat	3.00	2% of Estimated Cost	EE-11 CE-04	As Per Work Order	16-03-2022 12:00(P.M)

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Technical Design should be based on Hydraulic Parameter of the scheme provided in the bidding documents and rates should be quoted accordingly in the financial bid. Technical bid will be opened on the date and time mentioned above by the bid opening committee in the office of the undersigned in the presence of bidders. Specification and design parameter of pumping machinery are given in the bidding documents.
- Electronic bidding will be online through E-bidding system. Tender form and BOQ can be filled online and downloaded from the official website of Irrigation Department i.e. www.irrigation.gkp.kp, moreover a complete set of bid solicitation documents may be obtained on submission of written application from office of the undersigned on cash payment nonrefundable fees of 0.03% @ of estimated cost otherwise bid submitted without these documents will be considered as non-responsive.
- Electronic bidding shall be done on "above/below system" on BOQ/Engineer's estimate, based on MRS 2022 (2nd BI Annual). Only two digits after the decimal point shall be considered for evaluation purpose.
- All bidders are required to have valid registration with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority established under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Finance Act, 2018 (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Act. XXI of 2013).
- The contractors quoting their bids up to a limit of 10% below Engineer estimate shall submit bid security @ 2% only of Engineer Estimate along with the stamp duty in the name of procuring entity (through courier) before closing date and time otherwise it will be considered as non-responsive.
- If the contractors quoting their bids more than 10% below upto 20% below on Engineers' Estimate shall submit along with their bids 8% Additional Security of Engineer's Estimated cost in addition to 2% bid security. If the bid is not accompanied with the required amount of additional security then it will be considered as non-responsive and the 2% bid security shall be forfeited in favour of Government and the second lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly.
- Similarly, a contractor quoting bid more than 20% below shall submit with his bid an additional security on Engineer's estimated cost equal to the differential amount of submitted bid and Engineers' Estimate along with detailed rate analysis. In case of more than 20% below bids, if the bid is not accompanied by the detailed rate analysis and/or required amount of additional security, then the said bid shall be considered as non-responsive. All the securities submitted along with such non-responsive bid shall be forfeited in favour of Government and the 2nd lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly.
- The Additional Security shall be released to the contractor in four installments i.e. 1st installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 25% of the project, 2nd installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 50% of the project, 3rd installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 75% of the project and the 4th installment of 25% to be released after 100% completion of the project.
- Bid security of 1st, 2nd and 3rd lowest bidder will be retained by the procuring entity till approval of the bid by the competent authority.
- In case, no security deposit is credited, the bid shall be considered non-responsive/rejected.
- All Federal and Provincial taxes/duties shall be deducted from the bills of the contractors at prescribed rates as per Government Policy issued from time to time.
- The bidders belonging to newly merged areas of tribal districts shall require to submit exemption certificate regarding Federal & Provincial Taxes/duties etc: from the concerned Federal/Provincial tax authorities on approval of their bids.
- Any bidder who provided incorrect information shall stand disqualified as per KPRA Act Section 29 (i) rule (43).
- Successful bidders should sign the agreement with the Department within Twenty Eight (28) days after acceptance of bid.
- Electronic bids will be displayed through online E-Bidding System after 30 minutes of closing time in the presence of bidders/their representative who choose to be present.
- The procuring entity has the authority to reject any E-bid or all E-bids assigning valid reasons.
- All the prevailing KPRA rules / Act and other Govt. notifications will be applicable issued from time to time.
- The defect liability period for 02 Years (all allied accessories) & Warranty for Solar Panel for 20 Years and shall be commence from the date of commissioning for each work.
- Date of opening of financial bid will be announced after approval of Technical bid from the competent authority and will be communicated to all bidders accordingly.
- Technical and Financial bids if received to the office of the undersigned unsealed will be rejected.

Executive Engineer,
Irrigation Division District North Waziristan TD
Civil Officer's Colony Camp Area Miranshah # 0928-300508

INF(P) 655/2023



In brief

Junior Tennis Tournaments

ISLAMABAD (APP): M. Hamza Aasim and Hamid Israr will compete in the boys under 18 singles final of All Pakistan sports board National Ranking Junior Tennis Tournaments 2023 as they both registered wins in the semi-finals at PTF-SDA Tennis Complex Islamabad on Friday. Hamza out-classed Asad Zaman 6-0, 6-3 in the first semi-final, while Hamid overcame Huzaima Abdul Rehman 7-5, 6-1 in the second semi-final. In the girls' under 18 singles' first semi-final, Amna Ali Qayum eliminated Mahrukh Sajid 6-1, 6-1. Aman will now take on Sheeza Sajid, who in the second semi-final overcame Lalarukh Sajid 6-0, 6-2. Semi-finals of other categories were also played on Friday. The following are the results:- Boys 16& under Singles-Semi-finals: Hamza Roman bt Nabeel Ali Qayum 6-2, 6-1; Asad Zaman bt Amir Mazari 6-1, 6-2. Boys 14& under Singles Semi-finals: Shayan Afridi bt Junaid Khan 4-0, 4-0; Razik Sultan bt Waqas Janas 4-1, 5-4(4); Boys 12& under Doubles Semi-finals: Shayan Afridi/M. Faizan bt Zayd Zaman / Safiullah 4-1, 4-0 Boys/Girls 10& under Singles Semi-finals: M. Ibrahim Gill bt M. Faizan 5-4 (6), 4-2; Salar Khan bt Shayan Afridi 4-0, 4-0.

UCP wins Tennis title

PESHAWAR (APP): The University of Central Punjab (UCP) defeated Government College University (GCU) Lahore in the final of the All Pakistan Inter-University Men Tennis Championship organized by Pakistan Austria Fakhakhshule Institute of Applied Sciences Haripur on Friday. The team of University of Engineering and Technology (UET) Peshawar secured third position by defeating UMT Lahore by 2-0. Aqib and Aziz won their matches against their respective rivals in 6-1 and 6-1 and 6-4 and 6-4. Director sports Higher education Commission (HEC) Muhammad Asif distributed trophies and cash prizes among the position holder teams along with Pak Austria Fakhakhshule Haripur Provost Dr. Fida, Assistant Provost Dr. Mirzeab, Deputy Director Admin Sufi Shah, Director Sports and Organizing Secretary Khurshid Ahmed Marwat, Sports Advisor Dr. Rizwan Akhtar. At the end, the special guest distributed trophies and cash prizes among all the winning players. A total of 15 university teams from across the country participated in the Championship.

Pat Cummins to miss third Test

SYDNEY (Agencies): Australia captain Pat Cummins will miss the third Border-Gavaskar Test against India in Indore to remain home in Sydney for family reasons. Cummins left India just hours after the second Test loss in Delhi, flying home to Sydney to be with his mother who is seriously ill. He was booked to return to India on the weekend and join the team in Indore on Sunday ahead of the third Test starting on Wednesday, but he has decided to remain at home with his family in the short term. "I have decided against returning to India at this time as my mother is ill and in palliative care.

PSL 8: Azam, bowlers star as United thwart Gladiators by 63 runs

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Azam Khan wreaked havoc with a quickfire 97-run knock before bowlers led Islamabad United to a dominating 63-run victory over Quetta Gladiators in the 13th match of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) season eight.

Set to chase a mammoth 221, the Gladiators could only score 157 before being bundled out in the final over after a brief retaliation by Mohammad Hafeez.

The Gladiators had a poor start to their pursuit as the side lost three wickets for a mere 26 runs in the fourth over with all their top-three batters falling cheaply.

Following the slump, Hafeez along-side skipper Sarfaraz Ahmed looked to anchor the run chase with a crucial 69-run partnership for the third wicket and kept the Gladiators in the hunt.

Left-arm pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi rocked Gladiators' march in the 11th over when he dismissed Hafeez off a full-toss. Hafeez scored a quick 48 off 26 deliveries, hitting six boundaries and two sixes.

Following Hafeez's dismissal, Sarfaraz stitched a cautious 32-run partnership with Iftikhar Ahmed before the former finally perished in the 16th over. He scored 41 off 36.

Sarfaraz's dismissal triggered a match-defining collapse in the Gladiators' batting lineup, which eventually bundled out in the final over with their notable run-getter Iftikhar also walking back to the pavilion in the 19th. Iftikhar could score 39 off 27 deliveries with the help of three boundaries and two sixes. Farooqi and Hasan Ali picked up three wickets each for the United while Abrar Ahmed and Shadab Khan made twin strikes apiece.

Opting to bat first, the United posted a massive 220/6 at the back of an astounding 97-run knock by Azam despite a dismal start.

Earlier, the United got off to an unlikely start as the side was four down for 71 runs inside 10 overs before Azam turned things around with his belligerent hitting.

With the side at 77/4 in the first 10 overs, Azam stitched a match-defin-

ing partnership with Asif Ali and launched a counterattack on the Gladiators' bowlers.

The pair added brisk 98 runs in just 45 deliveries with Azam being the core aggressor of the game-changing spell.

Naseem then finally managed to break the partnership in the 18th over when he dismissed Asif, who scored 42 off just 24 deliveries with the help of a boundary and four sixes.

Asif's dismissal did not bother Azam's approach as he kept on charging on the Gladiators' bowlers amid his brief yet effective partnership with Faheem Ashraf, who remained unbeaten on 17 off just six.

After all the thrashing, Odean Smith finally cleaned up Azam on the final delivery of the innings and barred him from scoring his century.

Azam top-scored for the United with 97 off a mere 42 deliveries and smashed nine boundaries and eight sixes.

Mohammad Hasnain and Odean Smith bagged two wickets each for the Gladiators while Naseem and Aimal Khan struck out a batter each.



KARACHI: Azam Khan acknowledges the crowd after smashing 97 off 42 balls, Islamabad United, Quetta Gladiators PSL.

England out of T20 World Cup as SA win semi-final

CAPE TOWN (Agencies): England were knocked out of the Women's T20 World Cup after inspired hosts South Africa won a gripping semi-final by six runs.

Chasing 165 to win, England were cruising at 132-3 before Nat Sciver-Brunts dismissal for 40 sparked a collapse of five wickets for 26 runs in 22 balls. With 13 runs needed from the final over, Shabnim Ismail held her nerve to bowl England captain Heather Knight for 31 and seal a thrilling victory in front of a packed Cape Town crowd.

The Proteas face defending champions Australia in the final at Newlands on Sunday. They are the first South Africa side, either men's or women's, to reach a World Cup final in any format. It was a thriller that England probably should have won, but were left to rue a sloppy performance in the field that saw South Africa post an imposing 164-5, ultimately leaving them too much to do with the bat.

Ragged England's dream is over

After conceding just 14 from the first four overs, England squandered a positive start as openers Laura Wolvaardt and Tazmin Brits added 96 for the first wicket. Both reached half-centuries, with Wolvaardt first to fall for 54, but Brits went on to punish England's inconsistency with an entertaining 68 from 55 balls that included two sixes from one Sarah Glenn over.

England were ragged, under pressure for the first time in the tournament after an unbeaten four-match run, as misfields and impatience crept in. Sophie Ecclestone dragged England back into contention with a stunning spell of 3-22, including two wickets in the penultimate over, only for a visibly frustrated Katherine Sciver-Brunts to concede 18 in a final over that prove decisive.

England started positively in reply, also aided by some sloppy South African fielding, until Shabnim Ismail took two wickets in the sixth over with Alice Capsey falling to a spectacular one-handed catch by Brits - one of her four catches, as their standards drastically improved.

Noor Zaman wins All Pakistan Men Squash C'ship

PESHAWAR (APP): Squash player Noor Zaman of Pakistan Wapda defeated his close rival Saddam Ul Haq of Pakistan Army in the final of the All Pakistan Men Squash Championship played here at Qamar Zaman Squash Complex on Friday.

Secretary Pakistan Squash Federation Group Captain Zafriaz Iqbal was the chief guest at the occasion who witnessed the final. Former World Champion Qamar Zaman, Director Blue Tone Squash academy Wazir Gul, members of the KP Squash

Association, Chief Referee Munawar Zaman, players, and relevant officials were also present.

Noor Zaman did not get any time in toppling Saddam Ul Haq of Pakistan Army in straight sets, the score was 11-9, 11-2 and 11-6.

The final lasted only 22 minutes wherein Noor Zaman fully dominated the proceedings and did not allow his rival Saddam Ul Haq to strike back.

A total of 40 players from across the country participated in the four-day event.

At the end of the final match, the chief guest Group Captain Zafriab gave away trophies and cash prizes to the winners and runners-up.

He also appreciated Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Squash Association for holding more tournaments, especially in different age groups through which good talent is coming to the national pool from the grassroots level.

It is pertinent to mention here that recently, he won the gold medal in the Asian Team Championship in India.

2nd President of Pakistan Polo Cup Diamond Paints, FG Polo score wins

LAHORE (APP): Diamond Paints and FG Polo registered triumphs over their respective opponents in the 2nd President of Pakistan Polo Cup 2023 sponsored by Takmeel Square matches played here at the Jinnah Polo Fields on Friday.

Mir Huzaifa Ahmad steered Diamond Paints to a narrow 8-7 over Master Paints in the first match of the day. Mir Huzaifa, who emerged as hero of the day for Diamond Paints, Mir Huzaifa played splendid polo and converted three tremendous goals, while Nico Roberts and Ahmed Ali Tiwana banged in a brace each and Chulo Corti struck one goal. Manuel Crispo fired in five goals while Agha Musa Ali Khan and Pelagio Balazaldi scored one goal each for Master Paints, which had a half goal handicap advantage.

Diamond Paints started the match with a field goal to take a 1-0 lead which couldn't last long as Master Paints struck an equalizer to level the score at 1-1. Just before the end of the first chukker, Diamond Paints successfully converted a

40-yard penalty to get back a slight 2-1 lead. The second chukker saw total dominance of Master Paints, who slammed in four back-to-back four goals to earn a healthy 5-2 lead.

Diamond Paints made a strong comeback in the third chukker by hammering a hat-trick of goals to equalize the score at 5-5. Diamond Paints maintained their supremacy in the highly-charged fourth and last chukker by hammering another hat-trick of goals to gain an 8-5 lead.

Master Paints though bounced back in the dying moments of the match by thrashing in two back-to-back goals to reduce the deficit to 7-8, yet it was all that they could get from the match as when the final bell was rung, Diamond Paints won the encounter by 8-7.

Mian Abbas Mukhtar and Raul Laplacette were the two heroes of the day, who fired in four goals each FG Polo's impressive 9-6 victory over DS Polo in the second match of the day.

Both Abbas Mukhtar and Laplacette were in sublime form and displayed out-

standing mallet and pony work that steered their side to an emphatic success, which also included a lone goal contribution from Ramiro Zavaleta. For DS Polo, Hissam Ali Hyder hammered three goals while Javier Guerrero scored two goals and Bilal Have one.

Both the teams were off to a flying start as they converted one goal after another and finished the first chukker at 3-3. FG Polo played better polo in the second chukker by scoring two goals against one by DS Polo to earn a 5-4 lead. The third chukker was identical to the second one, where FG Polo players once again played well and thrashed in two goals against one by DS Polo to stretch their lead to 7-5.

FG Polo maintained their supremacy in the fourth and last chukker by pumping in two goals against one by DS Polo to win the match by 9-6.

Two important matches will be played on Sunday (February 26) afternoon here at the Jinnah Polo Fields.



CAPE TOWN: South Africa players celebrate after reaching their maiden T20 World Cup final.

Man United drawn with Real Betis in last 16 of Europa League

NYON (AP): Manchester United was paired with Real Betis in the round of 16 of the Europa League on Friday, giving the 2017 champions another Spanish opponent after eliminating Barcelona.

United will host the fifth-place Spanish team on March 9 in the first leg at Old Trafford, where Barcelona was beaten 2-1 on Thursday to complete a 4-3 aggregate victory.

"It is a playing team, a skillful team," Man United manager Erik ten Hag said of Betis, who his team played in a friendly during the mid-season break for the World Cup. "You know what you get from Spanish football. We also played Real Sociedad this season and so we know (that) only when you play your best, you have a chance to survive."

The last Ukrainian team left in this season's European competitions, Shakhtar Donetsk, was drawn to face Dutch league leader Feyenoord. Shakhtar

will have three defenders suspended for the first leg it will host in neighboring Poland because of the Russian military invasion of Ukraine. Premier League leader Arsenal will face Sporting Lisbon, with the first leg played in Portugal.

Arsenal was seeded in the draw because it was among the eight winners of Europa League groups, and those teams play the second leg at home. Unseeded teams hosting the first leg came through the playoff round, which involved Europa League group runners-up and teams which placed third in a Champions League group.

Juventus was paired with Freiburg and six-time champion Sevilla will be at home first against Fenerbahce. Union Berlin will have a reunion with Union Saint-Gilloise after they also met twice in the group stage.

Roma, coached by José Mourinho, will play Real Sociedad, while Bayer

Leverkusen was paired with Ferencvaros. Ferencvaros will host the second leg at the Puskas Arena in Budapest, the stadium that will also stage the Europa League final on May 31.

In the round of 16 of the third-tier Europa Conference League, Villarreal — a Champions League semifinalist last season — was paired with Anderlecht while Fiorentina will host the first leg against Sivasspor.

In other matches, West Ham travels to Cyprus for the first leg against AEK Larnaca. Sheriff will host Nice in Moldova, and Lazio is at home first against AZ Alkmaar, potentially on March 7 to avoid a clash at Stadio Olimpico with Roma's game in the Europa League. Also, it was: Lech Poznan vs. Djurgarden; Basel vs. Slovan Bratislava; and Gent vs. Istanbul Basaksehir.

The Europa Conference League final is scheduled for June 7 in Prague.

Preparations for 'Karachi Games 2023' in full swing

KARACHI (APP): Preparations for Karachi Games, 2023, which will begin on March 3, is being organized by Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) as preparations are in full swing.

Different games are scheduled under 'Karachi Games' auspices as KMC Sports Complex; Women Sports Complex; Nazimabad Gymkhana; Eastern Star Ground; TMC Ground; Gulbarg Gymkhana; Shadab Ground; Landhi Gymkhana; KP Ground; Karachi Hockey Association Stadium; Islahuddin Hockey Stadium; KMC Football Stadium; Trans Lyari Football Ground; Star Football Ground; Ibrahim Hydari Football Ground; Ayam Bagh Court; Sindh Sports Board Complex Nazimabad; and People's Sports Complex will host various sporting events.

Special arrangements are being made for the sports gala under the direction of Administrator Karachi Dr. Syed Saif-ur-Rahman.

All concerned sports associations had been con-

sulted and in light of their suggestions, cricket, hockey and football grounds, swimming pools, basketball court, track and field arenas, squash courts, badminton courts, snooker tables and other places had been provided with modern facilities, said a statement on Friday.

"Karachi Games 2023 will be held in accordance with the prescribed international rules and regulations of various sports and it will be mandatory for the participating players, teams and officials to adhere to these rules," the statement added.

Administrator Dr. Syed Saifur Rahman had directed the organizers to ensure best players, teams, to be shortlisted for the said event. He also directed that these games should be widely advertised through mass media to generate enthusiasm among the citizens to witness the Karachi Games in large numbers in stadiums and grounds.

"Not only cricket, football and hockey but citizens take a keen interest in other sports, so their preferences should be taken into consideration," the administra-

tor directed from the Secretariat of Karachi Games 2023, established at KMC Sports Complex.

In this secretariat, technical staff, a ground committee including officials and members of various sports associations will be presented, while a media corner has also been provided for journalists related to print and electronic media to make this event successful and memorable.

The sports events included in the Karachi Games are cricket, hockey, football, basketball, shooting ball, volleyball, softball, netball, dodgeball, karate, taekwondo, judo, vishu, badminton, table tennis, snooker, boxing, squash, chess, Rowing, Carrom, body building, swimming, roller skating, sepak takraw, futsal, tug of war, gymnastics, wrestling, shooting, scrabble, tennis, cycle race, donkey cart race, arm wrestling, mass wrestling, weight lifting, marathon race. Apart from field and track events, the traditional cultural sports of Sindh Malakhra Kabaddi and Khokhu are also included.



LAHORE: A view of match between Dimond Paints VS Master Paints in Takmeel Square 2nd President of Pakistan Polo Cup 2023 at Jinnah Polo Fields. —APP Photo



In brief

IRSA releases 99,400 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 99,400 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 58,100 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1465.99 feet and was 67.99 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 17,600 cusecs while outflow was 50,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1114.75 feet, which was 64.75 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded at 18,100 cusecs and 27,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded at 57,000, 43,500, 30,400 and 6,200 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 14,300 cusecs of water were released at Nowshera and 2,000 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

36 kite sellers, flyers arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi district police on the directives of City Police Officer, Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani here on Thursday night continued a special crackdown against kite sellers and flyers and managed to net 36 and recovered hundreds of kites, kite flying string rolls, two pistols and 15 bottles of liquor. According to a police spokesman, all police stations of the district had been directed to accelerate ongoing operations against kite-flying ban violators while special teams constituted to control kite-flying under the supervision of senior police officers were conducting raids in different areas. He informed that over 1300 cops were deployed to control kite flying in city areas. Monitoring was also being conducted from over 250 rooftops of the buildings, he added. Senior Superintendent of Police, Operations, Capt (ret'd) Muhammad Amir Khan Niazi said that all available resources were being utilized to control kite flying. He said strict vigilance would be maintained like in previous years to maintain law and order in the city and to curb the dangerous kite flying.

Crackdown against violators

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration took action against illegal petrol and LPG filling stations, sealing 21 such stations and arresting 7 offenders during the week. Talking to APP the spokesperson of the ICT administration Abdullah Tabbsum said that the crackdown against violators was carried out by ICT officials, who sealed 14 illegal petrol filling stations and seven LPG filling agencies on charges of malpractices, despite repeated warnings and raids. He said that the teams also collected a fine of Rs. 76,000 from shopkeepers who were found overcharging customers, in violation of government-mandated rates on essential items. He informed that in addition to sealing the illegal filling stations, the administration also cracked down on violators in other areas. He said that six shops were sealed and 12 shopkeepers were arrested for violating regulations, with a total of 57 kilograms of polythene bags seized during the week. He informed that these measures are part of the government's ongoing efforts to ensure compliance with safety standards and fair business practices, in order to protect consumers and the environment.



ISLAMABAD: MNA Chauhdary Ehsan ul Haq Bajwa, former MPAs Sufi Akram and Zahid Akram called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Riaz lauds Japanese generosity towards developing world

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Human Rights Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada said that the people of Pakistan were indebted to the Japanese generosity towards the developing world with their development assistance through Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). He said, Pakistan attaches great value to its relationship with Japan and the important contributions made by Japan in Pakistan's development efforts over the last several decades.

The minister said this while addressing as chief guest at a special event organized by the Japanese Embassy in Pakistan to celebrate His Majesty the Emperor's 63rd Birthday here Thursday night.

The minister extended the warmest felicitations to the government and the people of Japan on the joyous occasion and said, we honor the rich cultural her-

itage of Japan, a country that has made immeasurable contributions to the world especially, in the scientific domain. The Japanese people are known for their deep respect for traditions and their untiring commitment to innovation, he expressed.

Over the decades, he said JICA has contributed to Pakistan's socio-economic development with assistance worth 13 billion US\$. He further expressed that we are particularly grateful to the people and Government of Japan for its assistance in the aftermath of devastating floods in Pakistan in 2022 especially for the support that Government of Japan extended during the Resilient Pakistan Conference held in Geneva on 9 January 2023.

He stated that Pakistan and Japan always had friendly bilateral relations in political, economic, scientific

and educational domains. "Pakistan is keen to take this relationship to a new and higher level of cooperation, with particular focus on economic and business ties, human resource development initiatives, defense, cultural and people-to-people contacts".

The minister affirmed that Japanese companies have made a remarkable contribution in the development of Pakistan-Japan and investment relations. There are more than 80 Japanese companies working in Pakistan in auto, pharma, textile, steel, machinery and trading sectors.

Pakistan and Japan have also signed two Memoranda of Cooperation for collaboration in capacity building and manpower exports to Japan. These MOCs aim to pave the way for skilled Pakistani workers to make important contributions to the economic development of Japan.

Govt ensuring facilitation to common people, says Uzma

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) leader Uzma Bukhari on Friday highlighted that Pakistan TehreekInsaf (PTI) regime was responsible for the situation when common man was facing numerous challenges whereas the incumbent government was making efforts to provide facilities through different schemes.

Talking to a private news channel, she said, Imran Khan could not handle the economic as well as international issues, adding that the people were facing troubles due to the weak policies of Imran's regime.

She said that the agreement made by the PTI leaders with IMF should be made public. We are paying the cost of Imran's policy made during the PTI government, she added.

To a question about the politics of the PTI chairman, she said Imran Khan is a politician without any political ideology.

She said that Imran's party had become unpopular due to its weak vision. The PTI chief is struggling for personal interests in the country, she added.

To a question, Uzma Bukhari said that his party was not interested in taking revenge from the PTI chairman who registered false cases against the PML-N. Many of the PML-N leaders suffered a lot due to political victimization started by the PTI regime, she added.

non-invasive mobile therapy to treat neurological disorders including cerebral palsy, autism, etc. One of the various advantages of the device is its low cost making it accessible to all.

In addition, EKKO offers safe treatment of neuro disorders through vibrational waves that affect neural activity in the brain and body. It merits mention that the NUST Technology Transfer Office worked hand in glove with the project team, from kick-off and successful pilot testing to its commercialisation, and closely liaised with different stakeholders to support the project that would have far-reaching dividends for all.

NUST project declared global winner at "Better World Project" competition, USA

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) has been making headlines internationally after one of its projects EKKO, a therapeutic device, has been declared global winner in this year's "Better World Project" competition, held by the Association of University Technology Managers (AUTM), Washington DC (USA).

The project has been developed by Prof Dr Muhammad Usman Akram and his team from NUST College of Electrical & Mechanical Engineering. EKKO was among the 3 finalists out of over 40 projects submitted from around the world.

Congratulating the winning team and the NUST Technology Transfer Office upon this landmark success, Dr Rizwan Riaz, Pro-Rector RIC at NUST termed it a proud moment for the entire Pakistani nation as the competition only includes research projects that have been successfully tested in the field and commercialised – a rare feat in Pakistani academia. He also reiterated NUST's commitment to continue with its efforts to bring a positive discernible change in the country and the world at large through its cutting-edge research and innovative technologies. EKKO Wave Therapeutic Device provides

Spread of COVID-19 epidemic in China basically ended, Chinese expert says

ISLAMABAD (APP): The spread of the COVID-19 epidemic has ended in China, though it is not completely over, a senior Chinese health expert said.

Liang Wannian, head of the National Health Commission's expert panel on COVID-19 control, said the "decisive victory" in COVID-19 epidemic control, announced at a recent meeting of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, means that the country has withstood the impact and test of the recent outbreak, with its people achieving herd immunity.

Although COVID-19 remains an international health emergency, China has set an example of a highly populous nation successfully pulling through a pandemic, he said. Liang said the decisive victory is the result of the power of China's political system, as the CPC and the Chinese government have always prioritized people and the saving of lives, which is the fundamental principle of the nation's epidemic response. Moreover, the country's political system can ensure that different departments and regions can work together, with governments, enterprises and individuals assuming their responsibilities and realizing synergy, he said.

The mobilization and participation of the public have also been crucial, and the

Chinese people have shown a high degree of altruism, unity and dedication in the fight against COVID, he said.

Yang Feng, an official with the National Administration of Disease Prevention and Control, said that with concerted efforts from the whole country, China's COVID-19 response has made a smooth transition in a relatively short time since November, with more than 200 million people receiving medical treatment and nearly 800,000 patients with severe cases receiving proper treatment, China Daily reported.

The country's COVID-19 death rate remains the world's lowest, and there was no resurgence of cases during the Spring Festival travel rush, he added.

While the nation's epidemic situation is improving, COVID-19 is still spreading worldwide, and the virus is still mutating.

Authorities should continue to implement epidemic control measures and people should safeguard themselves with good health habits to maintain hard-won success, he added. Chang Zhaoxun, a research fellow at the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, said there have been seven cases of the XBB.1.5 Omicron subvariant reported in China since Jan 8. While the new variant is highly transmissible and has become the dominant one in some Western countries, a major outbreak in China is unlikely, given the fact that the country has just gone through a major outbreak, she said.

Pakistan to continue relief activities to support quake-affected people in Türkiye, Syria: Tanveer

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training, Rana Tanveer Hussain on Friday said that Pakistan will continue to extend support to the people of Türkiye and Syria in rescue and relief activities following the deadly earthquake.

Addressing the media persons after receiving Pakistan's team returning from Türkiye after the rescue and relief operation, the federal minister said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is personally monitoring the relief operation being carried out by Pakistani team in Türkiye and Syria. The whole nation is also wholeheartedly participating in relief activities to help affected people of both countries.

Appreciating the contribution of rescue teams of the Pakistan Army, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and Rescue 1122, Rana Tanveer said that these institutions have always done a remarkable job in relief and rescue activities within the country and internationally in every hour of need and made Pakistan proud with their utmost dedication.

He said that besides the great diplomatic ties, Pakistan is enjoying cordial relations with Türkiye and Syria and support each other at every difficult time.

"We as a nation stand along with our brothers and sisters of Türkiye and Syria in this difficult time and our relief and rescue efforts will remain continue in quake-affected areas till the last affected person is rescued and rehabilitated", he said.

Lauding the role of Pakistan's rescue teams, Rana Tanveer said that they always played a valuable role during calamitous times not only within the country but also when our friendly countries were in need.

He said that Pakistan Army, NDMA and

other rescue teams always helped people in hard times and rendered great services for humanity not only in the country but internationally. About Pakistan armed forces rescue team, he said that the work of Pakistan army either as a peacekeeper from UN forum or their contribution to relief activities always remained prominent. Professionalism and work of the Pakistan army are always acknowledged around the world, he added.

He informed that the rescue team of Pakistan Army was the first to reach affected areas of Türkiye for help and they were the last to leave.

"This team cleared 91 quake-affected sites, rescued 13 people from under the rubble and recovered 38 dead bodies during the operation", he added.

About the working of team of rescue 1122 he said that they joined the relief activities on February 7 and cleared 147 sites, rescued 15 people from the rubble and recovered 63 dead bodies.

He said that our relief activities are continued in Syria and keeping in view the intensity of damage caused by earthquake, we have apportioned 75 per cent of our rescue aid for Türkiye and 25 per cent for Syria. Addressing the ceremony, the Ambassador of Türkiye to Pakistan Dr. Mehmet Pachachi thanked the government of Pakistan and lauded the role of Pakistani teams in rescuing people in earthquake-hit areas.

He at the outset also appreciated the passion and sincerity of the leadership and people of the country and said Pakistan is the country which sent its rescue teams to Türkiye immediately after the disaster and these teams did a valuable job there.

PR doles out additional Rs 2m for Shaddadpur Station platform's upgradation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has allocated around Rs 2 million more funds for completing the renovation and construction of a platform of Shaddadpur Railway Station, to be spent during the current financial year.

"Shaddadpur Railway Station, operating with three platforms, is one of the important stations situated on mainline where most of the mail and express trains have their stoppages," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP. He said the contractor had stopped the construction work due to non-payment of bills and funds, adding 50 per cent of the renovation work had been already been completed. However, the official said the requisite funds are being arranged for the remaining work. The official said the platform condition on the downside was dilapidated and therefore it was decided to carry out its repair under the head of improvement and welfare expenditure.

He said the total budget for the construction and renovation work was Rs 22.686 million, out of which Rs 5.679 million was released and utilized by June 2022. To a question, the official said Pakistan Railways was a big organization comprising of around 63,000 employees and its network stretched

across the country. He said the employees have well-cared under the welfare activities like health facilities through an intensive network of hospitals, dispensaries and child healthcare units. Elaborating, the official said the provision of government accommodation according to entitlement and priority list, staff benevolent funds, benefits and incentives were provided through the Prime Minister's Family Assistance Package policy for families of deceased employees.

He said the other welfare activities were benefits and incentives provided through policy for disabled employee's families, monthly grants to widows scale-wise, the establishment of primary and high schools, industrial schools to teach handicrafts, sports activities through the constitution of Pakistan and pick and drop facility for schools/offices. The official said the installation of water filters plants, a special provision of five medical seats in Riphia Islamic Universities with a reduction of 50 per cent in admission and tuition fees, loans on easy instalments, availability of all recreational facilities, payment for burial and ambulance charges, marriage grant, farewell grant, free passes and concession in railways fares.

Better hygiene at schools - a gigantic task

ISLAMABAD (APP): Better hygiene at educational institutions is as important as education itself to create healthy minds and well-equipped nations and establish countries on sound technical, scientific, cultural and economic footing.

The schools are not only expected to impart better education to children but also better hygiene to fulfill the undeniable right of every child to get proper education in a clean and healthy environment.

Therefore, keeping in view the importance of hygiene facilities in educational institutions, the Federal Government is all-set to launch "Oral Hygiene Program" at 423 public sector schools and colleges functioning under the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE).

Under this Program, the federal government through the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training would distribute 'Hygiene Kits' among the students of the government educational institutions within Islamabad Capital Territory jurisdiction. Doctors would be engaged to guide students on the use of these kits consisting of tools for teeth cleanliness and soap and sanitizers. "Hygiene Kits distribution program will be launched in April 2023 with the distribution of as many as 100,000 kits among the students," said Director Academics Federal Directorate of Education Riffat Jabeen. "The government will hire doctors to execute this program who will guide students about cleanliness and check their health conditions. If any student is found suffering from any disease, he or she will be referred to the hospital for a detailed check-up," she informed.

She said facilities like dispensers for clean drinking water, liquid or soap for hand washing after the use of toilets are already being provided at each government school and college of Islamabad. "Students are also guided about cleanliness, taking bath regularly, washing hands, brushing

their teeth and ablution for prayer etc." Riffat Jabeen said that some private organizations are also engaged with FDE to provide missing facilities at schools especially clean drinking water and Pakistan Council for Research in Water Resources (PCRWR) played an important role in this regard. Despite her claims, there are complaints of missing facilities at schools, especially for female students as poor cleanliness and substandard food supplied by canteens inside the school premises and private vendors outside, was proving to be hazardous for the students' health.

In many cases, there is also a deficiency of bathrooms as compared to the number of students with many needing immediate repair and upgradation as Director Monitoring FDE Malik Sohail assured to provide missing facilities. "We are on way to bridge this gap and missing facilities are being ensured for all such institutions," Sohail said.

Principal Islamabad Model College for Boys F-6/2 Ali Ahmad Kharal has informed that Prime Minister's Education Reforms Program worth Rs four billion was launched for betterment of ICT Schools and Colleges especially in rural areas.

Out of this amount, around Rs three billion were used for renovation and provision of missing facilities at the public sector educational institutions of Islamabad with Rs 500 million utilized to improve transportation facility by purchasing 200 new buses. The remaining Rs 500 million were reserved for new curriculum.

It is worth mentioning that Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif in 2017 had launched Educational Reforms Program for upgrading facilities at 423 schools and colleges in the Federal Capital.

Under this Program the facilities of science and IT labs, classrooms, libraries, sports and play areas were upgraded at some 21 educational institutions during the first month

while remaining were upgraded in next 10 months.

"Hygiene conditions are far better now than the past years especially at institutions where the Principal and staff are active," Ali Ahmed Kharal said. "During last two years massive tree plantation was also carried out at the government schools and college to ensure cleaner environment."

As the efforts are on to achieve the targets of better cleanliness and hygiene, in some cases the shortage of staff and funds is also reported.

"At some institutions there is shortage of sanitary staff and a requisition has been forwarded for induction of more sweepers and sanitary workers to overcome the shortage," informed President Federal Government Teachers Association Malik Ameer Ahmad Khan.

He further said that under the government's Deworming Program at ICT schools and colleges, the children are being provided tablets regularly to safeguard them from different diseases. "We are fully alive to better health of our children and the Association has formed a committee for identifying missing facilities at government schools and ensure their earliest provision," Malik Ameer Khan said. Although the government has initiated multiple measures to promote better hygiene at educational institutions yet there are still challenges like inadequate attention to hygiene concepts in the curricula, un-conducive environment, teachers' and parents' carelessness toward students hygiene and communication gap among them besides poor coordination between health and education departments. Therefore, the authorities must adopt a holistic approach with the involvement of all stakeholders to promote hygiene by revising curriculum and raising awareness among teachers, parents and students on the issue besides ensuring a strong coordination between concerned departments.



Borrell made the remarks at a press conference on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly's meeting in support of the Afghan women.

"We cannot abandon the Afghan women to be punished twice. First by the Afghan government decision and second by us cutting development support."

The Islamic Emirate's Spokesman, Zabiullah Mujahid, called aid by the international community a right of the people of Afghanistan.

The international aid which is based on humanitarian purposes, should not be linked to the political issues. It should not be halt-

ed. The Afghan nation as a war-affected country, has the right to receive aid. On the other hand, some of the political issues are not only within the Islamic Emirate, but the policies of the international community are also not positive," he said.

The political analysts said that the continuation of aid will benefit the people of Afghanistan but called on the caretaker government to show flexibility in engagement with the international community.

"The Islamic Emirate should not hide the current situation from the people of Afghanistan and it should not blame others for it," said Janat Fahim Chakari, a political analyst.

"The Islamic Emirate should also show some flexibility in its policies and it should have engagement with the international community, so that Afghanistan can stand on its own feet," said Abdul Malik Afghan, a political analyst.

This comes as the Islamic Emirate's decree barring women from higher education and working at NGOs faced a strong reaction by the international community.

Delegation leaves for Tehran to address issue of imprisoned refugees

wants all Afghans to not remain in prison in any country. A delegation led by the attorney general has traveled to Iran to solve these problems," he said.

Meanwhile, the Afghan refugees in Iran said that the Afghan refugees in the country are in critical condition. "Based on the available information, around 600 Afghans are imprisoned on charges of various types of accusations. It is natural that when it is a foreign coun-

try and you are in prison, the situation of the Afghans is already bad," said Ataulloh Khogiana, an Afghan refugee in Iran.

"Many Afghans who are in prisons in Iran, they are now happy with the investigation of the Afghan delegation," said Moeen Stanikzai, an Afghan refugee. This comes as the Afghan refugee-supporting community in Iran said that many Afghans who arrived in Iran after the collapse of the former gov-

enment are in poor condition. "After the changes in Afghanistan, Afghans migrated in many countries. Some of them arrived in Iran who now are facing various types of problems," said Asifai Stanikzai, head of the community. Earlier, the Afghanistan embassy in Pakistan voiced concerns over the detention of Afghan refugees in the country's prisons, saying that nearly 2,000 Afghan refugees are in prisons of Pakistan.

Afghan Saffron yield reaches 21 tons: Agriculture Ministry

went to India, which was approximately \$14.5 million," said Abdul Salam Akhundzada, a spokesman for the MoI.

This comes as the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI) said that Afghan saffron earns

tional markets but the lack of an air-corridor is the main challenge to exporting the product.

"There were good facilities in the previous years. We had exports to Europe and US.

This year, fortunately, our saffron is both high

our access to facilities has been limited," said Khanjan Alokzai, a member of the ACCI. According to the ministry, the saffron has been cultivated in nearly 8,000 acres of land across the country. Herat produces high-quality saffron that also has a good market internationally.



Kabul municipality resumes work on construction projects



KABUL (Pajhowsk): Kabul Municipality resumes work on some development projects which were halted due to cold weather, according to a statement on Friday.

The source said that earlier the municipality officials directed relevant officials to halt asphalt and concrete work during cold weather to ensure high quality and effectiveness of the projects.

The statement added that the asphalt and concrete work would be resumed in days to come.

Kabul Municipality urged all residents to cooperate with the municipality in the implementation of development projects and refrain from creating hurdles.

Kabul's isolation undermining aid, development efforts: ICG

KABUL (ToloNews): The International Crisis Group said in a new report that the latest restrictions imposed by the Islamic Emirate have dealt a "grievous blow" to women's freedoms in Afghanistan and that they are also impeding delivery of life-saving assistance, disrupting the world's largest aid operation even as half the population suffers from acute hunger.



The report said that the "Taliban's unrecognized regime's isolation undermines humanitarian and development efforts," the report said. "It may result in drastic aid cuts."

The report highlighted the economic and political situation of Afghanistan.

The report said that the "Taliban restrictions on

vide 100 percent for their families," said Suraya Paikan, a women's rights activist.

women's rights deepen Afghanistan's crisis." "The Taliban's worsening behaviour risks provoking abrupt cut-offs of international aid that would profoundly harm millions of Afghans. Western policymakers must stand up for Afghan women and girls. At the same time, they should be careful to avoid self-defeating policies," the report reads. "Practical steps that materially benefit Afghan women,

The report said the conversations among western officials about aid cannot be put off forever if the international community wants to see a stable Afghanistan. "The regime has earned such opprobrium that Western officials cancelled or delayed plans to discuss investments in infrastructure, but these conversations cannot be put off forever if international actors wish to see Afghanistan stabilize," the report cited. "High-level engagement with the Taliban is necessary to draft the outlines of a plan for a path to recovery. A plan for Afghan self-sufficiency should start with the water, electricity, transport and other projects halted when the Taliban took over in 2021. These plans build

on the previous government's consultations with Afghan women and men about their needs; any elaboration should, where possible, create opportunities for inclusion of Afghan women in project design and implementation."

According to the organization, some humanitarian officials predicted "hundreds of thousands" of deaths as vital assistance slowed. Reductions in aid were reported for 11.6 million women and girls, although in some cases the interruptions were temporary. "Among the most vulnerable were one million people requiring assistance to get through one of the harshest winters in years," the report said.

"The restriction on women's working and education has played a role in the rise of poverty among families in the country," said Shabir

Basheeri, an economist. "To save ourselves from this crisis of economic and livelihood affairs, and to move forward toward economic self-sufficiency, there is an initial need for a legitimated and proper state," said Azeraksh Hafizi, an economist. The Islamic Emirate's Spokesman, Zabiullah Mujahid said that efforts are underway to improve the economy of Afghanistan.

"The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan tries to stand the Afghan economy on its feet. We have brought all options under focus in this regard. The activities of women and some other issues doesn't have a major affect on the economy," he said.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said that more than 28 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance.

Norwegian institute reports on climate change in Afghanistan



KABUL (ToloNews): The Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) released a report in which it highlighted the climate change effects coupled with the legacy of four decades of war, a complex humanitarian emergency and an economic crisis since the “Taliban’s takeover of the government in August 2021.”

in mid-2022. “Climate-related extreme weather events and natural hazards threaten Afghan livelihoods, increase poverty and food insecurity, and erode the resilience of communities, households and individuals,” the report cited.

This comes as the Ministry of Economy (MoE) said that there is a need for investment in infrastructural projects to improve the economic situ-

“The path to overcome the economic challenges is to bring the economic and development aid in focus, so that we will be able to build the infrastructure and access underground resources of Afghanistan,” said Abdul Latif Nazari, deputy Minister of Economy. This comes as Kabul residents called the lack of job opportunities the main reason for the rise in poverty in the country.

"We used to earn between 200 to 300 (Afs) but now there is no work," said Ahmad, a resident of Kabul. The economists believe that the development aid needs to be increased in a bid to provide job opportunities for citizens. "To reduce poverty in Afghanistan, there should be investment on agriculture and human resources and also there should be good management to reduce the dangerous issues that affects the people and causes a rise in poverty," said Seyar Qureshi, an economist.

Meanwhile, some residents of Kabul called on the organization to increase their aid to Afghanistan.

"Around us, there has been no aid. There are many poor people and widows who have nothing," said Nahida, a resident of Kabul. After the Islamic Emirate ordered a ban on work of female employees at NGOs, many humanitarian organizations have either halted or reduced their activities, saying that women contribute 30 percent of their workforce—and their role is important in providing aid to vulnerable people.

Salang blaze: Bodies of 6 unidentified victims still kept at Forensic Dept

KABUL (Pajhwok): Six unidentified bodies from the Salang fire incident were still kept in the Forensic Department, the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) said asking people to refer to the department for the identification of these bodies.

Last year in December, an oil tanker overturned in the Salang tunnel after which a fire broke out and 70 people were killed and injured because the fire engulfed some other vehicles as well.

In a statement the MoPH announced that six unidentified bodies were still kept in the Forensic Department and its registration number is 703-702-701-700-699.

The statement said

that earlier similar announcement had been made but nobody referred to the forensic

department to collect their bodies therefore the ministry again urged the relatives of these uniden-

tified bodies to refer to the forensic department and collect the bodies of their relatives.



ATC issues arrest warrants for Sanaullah in terror case

GUJRAT (Agencies): An anti-terrorism court in Gujrat has issued bailable arrest warrants for Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah for allegedly threatening the judiciary and government officials in his public speeches. The directives were issued by Accountability Judge Rana Zahid. A terrorism case was registered against Sanaullah in August last year.

The first information report (FIR) stated that during his speeches on April 15, 2021, and January 29, 2022, the interior minister had threatened to stop the judiciary from doing its job and kill the children of the Punjab police officials. The case was taken up by the ATC in Gujrat.

At the outset of the hearing, the police furnished before the court its final report on the case with the omission of the minister's name in it. The judge, however, rejected the report and issued notices to Gujrat's SP investigation, the deputy superintendent of police, and investigating officer. The court also directed law enforcers to arrest and produce the minister before the ATC on March 7.

The FIR was registered on the complaint of a citizen, Sheikh Shekz Aslam, under Section 7 of the Anti-Terrorism Act (punishment for acts of terrorism), and sections 353 (assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty), 186 (obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions), 189 (threat of injury to public servant) and 506 (punishment for criminal intimidation) of the Pakistan Penal Code.

Turkiye issues earthquake rebuilding rules

ISTANBUL (Agencies): Türkiye issued rebuilding regulations on Friday for a region devastated by earthquakes this month to enable companies or charities to help in the urgent task of building new homes for the millions who need rehousing after the devastating tremors. More than 160,000 buildings, containing 520,000 apartments, collapsed or were severely damaged in Türkiye in the earthquakes. The Turkish death toll from the tremors now stands at more than 43,500 people, while the toll in neighbouring Syria, a nation already shattered by war, is close to 6,000. Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan has pledged to rebuild homes within a year, although experts have said the authorities should put safety before speed. Some buildings that were meant to withstand tremors crumbled in the latest earthquakes.

Many survivors have left the region of southern Türkiye that was hit or have been settled in tents, container homes and other government-sponsored accommodation. Under the new regulations, individuals, institutions and organisations will be able to build residences and workplaces that they can donate to the urbanisation ministry and those properties will then be handed to those in need, according to a presidential decree published in the Official Gazette.

Justice Minister Bekir Bozdag told CNNTurk that 171 people had been arrested and 77 more faced detention as part of an investigation into collapsed buildings in the earthquake area, related to violations of building codes. "Everyone involved will be held accountable in front of courts. Everyone will be punished according to their responsibility," Bozdag said. He said legal changes could be needed for crimes regarding construction permits and said the authorities should discuss tougher punishments and deterrents for violating zoning rules, which dictate where and how buildings can be more safely built. In Antakya, Saeed Sleiman Ertoglu, 56, loaded up what remained of his stock from his waterpipe shop that was not damaged in the two massive earthquakes on Feb 6 followed by another strong quake two weeks later.

ECP denotifies Imran Khan from six NA seats

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Friday denotified Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan from six National Assembly seats — on which he emerged victorious last year.

The electoral authority, in a notification, stated that the former prime minister — who was ousted from power last year — had been de-notified from his seats in NA 22 Mardan, NA 24 Charsadda, NA 31 Peshawar, NA 108, NA 118 Nankana and NA 239 Karachi.

Earlier, on January 19, a three-member bench of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), headed by Chief Election Commissioner Sikander Sultan Raja, announced its verdict to notify the PTI chief of his victory on seven seats in the by-elections held in October last year.

The notification had previously been withheld due to his alleged failure to submit the party's funding details to the electoral body. However, the January 19 verdict stated that Khan had submitted the required details to the electoral body after which it decided to notify him as the winning candidate on all the seven

National Assembly seats.

After his de-notification from the six earlier seats, Khan now holds the Kurram seat, for which he may take oath and join the National Assembly. In a separate notification, the election commission also suspended its denotification announcement of 32 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) MNAs. Following the ouster of Khan from the government, PTI lawmakers resigned en masse from the NA.

At first, the resignations of only 11 MNAs were accepted by NA speaker Raja Parvez Ashraf. However, on January 17 and January 20, the resignations of 34 and 35 more Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) MNAs were accepted respectively. Several MNAs then withdrew their resignations and requested the speaker not to accept them. However, on January 25, the NA speaker accepted the last batch of resignations. Subsequently, the 43 MNAs took their grievance to the Lahore High Court (LHC), which on February 8 suspended the ECP's orders.

Later, several other Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) MNAs approached the Lahore High Court for similar relief. The court, however, only instructed

the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to suspend the denotification of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) MNAs from Punjab.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) statement issued today said that the electoral body was suspending its notifications from January 17, 20, 27, and February 3 to "the extent of the following constituencies/reserved seats falling in the province of Punjab".

The statement said that the notification of denotification of 27 members on general seats from Punjab had been suspended, along with the notification to denotify five women members from Punjab.

The commission would also delay holding elections for these seats until further guidance from the LHC, the statement mentioned. The women MNAs whose denotification notice has been suspended include Aliya Hamza Malik, Kanwal Shauzab, Andleeb Abbas, Asma Hadeed and Maleeka Ali Bukhari.

Moreover, the denotification notices of Sadaqat Ali Khan, Ghulam Sarwar Khan, Aamer Mehmood Kiani, Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed, Fawad Chaudhry, and Syed Faiz Ul Hassan have also been suspended.

KP governor says will accept SC's decision on elections

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Governor Haji Ghulam Ali has asserted that the caretaker government would accept the Supreme Court (SC) decision on holding elections in the province.

In a statement, KP governor refrained from giving date for elections for provincial assembly, saying that the caretaker government would accept the Supreme Court (SC) decision on the matter. "The apex court will not make any decision that will push the country towards anarchy", Haji Ghulam said, adding that the country's politics were destroyed in the last four years.

He claimed that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was now regretting of their decision to dissolve the assemblies, adding that he was trying in his personal capacity to bring stakeholders together at one table. Referring to PTI's Jail Bharo Tehreek, the KP governor said that he already knew no arrests would be made under this drive. He also lambasted PTI Chairman Imran Khan for violating the agreement

with International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Meanwhile, during a press chat held here on Friday in office of Mardan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Mardan, Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali has said that Pakistan is going through very critical juncture on all fronts and in such kind of situations the announcement of poll-date by him, will increase the country's difficulties manifold.

He told that they would accept the order of Supreme Court of Pakistan in this regard whatever it was given. However, the KPK governor Haji Ghulam Ali claimed that the apex court would not give such type of order which caused to led panic and lawlessness in the country.

He blamed that principles of politics were badly damaged and ruined in the last four years. He also claimed that the PTI leadership did not take up his advises and consultations as serious about dissolution of provincial assembly and now they were ashamed over their act of dissolution. "I am trying my level best to gather all political parties on one table with

the purpose to find out reasonable solution of their political differences, he added.

He pointed out it was correct that under the constitution of Pakistan, the polls must be held within 90-days but article-254 was also present in the constitution. He claimed that all works including developmental projects were going on in the province under the joint consultations with caretaker chief minister Muhammad Azam Khan.

He went on to say that they were fully-prepared tackle the court arrest movement of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Party, adding that he himself already knew that no one would give arrest and the movement would be failed. He accused that the ex-prime minister Imran Khan had violated the IMF agreement and now the punishment was being given to the whole nation. Haji Ghulam Ali alleged that the former Prime Minister Imran Khan and his government was responsible for price-hike, inflation and devaluation of rupee against dollar as it was all because of poor and bad policies of the PTI government.

Marri sit-in called off

QUETTA (Agencies): As some angry demonstrators continue their protest in the city's red zone, the All Pakistan Marri Ittehad (APMI) announced calling off its sit-in on Friday following the recovery of Khan Muhammad Marri's family members from Barkhan, a district of Balochistan.

Marri earlier alleged that his family members were held in a private jail of Balochistan Minister for Construction and Communications Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran. While his wife and five children have been recovered, bodies of his three deceased children were found in a well in Kohlu. The gruesome incident came into the spotlight after the video of a woman — wife of Marri who was earlier presumed dead but was later recovered — with the Holy Quran in her hands was released on social media.

Meanwhile, leaders of

APMI Mehruddin Marri and Jehangir Marri announced the development after being asked by Senator Agha Umar Ahmedzai, brother of the Khan of Kalat Mir Ahmed Khan Ahmedzai. Representatives of the tribal jirga reached the sit-in spot under Ahmedzai's leadership.

However, relatives of the deceased, Marri tribesmen including those from the Balochistan Students Organisation (BSO), at the sit-in have refused to end their protest. They have also denied handing over the bodies for burial. The provincial government has requested the remaining protesters to end the sit-in after all their demands were met including the recovery of Marri's family members and Khetran's arrest. "Our demands have been met. We announce the ending of the sit-in."

Our other demands have also been met," Mehruddin Marri said

while speaking during his announcement.

He added that their decision, to end the sit-in, came after Khetran's arrest and the recovery of Khan Muhammad Marri's family. "Granaz and her daughter [Marri's wife and daughter] will be taken to Karachi for a medical check-up, while the bodies will be taken for forensics. The announcement of their burial will be made later," he said. On the other hand, a meeting between Khan Muhammad Marri and his family has also taken place today in Quetta.

According to the police, Marri also reunited with his family after his arrival in the provincial capital city. He and his family members have been taken into police custody.

"Recovered woman and children will be presented in the judicial magistrate 12's court where their statements will be recorded before them," police said.

bringing in into power. Khawaja Asif said that Pervaiz Khattak gave the name of Sikandar Sultan Raja for the Chief Election Commissioner after they were now opposing him. "Imran Khan bites the hands of those people who feed him. First time in history the appointment of chief of army staff was made controversial," the minister added.

Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif while commenting on the recent visit of the Pakistani delegation to Afghanistan said some four ministers of the Cabinet were



RAWALPINDI: Activist of PTI holding a protest during Jail Bharo Threek at Committee Chowk.

'Every one observed destiny of Jail Bharo Tehreek' F.P. Report

KARACHI: Provincial Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon has said that every has witnessed the destiny of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf International Circus Company in Peshawar, and added that neither a single person turn up for voluntarily arrest nor accepted the hospitality of the Khyber Pakhtoonkhaw police.

The police was calling PTI leaders and workers through mega phone in streets of Dera Ismael Khan, Peshawar and other cities of Khyber Pakhtoonkhaw to facilitate them in their Jail Bharo Tehreek on Thursday. In his statement the minister said that PTI leaders and MPA's were only busy in taking selfies with police vehicles and when ever police proceeded towards Imran Khan's Tiger , they fled away.

The provincial minister said that these people were chanting the slogans of Jail Bharo Tehreek, while the families of arrested people within 24 hours filed petition in the High Court for their recovery. He said that T e h r e e k - e - I n s a f International Circus Company organized it's third show in the city of Rawalpindi under the production of Imran Khan and the direction of Sheikh Rasheed. He criticised that Imran Khan had sidelined whole PTI Rawalpindi and handed over all the powers to Sheikh Rasheed.

Punjab police has political interference: CJP Bandial

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Umar Ata Bandial on Friday remarked that the Punjab police had been exposed for political interference, due to which the department is unable to perform its duties in a peaceful manner.

The three-member bench headed by CJP Bandial rejected the reinstatement plea of former Chief Secretary Punjab Kamran Afzal, stating that the matter was of an individual nature. During the hearing, CJP Bandial highlighted the issue of frequent transfers of Inspector Generals (IG) of police in Punjab. He remarked since 2018, no IG had completed even a year in office and they were removed within a few months. The Punjab police urgently needed the training to improve their efficiency and performance, the CJP added.

In another matter, CJP Bandial mentioned that help from agencies had been taken to release a girl who had been abducted for six years. The hearing also saw a detailed report on the appointments and transfers submitted by Punjab and Sindh police. However, Justice Athar Minallah pointed out that there were no reasons stated in the report for the removal of the Punjab IG.

Asad's wife approaches court for his release

LAHORE (Agencies): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf general secretary Asad Umar's wife has filed a separate petition for her husband's release. A petition for Asad's release has already been filed in the court challenging his arrest by the Punjab police. In the fresh petition, Asad Umar's wife Sofia Fatima made Lahore Deputy Commissioner, CCPO, IG Jail Punjab, and Superintendent of Jail parties and held them responsible for Asad Umar's illegal arrest.

She in her petition maintained that PTI Chairman Imran Khan announced Jail Bharu Tehreek, a symbolic drive for the supremacy of the Constitution. It is apprised to the court that Asad Umar is the general secretary of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. Asad Umar along with other PTI leaders and activists gathered at Charing Cross, The Mall of Lahore on February 22.

The Police crackdown on them and detained Asad Umar and others illegally. Later the police shifted Asad to Dera Ghazi Khan jail in a vehicle with prisoners. It is held that PTI arrested leaders should have been produced before the respective judges as per law, but the police did not. Police detained Asad Umar on the instructions of the Deputy Commissioner, she alleged in her petition. She further said, "It has come to know that the Deputy Commissioner has illegally issued the detention order." She added that she had tried to meet her husband in prison to enquire about his health but the lawmen did not allow it. Sofia Fatima added that Asad Umar is a law-abiding citizen, not involved in anti-social activities. His detention should be declared illegal and released.

PTI's petition seeking recovery of arrested leaders irks LHC: The Lahore High Court (LHC) has expressed reservations over pleas seeking the release of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders and workers presently under voluntary arrest. Justice Shehram Sarwar remarked as he headed the proceedings, "First you people decided to voluntarily offer arrests, boarded prison vans with your own consent and now you have come to increase the court's burden seeking recovery."

It may be noted that the arrests were offered by several PTI leaders and workers as part of the party's 'Jail Bharo' movement

— a drive that seeks to mark a protest against the government's policies and to put pressure on the government to announce elections. The petitioners senator Ijaz Ch. Syeda Nuria Humaira Rafique wife of Waleed Iqbal, and others filed petitions requesting the court to direct the concerned quarters to produce the PTI's detained leadership, including "Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Asad Umar, Umar Sarfraz Cheema, Azam Swati, Waleed Iqbal, Murad Rass and several others before the court after recovering them from illegal detention of the respondents".

As proceedings commenced, Justice Shehram asked how and when were the leaders and workers taken into custody. To which the counsels responded that more than 100 PTI leaders and workers have been kept in illegal custody. They submitted that those detained had been taken into custody as part of the movement offering voluntary arrests in a bid to uphold the supremacy of the Constitution. Justice Shehram asked Zain Qureshi if his father, prominent leader Shah Mehmood Qureshi, had also been arrested. Urging the court to allow the family to meet the former foreign minister, Zain Qureshi confirmed that his father was indeed under arrest. "You can go to Charing Cross if you wanted to meet him," Justice Shehram remarked.

Zain Qureshi responded that the family had done so but were told that "their arrests were not made". One of the lawyers requested the court to seek a report on the matter from the provincial government. "What report should be sought?" the judge asked. The counsel argued that neither was due process followed in the arrests nor were the arrested individuals presented before any court of law. Upon this, the judge said that "your concern is why your leaders and workers have been taken away from Lahore, in that case, you should have requested the home secretary to put them under house arrest instead". The counsel pleaded with the court to seek replies from the concerned authorities and continue hearing on the matter today. However, the court rejected the request. Nonetheless, Justice Shehram sought replies from concerned quarters by February 27.

Ukraine war: Pakistan, China abstain from UN vote

UNITED NATIONS (APP):

With Pakistan abstaining, the UN General Assembly voted to adopt, by an overwhelming majority, a resolution on a resolution that underscores the need for peace ensuring the country's "sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity".

The vote, which came on the eve of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, was 141 in Favour to seven against, with 32 abstentions. Sponsored by more than 60 countries, it called on UN member states and international organizations "to redouble support for diplomatic efforts" to achieve peace on those terms. The resolution reiterates the General Assembly's previous demand that Russia "immediately, completely, and unconditionally withdraw all of its military forces" from Ukraine's internationally recognized borders. And it reaffirms that no territory acquired by the threat or use of force will be considered legal.

In October 2022, 143 UNGA members had voted to condemn Russia's annexation of Ukrainian territories. Five countries, including Russia, voted against the resolution. Pakistan was among the 35 countries that had abstained. Explaining his vote, Pakistan's UN Ambassador Munir Akram voiced deep concern over the conflict in Ukraine which has caused immense human suffering in Ukraine and massive damage to its infrastructure, economy and society.

In this regard, he called for de-escalation, renewed negotiations and sustained dialogue for a peaceful diplomatic solution of the conflict. "We acknowledge the considerable effort made by the co-sponsors (of the resolution) to moderate the tone and language of the draft resolution," the Pakistani envoy said. Pakistan, he said, fully supports the resolution's call for respect for the principle of sovereignty, sovereign equality and territorial integrity of States and non-acquisition of territory by the threat or use of force. States cannot be torn apart by the use of force.

But, Ambassador Akram said, Pakistan regrets that these principles have not been universally applied and respected for instance in the situation of foreign occupation and the ongoing attempt at the illegal and forcible annexation of Jammu and Kashmir. In his remarks, he said Pakistan also endorses the resolution's call on member states and international organizations to redouble efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine.

"While the hostilities continue, there is an ever-present danger of a further military and geographical escalation of the war. There is thus an

imminent threat to global peace and security," the Pakistani envoy said, noting that while Pakistan agrees with and endorses the principles and general provisions contained in the draft resolution, some provisions were not consistent with Pakistan's principled position on some of the elements covered in the text. "As a country that has seen and suffered the consequences of prolonged conflict in our neighbourhood, we attach highest priority to the immediate cessation of hostilities and the resumption of dialogue to achieve a just and durable solution – through direct or indirect negotiations, mediation or other peaceful means."

"In this regard, we see an important role of the UN and the Secretary-General, inter alia under Chapter VI and VIII of the UN Charter provisions, for efforts aimed at de-escalation, renewed negotiations and sustained dialogue for a peaceful diplomatic solution," he added. "Pakistan continues to hope that, in a constructive approach, the parties will soon accept a mutual and early cessation of hostilities," Akram said, adding, "We also hope for the resumption of a dialogue for durable resolution of the conflict based on the principles of the UN Charter and past agreements, and bearing in mind the legitimate security interests of all States."

At this stage, he regretted that there were certain factions in the society committing a pathetic show off of their wealth during these critical times. It was rather an ugly portrayal of money by the elites through their life style who believed that the poor people of Pakistan did not exist, he added.

Full court should hear case about dissolution of PAs: Asif

(Continued from Page 1)

He said Pervaiz Elahi had told him that an amount of Rs. 1.2 billion was collected on a wedding ceremony of a bureaucrat who was not bothered to provide details of that money but politicians were always blamed despite their services for people. He added that the country could not proceed further under such circumstances as accountability of all was must. About PTI's court arrest movement, he said that son of Shah Mehmood Qureshi came to get his father's bail a day after his arrest.

"No one came for us when we were arrested for several days in our political life. We were sent on 90 days remand. Prime Minister and Maryam Nawaz were imprisoned for numerous days while Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif appeared 200 times in cases against him. No one got bail for this. On the other side, they (PTI leaders) get instant bail," said the minister. He said that the country was made after a political struggle and not with the help of a "sponsored person".

"They carry out photo sessions in front of a police van and then leave

for home. Jail Bharo Tehreek has flopped. Now it should be doob maro film (Go die film)," said Asif. The minister told the assembly that the incumbent Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) government had inherited the economic mess from Imran Khan. "We are trying to pull the country out of this economic situation. We know people are heavily burdened. We are cleaning the mess of the last government which will take time," Asif said.

The lawmaker alleged that the PTI chief abused all of his well-wishers and those who supported him in

bringing in into power. Khawaja Asif said that Pervaiz Khattak gave the name of Sikandar Sultan Raja for the Chief Election Commissioner after they were now opposing him. "Imran Khan bites the hands of those people who feed him. First time in history the appointment of chief of army staff was made controversial," the minister added.

Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif while commenting on the recent visit of the Pakistani delegation to Afghanistan said some four ministers of the Cabinet were

part of the delegation that held negotiations with the Afghan counterparts. The negotiations were responded very well, he said, adding, "But the question is would we launch accountability of ourselves. The lives of people and our law enforcement agencies' personnel are endangered. The person who while holding a cup of tea said all will be well."

"Our people's life is in danger. Does anyone care or these people who have become mere numbers?" he queried at the floor of the House. The minister mentioned that he used to sign letters to the family members

of the martyrs extending sympathies to them every month and the letters were increasing not declining. He added that these people (martyrs) were not numbers rather sons, fathers, and only support of their families.

At this stage, he regretted that there were certain factions in the society committing a pathetic show off of their wealth during these critical times. It was rather an ugly portrayal of money by the elites through their life style who believed that the poor people of Pakistan did not exist, he added.