

Terrorists killed
F.P. Report
RAWALPINDI: Security forces killed two terrorists during an exchange of fire in Esham area of North Waziristan District. According to ISPR, these terrorists were actively involved in terrorist activities against security forces. Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the terrorists. It stated that the killed terrorists remained actively involved in terrorist activities against security forces.

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Hina arrives in Sri Lanka
COLOMBO (APP): Minister of state for Foreign Affairs Ms Hina Rabbani Khar arrived here on Friday on a two-day official visit of Sri Lanka. She was received by Sri Lankan State Minister for Tourism Ms Diana Gamage, Pakistan's High Commissioner to Sri Lanka Maj Gen (R) Umar Farooq Burki and officials of the High Commission. During the visit, Ms Hina Rabbani Khar will attend celebrations of the 75th Independence Day of Sri Lanka.

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PM calls for forging national unity against terrorism

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif here on Friday called for forging national unity against the menace of terrorism and urged all the stakeholders to shun their differences and sit together to wipe out terrorism in its all forms and manifestation.

The prime minister said that all political-religious parties' leadership irrespective of their political, religious and linguistic ideologies should stand united to win the fight against terrorism. He expressed his government's strong resolve that the fight against terrorism would continue till its logical end and extermination.

Addressing an apex committee meeting here at Governor House, the prime minister said that undue criticism, propaganda and blames over the police lines' mosque blast was highly condemnable, adding that "we have to admit the facts behind the blast that had made the whole nation grieved and sadden." He said that it would be probed that how the terrorist sneaked into the mosque and carried out such a huge blast that claimed around 80 to 85 innocent worshippers and many others injured.

Prime Minister said the federation and provinces should jointly fight out terrorism as after every incident of the past the federation was blamed for not cooperating with KP in that regard. Shehbaz Sharif disclosed that Rs 417 billion were provided to KP since 2010 under the National Finance Commission Award that was supposed to be spent for capacity-building, infrastructure development and equipment for the counter-terrorism department and wondered where that huge amount was spent in KP. He suggested a complete probe and audit of the spending of such a huge amount in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He said that a well-equipped counter-terrorism department (CTD) and a modern forensic lab were established in Punjab and that a forensic lab, safe city project and infrastructure for CTD could also be established in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after receiving Rs 417 billion. He said that peace could have been established in KP if one-fourth of the said amount was spent in the province. The prime minister on this occasion announced Rs2 million for each martyr's family

Shehbaz announces compensation package for heirs of martyrs, injured of mosque blast

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif here Friday announced Rs two million for the heirs of all martyrs and Rs five lakh for those injured in the deadly suicide attack at police lines' mosque on January 30. Addressing the Apex Committee meeting held under his chairmanship here at Governor House, the Prime Minister said the compensation amount was not an alternative to the grief and sorrow through which the victims' families were passing through but was a token of relief on the part of federal government to ease the financial difficulties of members of the bereaved families and injured victims. The prime minister said the entire nation including civil and military armed forces, civil society, people and government officials had rendered great sacrifices in war against terrorism.

and Rs0.5 million for each injured in the police lines' mosque blast.

He said that the purpose of the convening of the Apex Committee meeting in Peshawar was to express solidarity with the bereaved families of the martyrs and injured and appraised all the stakeholders about the law and order situation in the province. Referring to recent terrorist attacks on CTD Bannu and Police Lines Peshawar, Shehbaz Sharif said the whole nation was worried that the menace of terrorism, which was wiped out by the Nawaz Sharif government, had reemerged in KP, which he said was highly deplorable.

He said the successful operations of Zarb Azab and Radul Fasad had immensely helped in wiping out of terrorism from the province and lauded the sacrifices of security forces, government officials, people, civil society and civil armed forces for the protection of their country. The premier strongly condemned social media speculations and propaganda in the wake of the police lines mosque blast, adding that the rumors of a drone attack and others allegations related to the blast were inappropriate. He clarified that it was a suicide attack.

The prime minister said the practice of criticism for the sake of criticism should be avoided and facts should not be distorted and supremacy of truth should prevail. The meeting of the apex committee was attended by Interior Minister Rana Sanullah, Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, Chief Ministers of four provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan, Federal Ministers and national and political leadership

except for PTI leadership, who refused to attend the meeting.

The prime minister said all the national political and religious parties' leadership including the one who did not want to shake hands with him, were invited to today's Apex Committee meeting and APC committee meeting to be held on February 7 in Islamabad. He called for rising above personal likes and dislikes and leaving the double standard politics to curb terrorism and extremism.

Shehbaz Sharif said despite repeated terrorist attacks, not a single inch of the land of KP was under the control of any terrorist group or individual that reflected the strong writ of the government. Referring to negotiations with IMF, he said talks with the IMF team were underway with his government's monetary team led by the finance minister Ishaq Dar, adding "despite IMF's strict terms and conditions the government would take the decisions while keeping in view the national interest supreme."

The prime minister said the economic challenges being faced by the country were enormous and the IMF conditions that the country has to meet are beyond immigration, adding the government would take strict decisions to take the country out of the economic quagmire. Later, collective Fateha was offered for eternal peace of the departed souls and speedy recovery of the injured in the police lines blast. Earlier, the prime minister was received by KP Governor Ghulam Ali, Caretaker CM Azam Khan and officials of the KP government.



PESHAWAR: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing a meeting of the Apex Committee.

Court orders release of Imran Riaz

LAHORE (Agencies): A court in Lahore has rejected the Federal Investigation Agency's (FIA) case against TV anchor Imran Riaz Khan and ordered his immediate release. The anchor was arrested from Lahore on Thursday on charges of "hate speech" and making a "violence-inducing statement" aimed at creating "a rift between the general public and the state institutions".

The FIA registered the first information report under sections 11 (electronic forgery), 20 (malicious code), and 24 (legal recognition of offenses committed in relation to information systems) of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Peca) 2016. Likewise, sections 131/109 (incitement to mutiny), 500 (punishment for defamation) and 505 (public mischief) of the Pakistan Penal Code have also been added to the FIR.

According to the FIR, Khan was "found involved in publicly making a hate speech at a conference which falls under the territorial jurisdiction of FIA cyber crime cell". The complaint went on to say that the speech was further publicly shared on social media platforms nationally and internationally. The contents of Khan's speech, as mentioned in the FIR, cast aspersions on former army chief Gen Bajwa's parting pledge that the military would remain apolitical.

UNEP head lauds Sherry's role

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Inger Andersen on Friday led a delegation to meet Federal Minister for Climate Change, Senator Sherry Rehman and appreciated her role in ecosystem restoration.

The federal minister and the UNEP Executive Director discussed climate change, rehabilitation and reconstruction of flood victims and other issues, a news release said. Senator Sherry Rehman thanked the UN delegation for visiting the flood-affected areas.

The Minister also informed the UN delegation about the flood victims, the recovery and reconstruction process and the challenges faced by the government. On the occasion, Senator Sherry Rehman emphasised turning the Living Indus project into a practical reality. She also welcomed the announcement of the establishment of a permanent office of the UNEP in Pakistan as a propitious step.

She said, "Timely and proper transfer of grants is essential in the rehabilitation process. Cooperation and partnership between the United Nations and the Government of Pakistan is indispensable to deal with climate change." The Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Inger Andersen said that working with the government of Pakistan was her first priority.

Spy balloon detected in US Blinken postpones trip to China

WASHINGTON (Reuters): US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will postpone his visit to China after a spy balloon was detected flying over the continental United States, according to media reports on Friday. Blinken did not want the balloon to dominate his meetings with Chinese officials, ABC News reported, citing an unnamed US official. Bloomberg News also reported the trip will be postponed.

Chinese spy balloon flies over the United States: A Chinese spy balloon has been flying over the United States for a couple of days, US officials said on Thursday, in what would be a brazen act just days ahead of a planned trip to Beijing by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

Fighter jets were mobilized, but military leaders advised President Joe Biden against shooting the balloon out of the sky for fear debris could pose a safety threat, advice Biden accepted, US officials said. The United States took "custody" of the balloon when it entered US airspace and had observed it with piloted US military aircraft, one of the officials told reporters on condition of anonymity.

Separately, Canada's defense ministry said a "high-altitude surveillance balloon" was detected and that it was monitoring a "potential second incident", without giving further details, adding that it was in frequent contact with the United States.

The news initially broke as CIA Director William Burns was speaking at an event at Washington's Georgetown University, where he called China the "biggest geopolitical challenge" facing the United States. "The United States government has detected and is tracking a high-altitude surveillance balloon that is over the continental United States right now," Pentagon spokesperson Brigadier General Patrick Ryder told reporters. "The balloon is currently traveling at an altitude well above commercial air traffic and does not present a military or physical threat to people on the ground."

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said Beijing was "verifying" the situation. "I would like to emphasize that until the facts are clarified, speculation and hype will not be helpful to the proper resolution of the issue," she told a regular daily briefing in Beijing on Friday, adding that China abides by international law. "China has no intention of violating the land territory and airspace of any sovereign country," Mao said.

US officials said they raised the matter with their Chinese counterparts through diplomatic channels. "We have communicated to them the seriousness with which

we take this issue," a US official said. One US official said the balloon was assessed to have "limited additive value from an intelligence collection perspective." Blinken is expected to travel to China next week for a visit agreed to in November by Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping. It was not clear how the discovery of the spy balloon might affect those plans.

US Senator Marco Rubio, the top Republican on the Senate intelligence committee, said the spy balloon was alarming but not surprising. "The level of espionage aimed at our country by Beijing has grown dramatically more intense & brazen over the last 5 years," Rubio said on Twitter. Republican Senator Tom Cotton called for Blinken to cancel his trip.

Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy said he would request a "Gang of Eight" briefing, referring to a classified national security briefing for congressional leaders and Republican and Democratic leaders of the intelligence committees. Relations between China and the United States have soured in recent years, particularly following then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in August, which prompted dramatic Chinese military drills near the self-ruled island.

Since then, Washington and Beijing have sought to communicate more frequently and prevent ties from worsening. US military leaders considered shooting down the balloon over Montana on Wednesday but eventually advised Biden against it because of the safety risk from debris, the official told reporters. The Billings, Montana, airport issued a ground stop as the military mobilized assets including F-22 fighter jets in case Biden ordered that the balloon be shot down.

"We wanted to make sure we were coordinating with civil authorities to empty out the airspace around that potential area," the official said. "But even with those protective measures taken, it was the judgment of our military commanders that we didn't drive the risk down low enough. So we didn't take the shot." Defense expert John Parachini estimated the size of the balloon was equivalent to three bus lengths. Billings resident Chase Doak, who filmed it on Wednesday, said at first he thought it was a star.

"But I thought that was kind of crazy because it was broad daylight and when I looked at it, it was just too big to be a star," he told Reuters. One of the officials said the flight path would carry the balloon over a number of sensitive sites, but did not give details.

PTI petition on polls date LHC grants time to governor to submit reply

LAHORE (Agencies): The Lahore High Court (LHC) has accepted Punjab Governor Balighur Rehman's request to be granted more time to submit a response regarding a PTI petition seeking the announcement of a date for elections in the province.

The PTI on Jan 27 had approached the LHC, seeking its order for the Punjab governor to immediately announce a date of an election in the province since the assembly had been dissolved. The ECP had recommended the elections be held between April 9 and 17. The petition filed through PTI General Secretary Asad Umar, stated that more than 10 days had passed since the dissolution of the Punjab Assembly but Governor Rehman had failed to fulfil his constitutional duty of announcing an election date.

During the hearing, Justice Jawad Hassan, who presided over hearing, directed the respondent — the Punjab governor — to submit a detailed response to the court before the next hearing, which he adjourned till Feb 9. At the outset of the hearing, the

court asked the ECP lawyer about the date on which they plan to hold the provincial elections.

The lawyer responded: "We are ready to hold the elections. There has been a new development yesterday regarding this; the governor has responded to the ECP's letter. He added that the governor has asked the ECP to hold a discussion with all the stakeholders. Justice Hassan remarked: "It is mentioned in the Constitution that the elections should be held within 90 days [of the assembly's dissolution]."

The court asked: "How can you say that the economic situation has worsened? Even in the past, the economic situation has been bad but the elections were conducted. The lawyer representing the federal government, Nassar Ahmed, responded that there was "plenty of time" till the 90-day period was over.

The judge, however, stressed that the date for the election should still be announced. "We are just talking about what is mentioned in the Constitution," Asad Umar said. "The ECP has issued a schedule

regarding the by-elections for the National Assembly. The by-elections have to be held in the entire country. He took a jibe at the ECP saying: "The thought of the economic situation did not come to their (ECP's) minds while issuing the by-election schedule?"

Upon this, the court remarked: "Asad, be content with the ECP today [as] they are favouring your stance today." Umar replied: "[Only] once the ECP gives [us] the chance to be happy." The court then asked if a full bench should be constituted for the case but Umar requested it not to. At this point, Governor Rehman's lawyer also appeared in the court and asked for additional time to submit a response to the court.

The court inquired of him: "How much time do you need? This is a matter concerning Pakistan's people." The lawyer answered that he needed a "minimum of seven days". Accepting the governor's request, the court granted him additional time to submit a detailed response and directed him also to provide a copy to the petitioner (Umar).

PM hails China's interest to investment

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: China is interested in investing in Pakistan's nuclear energy sector and delegation-level talks in this regard will be held in near future. This was informed in a meeting held between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and a delegation of China National Nuclear Corporation led by Charge d'Affaires of the Chinese embassy Pang Chunxue.

The meeting was also joined by federal ministers Ishaq Dar, Ahsan Iqbal, and Khurram Dastagir, PM's Adviser Ahad Cheema, and Special Assistants Tariq Fatemi, Tariq Bajwa, and Jahanzeb Khan. The prime minister welcomed the interest shown by China to invest in the country's nuclear energy sector.

He mentioned that the inauguration of K-3, the third unit of Karachi Nuclear Power Plant (KANUP) yesterday with the assistance of China would help Pakistan overcome its energy needs. He said the strategic relationship between Pakistan and China spanned over decades and would continue to strengthen with time.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said the government is working to diversify energy mix by focusing on the development of indigenous sources of power generation such as hydropower, coal and solar.

In his tweets on Friday, he said locally produced electricity will help reduce fuel import, bring down tariff and thus provide relief to the common man. Alluding to the 7th nuclear power plant of Pakistan inaugurated by him on Thursday in Karachi, he said with the induction of K-3, the total nuclear power generation capacity has reached 3600 megawatt.

Bilawal emphasizes importance of faith

WASHINGTON (APP): Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari was the keynote speaker at the International Luncheon, an important part of the National Prayer Breakfast activities in Washington DC.

Earlier during the breakfast, which was attended by more than 1400 guests from the United States and around the World, the Foreign Minister was recognized as a young and dynamic foreign minister by the Foundation organizing the event.

In his remarks, the Foreign Minister emphasized the role of faith and prayer in life, both individually and collectively as a global community. He said, "faith in one Creator that watches over us, guides us and give us strength is the bonding feature of all faiths. This sense of unity enables us to see the

humanity in those who are different from us, and to treat them with same kindness and respect that we would want for ourselves."

The Foreign Minister said, "In Islam the rights of our fellow human beings —Hagoq-ul-Ibad — constitute one of the most important pillars of our faith. By asking its adherents to treat all people with kindness and respect, regardless of their background or belief, Islam seeks to create a society where discord and strife are replaced by unity and harmony." The Foreign Minister referred to the many challenges facing the world today and emphasized the need to reaffirm our belief in the importance of compassion and empathy in addressing global issues. "Our fate is tied to the fate of others and we must work together to build a better future for all."

He emphasized the need

to build bridges of understanding, tolerance and compassion in pursuit of our common desire to have peace and amity. The Foreign Minister also spoke about the devastating floods in Pakistan and thanked the international community for coming forward and assisting Pakistan in this hour of need.

The National Prayer Breakfast is a high profile event, held annually since 1953, that gathers US and international leaders for a discourse on contemporary issues with key emphasis on the importance of faith and democracy. This year's Breakfast was also attended by King of Jordan, His Majesty King Abdullah II. The invitation to the Foreign Minister as a keynote speaker at the International Luncheon is a recognition of Pakistan's important voice in this discourse.

Free-floating exchange rate acutely hampers rupee

ISLAMABAD (INP): The free-floating of rupee continues to make the local currency extremely vulnerable to the onslaught of mighty US dollar as Pakistani rupee lost another 64 paisas in the interbank trading.

According to information provided by money dealers, the rupee kept up its downward trajectory against the US dollar which shot up to Rs272, up by 64 paisas, during today's trade.

Yesterday, the rupee was slumped by Rs2.53 in the interbank market, closing at a new historic low of Rs271.36 against the dollar. However, the gap between the interbank and

open market rate was narrowed down to Rs275.50. The local currency fell sharply in three sessions on January 26, 27 and 30, 2023. The rupee fell by PKR 38.74 or 16.77 per cent to PKR 269.63, the lowest level against the dollar. Currency experts said that despite a free-floating exchange rate, the situation was still uncertain and exporters and others were reluctant to sell their dollars in the market. Apart from this, the depleting forex reserves are causing a great concern for the rupee stability.

The foreign exchange reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan recorded ten years low, dropped by

\$592.2 million to stand at \$3.08 billion during the week ended on January 27, 2023, data published by the SBP on Thursday showed. The SBP said that the decline in foreign exchange reserves were due to scheduled external repayment.

The present level of the official reserves have fallen below one month import cover. The import bill of the country for the month of January 2023 was recorded at \$4.856 billion, according to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). The benchmark foreign exchange reserves of a central bank should be at a level to provide three months import cover.



Joint efforts against environmental changes

LAHORE (APP): Australian High Commissioner in Lahore Neil Hawkins on Friday said all nations would have to work together against environmental changes and stressed the need for changing human behaviour to save water.

The high commissioner said this during his visit to the WASA Head Office while Managing Director Ghafran Ahmed and Additional Secretary Housing Umar Farooq were also present. Australian High Commissioner Neil Hawkins hints for more aid in future for urban flood management during the meeting.

Director Planning Zeshan Ahmed briefed the delegation about departmental performance and activities while MD Ghafran Ahmed highlighted the issues and working on urban flood management.

DC reviews anti dengue measures

LAHORE (APP): Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali on Friday reviewed anti dengue measures in the city. The additional deputy commissioner, assistant commissioners, chief executive officer health and entomologists attended the meeting.

Addressing the meeting, the deputy commissioner said as per instructions of the Punjab government, strict monitoring and surveillance was being carried out in the city to control dengue.

Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Alisaid that instructions had been issued to the departments concerned to make necessary arrangements in this regard, adding that the Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) had been directed to ensure cleanliness of parks and fountains under its jurisdiction.

Light rain, snowfall expected

KARACHI (PPI): Met office informed on Friday that during the next 24 hours, cold and dry weather is expected in most parts while cloudy in upper parts of the country. Light rain/light snowfall over the hills is expected at isolated places in upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit Baltistan and Kashmir. Shallow fog is likely to occur in few plain areas of Punjab. Past 24 Hour Weather Cold and dry weather prevailed in most parts of the country.

While very cold in upper parts and north Balochistan.

Correction in Name

My father's correct name is Muhammad Farooq but mistakenly written in my educational documents as Farooq Khan. Please make necessary corrections. Sheryar Khan S/O Muhammad Farooq, R/O Mohallah Akazai, Tehkal Bala, Peshawar, KP.

'Key aim of the universities to conduct research'

LAHORE (INP): Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman has said that the key aim of the universities is to conduct research and there is a need to strengthen the linkage between industry and academia in order to get practical benefit from this research.

Speaking while presiding over the second convocation of Government College Women University Faisalabad (GCWUF) on Friday, he said that special attention is being paid to research and teaching in the universities. Muhammad Balighur Rehman congratulated the students on their outstanding success and appreciated the university teachers for polishing the talent of students. He said that it is a matter of pride that the Government College Women's University has achieved a prominent position at the national and international level in the recent rankings.

He advised the students to be part of positive activities, develop patience, tolerance and leadership skills. He further said that the students should focus on education and work hard to achieve their goals.

Addressing the convocation, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Rubina Farooq informed in detail about the achievements

and development projects of the university in the past years. In the convocation, the students of Ph.D., MPhil, MA, MSc and B.S. 80 female students were awarded gold medals and 81 female students were awarded silver medals for achieving a distinguished position in the academic field.

Vice Chancellor Professor, Dr. Rubina Farooq, University Directors and Principal Officers, Syndicate members, Vice Chancellors of various universities, parents and degree holders participated in the convocation. Later, Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rahman reached the residence of party leader Mian Ghulam Hussain Shahid where MNA Mian Abdul Maan, former federal minister Talal Chaudhry and members of assembly and workers of Muslim League Nawaz welcomed him.

Speaking on this occasion, Balighur Rahman said that Muhammad Nawaz Sharif will come to Pakistan before the general election. He said that the counter has been saved from bankruptcy due to the hard work of Federal Finance Minister Ishaq Dar and his team under the leadership of Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. He said PML-N is determined to steer the country out of crises.

Minister reviews facilities, security arrangements

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Provincial Minister Auqaf and Religious Affairs Barrister Syed Azfar Ali Nasir on Friday visited the shrine of the great spiritual figure Hazrat Baba Fariduddin Masood Ganj Shakar at Pakpattan.

He laid wreaths and offered a special prayer for the development and prosperity of the country. He visited various parts of the Darbar and reviewed the facilities and security arrangements made for the pilgrims and directed that fool-proof security should be ensured for the pilgrims at the Baba Farid Darbar, said a handout issued here. The minister paid a rich tribute to Hazrat Baba Fariduddin Masood Ganj

Shakar and said that he had served Islam and humanity throughout his life. He said it was a matter of fortune for him to attend the shrine of the great spiritual personality of the subcontinent.

He said that caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Syed Mohsin Naqvi has directed provision of all possible facilities for the pilgrims. He emphasised that everyone had to play their role for the stability of Pakistan and the integrity of the country.

Secretary Auqaf and Religious Affairs Syed Tahir Raza Bukhari, Zonal Administrator Auqaf Gohar Mustafa and other eminent mashaikh and scholars were also present.

KU organizes walk in connection with 'Kashmir Day'

KARACHI (APP): The University of Karachi on Friday organized a walk to show solidarity with the people of Kashmir. KU Vice Chancellor Professor Dr Khalid Mahmood Iraqi led the walk which started from the Administration Building Lawn and ended at the Azadi Chowk. A large number of students, faculty and employees attended the 'Kashmir Solidarity Walk' and expressed their support to the people of Kashmir in their struggle for self-determination.

They were holding the Pakistani and Kashmiri flags, and chanted slogans to support freedom struggle of Kashmiri people. On this occasion, Prof. Dr Khalid Mahmood Iraqi said, "India has been committing atrocities on the people of Indian Illegal Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) for the past seventy-five years which is very shameful."

KU VC Professor Dr Khalid Iraqi said that India cannot deprive the Kashmiris of their right to freedom by oppression and

force. He observed, "There is no such thing as democracy in India, although they claim to be a champion of democracy."

He informed the audience that India has recently banned the BBC documentary which has exposed the Gujarat riots and the main culprit Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, behind the ongoing violence, unrest, and disturbance due to which many innocent people lost their lives. The KU VC Professor Dr Khalid Iraqi said that the whole world should be ashamed for remaining silent on the atrocities committed by India in IIOJK and other parts of India.

He observed, "The silence of human rights organizations and international communities over the violation in India is strange and it marks a big question mark on their role and reputation."

He said that government should use all diplomatic platforms and other resources to raise voices for the Kashmir cause.

BISE Lahore announces matric, inter exam schedule

LAHORE (PPI): The Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE), Lahore on Friday announced the schedule for the annual examination of intermediate and matriculation for 2023. According to the date sheet released, the exam will start from May 20 next, whereas, the admission forms can be submitted

online from February 7.

The admission forms with single fee must be submitted by March 7. However, admission with double fee must be submitted between March 8 and March 16.

Moreover, admission with triple fee will be accepted from March 17 to March 22, and no admission form will be entertained from any stu-

dent after March 22.

The admission fee for a year with regular science subjects has been fixed at Rs850. Likewise, the admission fee for one year with regular arts subjects is Rs800.

Students taking the exam with science subjects as private candidates will be required to pay an annual admission fee of Rs900.

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

The Institute of Regional Studies, an Islamabad-based autonomous and not-for-profit think tank that focuses on South Asia, invites applications along with detailed CVs from qualified candidates to fill the following positions on open merit and contract basis.

#	Designation	BPS	Posts
1.	Assistant	15	01

Requirements:

- Graduate from HEC recognized University.
- Must know basics of IT, Microsoft Office and File management.
- At least two years of experience in any reputed firm/organization.
- Should not be more than 30 years of age on the last date for submission of application, i.e., 15 February 2023.

Applications together with CV's can be sent to irspak@comsats.net.pk on the below mentioned format by 15 February, 2023. No application will be entertained without it.

Email Format

- Subject: ASSVA2023
- Email Body:

Name: _____
Qualification: _____
Experience: _____
Contact Detail: _____
Attachment: CV/Resume

PID(I) 4831/22

Note: IRS reserves the right to not to fill the position, without assigning any reason.



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan Nawabzada Iftikhar Ahmed Khan Babar addressing a press conference regarding Kashmir Solidarity Day.

Ghani slams Imran for not contesting by-poll

KARACHI (NNI): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) senior leader Saeed Ghani launched on Friday a broadside at Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan, saying the latter's 'U-turn' on contesting by-elections was a confession of defeat.

Sharing his thoughts over the political situation, Mr Ghani reminded Mr Khan there was a huge dif-

ference between delivering speeches and presenting before the masses.

On Friday, PPP spokesperson Faisal Karim Kundi said unanimous decision to establish peace in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had been taken in the presence of representatives of all security forces in the apex committee.

Speaking to the media, he said talk would be held

with India so that its soil was not used against Pakistan and all points of the apex committee would be raised in the All Parties Conference (APC) to be held on February 7, 2023.

Mr Kundi mentioned the country was to launch another war against terrorism. He added the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was not serious on the issue of terrorism.

12 dead, 1,166 injured in 1,116 accidents

LAHORE (APP): At least 12 people were killed and 1,166 injured in 1,116 accidents in Punjab during the last 24 hours.

According to the Rescue 1122, 555 drivers, 33 underage drivers, 169 pedestrians, and 454 passengers were among the victims of the traffic crashes. The statistics showed that 253 accidents were reported in Lahore which affected 255 people placing the provincial capital top of the list followed by 109 in Faisalabad with 114 victims and third Gujranwala with 77 accidents and 75 victims.

'Training essential to increase the capacity of government employees'

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Provincial Minister for Industries, Commerce and Energy SM Tanveer visited Punjab Small Industries Corporation (PSIC) Head Office, Al-Falah Building and presided over the meeting of the PSIC board here on Friday.

During the meeting, the board gave in principle approval for the in-house training for the officers of the Punjab Small Industries Corporation. The board also reviewed the recommendations of

the committee regarding the departmental appeal of an officer.

PSIC Managing Director Asim Javed gave a briefing about the organisational structure, performance and future plans of the Punjab Small Industries Corporation.

The minister while addressing the meeting said that the ongoing development works in Small Industrial Estates should be completed at a fast pace. PSIC should set goals and work hard to achieve them. He said that the colonisation

of industrial estates should be a priority because employment opportunities would be created only through the colonisation of industrial estates.

The provincial minister said that training was essential to increase the capacity of government employees. A plan for purposeful training of PSIC officers should be made and presented in the next meeting of the board. Secretary Industries and Commerce Sohail Ashraf and board members attended the meeting.

Pakistan Literature Festival

LAHORE (APP): The caretaker Minister for Information and Culture Amir Mir held a meeting with the secretary information Punjab Ali Nawaz Malik, the president Karachi Arts Council Muhammad Ahmad Shah and the executive director Alhambra Arts Council Zulfiqar Zulf in his office on Friday.

It was decided to organize the Pakistan Literature Festival in collaboration with the arts councils of Lahore and Karachi. The three-day festival will be held from February 10 to 12 in Lahore, in which renowned artists will perform their art, while programs such as academic mushaira, food festival, music, dance, national book fair and other events will be part of the festival.

7-member committee to monitor PIMH patients data

LAHORE (APP): On the direction of caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi, a 7-member committee has been formed which would monitor data and condition of under treatment patients at the Punjab Institute of Mental Health (PIMH).

Member Punjab Mental Health Authority Dr Saad Bashir Malik would be the chairman of the committee along with Dr Altaf Qadir, Dr Ali Madeeh Hashmi of King Edward Medical University, Associate Professor Services Institute of Medical Sciences (SIMS) Dr Samaira Qamar, Associate Professor Lahore General Hospital Dr Faiza Athar, senior clinical psychologist SIMS Aasia Manzoor and Executive Director Punjab Institute of Mental Health as members.

The Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education Department have

issued a notification in this regard. The committee would examine the under-treatment patients to determine their recovery and possible discharge by conducting a patient audit at the hospital. The committee would also be authorised to recommend financial support to the families of convalesced patients and the Social Welfare and Baitul-Maal Department and other law enforcement agencies would be competent to extend necessary support to the committee for the rehabilitation of the patients.

The ED PIMH would ensure the implementation of the recommendations of the committee.

CM Mohsin Naqvi has emphasized that rehabilitated patients have the right to return to their homes. He said that overstay of recovered patients in the hospital was not good for the patient as well as the hospital.

NOTICE FOR INVITING E-BIDDING

SINGLE STAGE ONE ENVELOP PROCEDURE

Kohat Irrigation Division Kohat Irrigation Department Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, invites electronic Bids from the eligible firms/contractors in accordance with KPPRA procurement rules.

S.#	Name of work	Estimated Cost (M)	E/Money & S/duty	PEC Relevant Code
1.	Supply & Installation of Solar Based Irrigation T/Well at tanga zany Vc Surati kala (Under KADP).	3.287	71990	CE-09, CE-10, EE-11, ME-05.
2.	ADP No. 2206/210455 Construction of Flood Protection Works, Irrigation Channels and ponds and Installation of Solar Irrigation Tube Wells in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Solarization of Existing Irrigation Tube Well Located at Noor Ullah Korona Village Bogara Takht-e-Nasrati, Karak.	6.000	126250	

TERMS & CONDITIONS:

- Bid solicitation documents containing instructions to Bidders Technical eligibility & evaluation criteria and required forms to be filled by bidders can be downloaded from Irrigation Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa website <http://www.irrigation.gkp.pk/> and/or KPPRA website www.kppra.gov.pk. For each work separate bid solicitation documents are to be submitted by the interested bidders.
- Electronic bidding shall be done on "above/below system" on BOQ/Engineer's Estimate.
- All bidder are required to have registration with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority.
- The bidder shall submit 02% bid security, alongwith Bid entry Fee @ 0.03% of the estimated cost as mentioned above, in the shape of deposit at call (Original) along with their bid before closing date and time.
- Notifications issued by KPPRA pertaining to procurement process issued from time to time shall be applicable.
- If the evaluated electronic bid costs of two or more bidders are equal then the successful bidder will be declared through their past performance.
- The last date & time for submission of the bid along with relevant documents is **23.02.2023 upto 12:00 Noon** which will be opened on the same day at **12:30 PM** in the office of the undersigned in presence of contractor and their representatives who wishes to attend.
- Bid security of 1st, 2nd and 3rd lowest bidders will be retained by the employer till the approval of bids by the competent authority.
- All Govt: Notifications/rules/Taxes updated from time to time shall be applicable.
- Any further information regarding the above tender can be obtained from the office of the undersigned on any working day prior to bid opening date.

Address XEN Irrigation Charbagh Jangle Khel Peshawar Road Kohat Telephone Number: 0922-933173.

Executive Engineer | Kohat Irrigation Division, Kohat INF(P) 504/23



LAHORE: An artisan is carving words on a marble plate at his workplace.

Entire nation united against terrorism, says Faisal Kundi

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Faisal Karim Kundi, Minister of State for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety here Friday said that the entire nation was united to defeat menace of terrorism. Talking to media after inquiring health of the injured of the police lines mosque blast victims at Lady Reading Hospital Peshawar, he said that he came here to express solidarity with the victims.

He said sacrifices of police martyrs and injured would not go waste. Faisal Kundi said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has announced Rs two million for families of each martyr and Rs 5 lakh for each injured of the blast. He said Chief Minister



Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah has also visited LRH and inquired after the health of injured.

The apex committee participants have expressed the resolve to eliminate terrorism and make Khyber Pakhtunkhwa again cradle of peace and development. He went around different wards and met with injured

policemen. He directed the hospital administration to provide best medical facilities to the all victims. The victims families would not be left alone in this hour of grief and every kind of support would be provided to them. He expressed the hope that PTI leadership would attended APC at Islamabad on Feb 7.

PTI leaves KP people in-lurch, says PM's aide

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Acting president PPP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Water Resources, Mohammad Ali Shah Bacha has said that the leadership of PTI has left the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in lurch.

In a statement issued here on Friday, he said that the incompetency and poor performance of the former PTI government have been unveiled before the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The PPP leader termed the silence of PTI over terrorist attack on Police Lines Masjid a sorrowful act and added that the former provincial ministers during their one hour long press conference have not spoken a single word about this national tragedy. The whole press conference revolved around elections and politics, but did not dare to condemn the tragedy.

The Special Assistant said that the resolution of the public issues is the utmost priority of PPP and they will not leave them alone. He said that the decade long rule of the PTI in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has proved worst incompetent and funds received from the federal government were spent on the negative politics of Imran Khan. Syed Mohammad Ali Shah Bacha said that the top leadership of PTI is lacking the experience of political management and their politics is based on accusation and their performance is limited only to social media. He further said that the Malam Jabba scandal and record corruption in BRT and Billion Tree Tsunami projects are the black chapters of the PTI government.

Faiq hails convening of APC

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Amun Taraqqi Party (ATP) chairman Muhammad Faiq Shah has welcomed the holding of All Parties Conference (APC) following a terror surge.

He, especially put high weight behind the inviting the government's arch rival, Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf chairman Imran Khan to participate in the multiple-parties moot, which is planned to be held on February 7 next. The ATP chairman also hailed convening of Apex Committee meeting in Peshawar after the deadliest suicide bombing inside a mosques of central police lines, which had claimed more than 102 lives and injured over 200 people, mostly police officers and cops.

Security situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is deteriorating rapidly, the party chief noted. He expressed hope that the Apex committee will come up with an inclusive agenda and steps to eradicate the scourge of terrorism. Shah, chairing a meeting here at the party's main office on Friday said they have reinforced time and again that table talks was the only solution to defuse the growing political tension and crisis.

On the other hand, he noticed the verbal duels continue by putting the masses' issues into the backburner, which is deplorable.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister for Labour, Excise and Taxation Manzoor Afridi being warmly received by officials on arrival at Labour Department.

Poor utilization of NFC's fund in PTI's tenure raises many questions

PESHAWAR (APP): The poor utilization of Rs417 billion fund provided to the previous governments of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including PTI under the national finance commission (NFC) award for combating terrorism has raised many question in political and economic circles considering it a criminal negligence and incompetence of the former rulers that resulted spike in terrorism cases.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif during his keynote address at the inaugural session of the Apex Committee meeting attended by political, religious parties leadership and civil and military high ranking officers disclosed that Rs417 billion were provided to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa since last 2010 under NFC award and had this amount utilized properly especially on strengthening of law enforcers including counter terrorism department and establishment of forensic laboratories there would be now terrorism cases in the province today.

"I asked the PTI leadership, which ruled KP for the last 10 years with all perks and privileges, to explain to the nation where this huge amount was spent and utilized," Ikhtair Wali Khan, PMLN spokesman told APP on Wednesday. He said the Prime Minister has rightly mentioned that had one-fourth of the amount been spent on strengthening the counter terrorism department in terms of equipment, police training and raising of modern forensic labs on the pattern of Punjab there would have been complete peace in KP and terrorism incidents would not have surfaced today.

Wali said a well-equipped counterterrorism department (CTD) and a modern forensic lab were established in Punjab and that a forensic lab, safety project and infrastructure for CTD could also have been established in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after

receiving hefty amount of Rs 417 billion during last 13 years. While referring to recent terrorist attacks on CTD Bannu and Police Lines Peshawar, he said the whole nation was worried that the menace of terrorism, which was wiped out by the Nawaz Sharif government, had reemerged in KP, which he said was highly deplorable.

The Prime Minister has rightly suggested that federation and provinces should jointly fight out terrorism as after every terrorism incident in the past the federation was blamed for not cooperating with KP in that regard. "PTI had left people of KP on the mercy of miscreants after prematurely dissolving the KP assembly where the party was enjoying two third majority," he said, adding police lines' mosque and Bannu CTDs attacks could have been averted if the allocated amount was diverted properly to the concerned government departments by the PTI rulers to combat terrorism.

By not attending the today's Apex Committee meeting, he said the PTI showed political immaturity and an irrational approach. He said all political and religious parties leadership including four chief ministers of all federating units, CM GB, AJK PM, civil and military leadership attended the extraordinary Apex Committee meeting presided over by the prime minister which passed a strong message to the evil forces that the entire nation are united to foil their nefarious designs.

"Political unity and coordination among state organizations was key to win fight against terrorism," he said, adding Nawaz Sharif government had broken back of terrorism and restored peace in KP at that time when people of Peshawar even can't go out of homes fearing suicide attacks and bombing as evident of the APS massacres." Nawaz Sharif Govt had united the entire political and religious

parties after APS attack in 2014 in Peshawar and implemented the national action plan (NAP) that immensely helped curbed terrorism after establishment of the speedy courts in the country including KP.

Despite busy official engagements, he said prime minister Shehbaz Sharif had visited Peshawar twice after the police lines mosque bombing and attended an important meeting on law and order situation in KP on January 30 and Apex Committee today. The premier strongly condemned social media speculations and propaganda in the wake of the police lines mosque blast and clarified that it was a suicide attack and not a drone or bomb blast. The prime minister has also clarified that only 80 to 85 worshippers including policemen were martyred in the attack.

Senior economist, Sumbal Riaz said approval of PM along with his cabinet members and CMs of all provinces besides civil and military top leadership at Peshawar has passed a strong message that the entire nation was united to fight out terrorism and would continue efforts till elimination of last terrorist in the country. Talking to APP, she said it would have been better had the PTI leadership reciprocated to the good gesture of the government and attend the today's Apex committee meeting at Peshawar.

She said the Government's finance team was busy with negotiation with the IMF team despite the latter's strict terms and conditions while Imran Khan Niazi was busy in agitation politics and was making hue and cry after dissolving his two provincial assemblies. "IMF was the best platform to get loans and once agreement was reached with the world monetary body more international financial organizations would divert financial resources and bring investment in Pakistan," she concluded.

Lawyers observed strike against suicide attack

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The legal fraternity observed strike court's proceedings from High Court and subordinates against suicide attack on Police Lines Peshawar's Masjid, on Friday. The strike was called by Peshawar High Court Bar Association (PHCBA) which has disturbed court's proceedings while applicant returned to homes hopelessly.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Bar Council (KPBC) vice chairman Zar Badshah, chairman Executive Committee Syed Mubashir Shah, PHCBA president Rehman Ullah, general secretary Farooq Afridi, senior lawyers including Ishaq Ali Qazi, Yasir Khattak, Amin-ur-Rehman, Syed Abdul Fayyaz, Amjad Hassan Tanoli, Ajmal Khan Babar Khan Yousafzai and Danyal Khan condemned suicide attack on Police Lines Masjid while added that today (on Friday)

strike was observed in solidarity with police personnel.

The lawyer community paid tribute to sacrifices of police personnel fighting against extremism and terrorism while added that peace is sustain in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa due to police force potential. The legal fraternity offered prayer for martyrs of suicide blast and early recovery of injured person while show their condolence to the bereaved families.



PESHAWAR: People holding a rally for peace in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. - F.P. photo

KP police zeroing terrorists network behind police lines' mosque blast

PESHAWAR (APP): In a major development, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police has claimed to zeroing in on a terrorists network behind the deadly suicide bombing in police lines' mosque that massacred 103 worshippers mostly policemen and injuring 220 others.

Following the APS massacre in 2014 in which over 150 students and teachers were martyred, the Peshawar police lines named after slain DIG Malik Saad, has been considered the worst terror attack carried by the suicide bomber who came to the mosque on motorcycle while wearing police uniform by deceiving the security staff deployed on the police lines' gates on the fateful day ie Monday last and detonated his explosive laden jacket, killing 103 worshippers mostly policemen serving in different departments and wings of KP police.

All the speculations and rumours about nature of the blast were refuted by IGP Khyber police, Moazzam Jah Ansari during a press briefing today

and made it clear that the attack was carried out by the suicide bomber and was not made by drone strike or planted bomb.

Rejecting all the conspiracies, apprehensions and propaganda theories emerged after the powerful bombing on armed police busy in Zhur worship, the IGP made it crystal clear that it was a suicide attack that was carried out by the bomber, who was dressed in police uniform and was came on a bike and wearing helmet. He refuted all propaganda theories that the blast was made through a planted bomb or drone strike. "If the blast was made through a planted bomb there would be huge ditch or a hole in the mosque's roof if caused by a drone strike as nothing such like evidences were found on ground.

The closed-circuit television (CCTV) footage has been acquired by the investigators through which it was clearly seen that the suicide bomber was dressed in a police uniform, riding a motorcycle and wearing a face mask,

he said, adding about 10 to 12 kilogram of trinitrotoluene (TNT) was used in the attack. "I myself had seen the footage of the suicide bomber dressed in police uniform, wearing casual jacket, helmet and was arrived on motorbike."

The IGP said the bomber entered the mosque at 12:37pm and asked one of the police constables about the mosque, adding the question indicated that the bomber was unaware of the place and was sent by someone to carry out the explosion with police was the target. "There is a complete network behind the bomber and he is not a lone ranger." The IGP said investigators were burning the midnight oil in this case and every angle and possibility was being explored to bring this high profile case to its logical end.

"The motorcycle used by the bomber has been traced and more details about tracing was being collected. The intelligence agencies were close to trace the network of terrorists and busting it." To a question about

extra time taken in the investigation, IGP explained that it takes one person 24 hours to scan a day's footage and 100 people were required to look at all cameras.

The IGP disclosed that the network of terrorists behind the attack has been found and the culprits would be punished for their brutal and inhuman act. The KP police chief said that police force were zeroing in on terrorists' network behind the deadly suicide attack on the police lines' mosque and warned that provoking of police jawans would not be tolerated and strict action would be taken against propagandists.

"I along with police officers and jawans was in deep pain after the martyrdom of policemen and we will take revenge of every drop of blood of our martyrs and injured," IGP said. He said that moral of police force was sky high despite the horrific mosque's bombing and was ready to give more sacrifices for protection of their motherland against any threat.

Referring to recent protests of police jawans and families of martyred cops at Peshawar demanded independent investigation of blast, IGP said that he was the commander of about 1,30,000 police jawans whom were like his children and he knew about their sentiments and pains through which they are passing through. He reiterated that the pain of police force should not be increased further by creating hurdles in the police work and that politics on dead bodies of their loved ones should be avoided strictly. The IGP said all details would be shared with media once the investigation was completed and by that time all kinds of speculations should be avoided.

He said that police officers and jawans was busy in funeral preparations of their martyrs while conspiracies theories were started to provoke our people to launch a protest that was highly deplorable. He said misleading and provoking of police jawans would not be tolerated further and police

protest would be strongly discouraged.

He pleaded again to people not to 'provoke and mislead his force's jawans' and their further misleading would not be tolerated any more. The suicide blast was so powerful that the shockwaves did not find ways to escape, hence, forcing the mosque's roof to collapsed on worshippers due to lack of pillars. The rescue staff and police took three days to complete rescue operation and retrieved bodies and injured from the collapsed structure.

"Our first target was to retrieve the survivors and extracting injured from the mosque's debris." "Identification of accurate cause of the explosion was a significant development that would help investigators to reach the mastermind and culprits behind the attack," said former IGP Syed Akhtar Ali Shah while talking to APP. He said there was a need to enhance the capacity of counter terrorism department and investigation staff of KP police to effectively counter terrorism and bust terror networks.



In brief

Robbery in Mega mart F.P. Report

MALAKAND: In board daylight robbery of millions of rupees at Alzarar Mega Mart in Dargai Bazar reported while trader community demanded stern actions against alleged culprits. According to details, three masked men entered Mega-mart when most of the Mega mart staff were busy eating bread. According to the eyewitnesses, the masked men entered waving arms and asked all the staff to raise their hands, while the masked men also opened fire on resistance, which hit the wall near the main counter, causing no casualties. After that, they took lakhs of rupees in cash, two mobile phones, including a valuable iPhone, from all the counter points, and in addition, they took an English pistol with them. According to the sources, the total amount of cash is estimated to be around 15 to 16 lakh rupees. As soon as the information was received, Additional Stunt Commissioner Dargai Zia Safi, In-charge Levies of Dargai police station with heavy levies, President of Trade Union Dargai Bazaar, Isfandiari Khan, General Secretary Haji Ghulam Hasan, Dargai Traders community and the people of the area immediately. The affected people reached Mega Mart. While later, a case of robbery was registered against unknown masked persons in Dargai.

Landlord shot dead

SHEIKHURPURA (INP): An armed accused gunned down a landlord over old enmity in the premises of district court on Friday. Police arrested the culprit with murder weapon. Police said that landlord Ishfaq Sindhu had come to district court Sheikhupura to pursue a case when accused Irfan who was in old rivalry with him shot him dead. The culprit attempted to flee from the scene of crime but police arrested him along with murder weapon. The body was shifted to hospital for postmortem and police after registering a case against the detainee have started an investigation.

Pakistan has become hunting ground for anti-state elements: JJ

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Jamaat-e-Islami senator Mushtaq Ahmad Khan has said that Pakistan has become a hunting ground for anti-state elements and they are free to carry out sabotage acts. Addressing the monthly congregation of the JJ held at the Ahya ul Uloom Balambat as chief guest here on Thursday night, he said that despite the passage of 75 years, the objectives of the establishment of Pakistan had not been fulfilled.

He said the Shariat system had not been implemented in the country, because of which Allah Almighty was unhappy and the country was suffering from economic problems and terrorism.

Senator Mushtaq Ahmad Khan said that the rulers were the slaves of the western powers and they are working for their interests. He said that the country was in the grip of terrorism and inflation due to the

non-implementation of the Islamic system in Pakistan, that came into being in the name of Islam.

The JJ lawmaker said that the honor and faith of the Muslims had been challenged by the non-Muslims in Sweden and Denmark, but unfortunately the Muslims had kept silent on it. He urged the Muslim world to get united for protecting their common religion and welfare of the Muslim brothers. The function was also addressed by the JJ district chief Izazul Mulk and others.

Two killed 9 injured in road accident: Two persons were killed and nine others were injured when a Kumbhar bound double cabin pick up fell into a deep ravine on the Maidan Karbori road here on Friday.

The Rescue1122 medical team along with two ambulance vehicles reached the spot and shifted the victims to a nearby hospital after providing first

aid to all the injured. The dead were identified as Sikandar, 35 years and Meem Roz Khan, 50 while Bacha Muhammad 35, Sabz Ali 50, Bacha Muhammad 35, Rohida wife of Sikander 20, Asghar Khan 38, Rozmina 5, Sherzada50, Shah Faisal 8 and Khan Munir 45 were injured.

Three of the injured were referred to the District Headquarters Hospital Tamergara due to their critical condition. All the injured and dead belonged to the same family of Maidan Karbori village. The Lal Qila police station registered a case and started an investigation. Meanwhile one Ibrar Khan s/o Khan Badshah was killed when unknown person opened firing on him at Kitiari area in the jurisdiction of Ouch police station. The accused fled from the scene. The motive behind the incident is not known. The Ouch police registered a case and started investigation.



GHALANAI: Residents of Mohmand burning tyres during a protest against electricity load shedding their areas. - F.P. photo

Sanitary staff seeks release of half year salaries

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Approximately 70 project sanitary staff in District Headquarter hospital, Landi Kotal have given up their duties in protest against non paying of their monthly salaries for the last six months.

The affected persons said that a private firm, Council Enterprise, took into service for the cleanliness purpose of the DHQ hospital Landi Kotal but for the last half year monthly pay had not been paid to them.

Speaking on the occasion Izharul Haq and his other companions lamented that

they performed their sanitation duties with honesty and dedication but ironically no payment of their monthly salaries had been paid to them for the last seven months.

With non-payment of monthly wages compelled their families to starve, they added and they threatened that till payment of their six months salaries they would not start their duties again. District manager of the scheme Wali Muhammad said keeping in view the deteriorated cleanliness condition of the hospitals under the janitorial service revamping project was

launched in 29 districts across the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

Beside the non-cooperative attitude of the Medical Superintendent, the sanitary staff started their services and in short time a visible change was noticed he maintained but lack of interest of the health hiphup suffered the scheme. When the Project Director Revamping KP Dr Niazi was contacted on the issue he said that due to lack of funds they could not clear bills of the company through which they hired services of the sanitary crew.

IG FC visits Scouts Cadet College Warsak F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Inspector General (IG) Frontier Corps North Major General Noor Wali Khan participated in the 7th annual Parents' Day ceremony at Frontier Scouts Cadet College Warsak as chief guest, on Friday.

Inspector General FC North Major General Noor Wali Khan inspected the parade and awarded swords, shields and trophies to the cadets who showed exceptional performance in academics and sports. On this occasion, the cadets performed a magnificent march past and saluted the chief guest. The cadets also performed gymnastics, horse riding and physical training which was highly appreciated by the guests. While addressing, IGFC North Major General Noor Wali Khan said that Frontier Scouts Cadet College Warsak is providing quality education to the students.

The academic performance of students here can be compared with other educational institutions of Pakistan. All the credit goes to the management and faculty. The ceremony was attended by the parents of cadets, civil and military officials and a large number of people from different walks of life. Frontier Scouts Cadet College Warsak was established in 2009, where students from all over Pakistan including tribal districts of KP are studying.

Rich tribute paid to retired official

Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: Chief Executive Officer Education Hafizabad Wazir Ahmad Agha visited residences of retired teachers and officials of Education Department and presented bouquets and paid rich tribute to their services for the nation building. DEO Mian Abdul Majeed, Deputy DEO Malik Riaz Ahmad and Assistant Education Officer Ishfaq Nazir were also accompanied by him.

He said that education department would remember their services rendered for promoting education and character building of students as well as progress and prosperity of the nation. Retired teachers are great assets who gave a long portion of their lives to the nation and the whole nation should accord due respect and honour at all level to acknowledge their services, he added. He further said that due to hardworking of teachers, the nation could achieve destination of development and rule the world.

Action against profiteers: Special Price Magistrates are taking action against profiteers and hoarders to ensure provision of edibles items to people in abundance in

the district.

A spokesman of District Administration Hafizabad told that Special Price Magistrates imposed Rs. 12,98,000/- fine on 575 shopkeepers involved in selling daily used items on arbitrary prices in the district while 117 profiteers and hoarders arrested during last month (January).

District and Session Judge Hafizabad Mushtaq Elahi Bingi visits District Jail: District and Session Judge Hafizabad Mushtaq Elahi Bingi visited District Jail Hafizabad and expressed his satisfaction over security and other arrangements of the jail. Senior Civil Judge Criminal Division Usman Ghani and DPP Rana Irfan also accompanied by him.

He inspected all bars, dispensary, kitchen and other parts of the jail and listened problems of prisoners. He directed the Deputy Superintendent Jail Haq Nawaz to address grievances of the prisoners and to continue implementation on jail manual.

PDM govt flayed: Ex-MNA Ch. Shoukat Ali Bhatti said that present incapable and corrupt government of PDM has taken the country at the brink of disaster and instability and stolen Rs. 1100 billion to

make amendments in NAB rules. While talking to meidamen at Press Club, he said that in contrary to PTI government, the present government was increased 125 percent inflation which has not tolerated able and inflation has made the people restless.

He said that if PTI voted to power then PTI government would exert looted money from those who looted national exchequer. He said that imported and inherited political parties were imposed on the poor people once again whereas the masses was tolerated and tried these failed parties for 75-years but now they were exposed before the nation and people would not trapped further in their tricks.

He said that Imran Khan was created awareness among people about power of vote and exposed inherited politics of some families before the nation. He said that Imran Khan was playing last round to save the country from corrupt and inherited politics and the masses of the country were standing shoulder to shoulder by him. District President PTI Ch. Imran Haider Bhatti and Syed Hussain Ali Shah were also present on the occasion.

Gender based participation in electoral process: Political point of view in contemporary Pakistan

Humayun Khan

FOLLOWING immature dissolution of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab assemblies and upcoming general elections in both the provinces of Pakistan *The Frontier Post* has asked ten questions from Pakistan Awami National Party (ANP), Jammiat-e-Ulema Islam Fazal (JUI-F), Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) leaderships regarding "Gender based participation in electoral process".

The questions follow as:

1. Approximately half of voters: who can women play their role in contemporary politics?

2. Early/Immature dissolution of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab assemblies: May beneficial for PTI or PDM and other allied parties in upcoming elections?

3. Party's policy for distribution of tickets and political alliances for elections of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab assemblies?

4. Role of women in decision making at both capacities in party and at treasury benches...

5. Party's policy towards women participation in electoral process?

6. Party initiatives for uplift of women rights during government and way forward in this regard?

7. How political parties will arrange election campaign especially women participation in current situation?

8. The role of women at both domestic and national level in contemporary Pakistan?

9. How parliamentarians have upheld voice for restoration student's union and women participation electoral system on the floor of Assembly?

10. How much women candidates are expected to contest election on general seat especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa? Opinion

Moreover, four questions were forwarded to Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa asking: 1. Role of ECP to maximize women participation in Electoral process, 2. ECP plan for holding elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in current situation specially to assure women participation, 3. How ECP should ensure maximum candidates on General Election irrespective 5% quota specified by law, 4. Significance of women participation in Electoral process especially in patriarchal society.

It is worthy to mention that Former MPA Khyber Pakhtunkhwa & ANP leader Samar Haroon Bilour was contacted and questionnaire was forwarded to her while response of the question was reminded but to no veil.

Although, PML-N leaders Farah Khan and Shazia Aurangzeb was contacted while former neither received the call nor responded to text message. However, Shazia Aurangzeb was contacted and questionnaire was forwarded to her and reminded but she doesn't respond to *The Frontier Post*.

ECP Point of View;

ECP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa spokesperson responded that Sohail Ahmad stated that; 1. As per section 9 of the election act

is the total turnout of women is less than 10% out of the total polled votes the election of that constituency stands to be null and void. Furthermore, ECP has been raising awareness through DVECs. Awareness sessions have been arranged in girl's colleges, schools and universities. Inclusive NIC/voter registration and has been initiated as a joint campaign with NADRA and the development partners in which MRVS are deployed for making NICs of women at their door step.

2. Proper security arrangements have been put in place in coordination with LEA's to insure free & fair elections, moreover Female security personnel shall be deployed to facilitate women. 3. Section 206 of election act 2017 ensures that women can contests' elections on general seats and Female folk consist 48-50% of the total population of Pakistan and have a pivotal role in the electoral process, the spokesperson concluded.

PTI's Point of View;

Vice President PTI Women Wing and Former Parliamentary Secretary Higher Education Department at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Ayesha Bano said that mass awareness campaign was launched with her personal interests to reduce gender gap in electoral processes. She added that population of Pakistan comprised of 51% women folk and their exclusion from political sphere shouldn't be beneficial for society.

Ayesha Bano claimed that during PTI public awareness campaign in 2015 had stressed upon significance of votes and

community indulgence in electoral processes especially in patriarchal society. She added that increase of quota on general seats for women through legislation shall ultimately achieve the gender-gap in electoral process.

Responding to question regarding immature dissolution of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab Assemblies that the decision was taken in larger public's interest irrespective of political gains or losses, Ayesha answered. The participation of women folk in politico-social activities regardless of difference in ideologies and narratives hopeful for both electoral and economic development in Pakistan, Bano added.

The party has arranged door to door campaign to outreach women for mass mobilization for female folk to participated in electoral process, she claimed. Bano added that party has granted several tasks to women wing including the above mentioned and composition of organizational structure for upcoming elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab assemblies.

Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has passed first ever gender-sensitive budget for 2022-23 while answering to steps taken for uplift of women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, former parliamentary secretary for HED, Bano said that Provincial Ombudsman has been appointed for the first time in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa which has benefited women at large. She added that Domestic Violence Bill and Anti-harassment at workplace Act which

has included three tiers of financial, physical and psychological violence.

The current situations especially economic crunch will impact election campaign especially female folk because women comprising 65% home-based workers, she added. It is high time for politicians to sit together to overcome current situation at both fronts of economy and security in larger national interest, former parliamentary secretary asserted. Bano claimed that PTI had introduced educated women in Local Governments like doctors, lawyers and other professionals.

PTI's leader argued that Women's Parliamentary Caucus comprised all female parliamentarians irrespective of their political affiliations. Bano upheld that reserve seats at parliament has ensure participation of women in legislation but political parties must grant significant tickets to female on general seats which will decisively change perception of society while responding to questions regarding party position on granting of candidature on general seats to women. It is proclaimed that democracy is developing through evolution and gradual process which ultimately benefits the electoral procedure in the society. Ayesha Bano concluded.

JUI-F's leader Asif Iqbal Daudzai opinion;

Responding to *The Frontier Post* Asif Iqbal Daudzai stated that JUIF as a party has always encouraged the participation of women in balloting to express



their role and opinion. He added that being a political party JUI is always ready to take part in any election but dissolving the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies by PTI was just a quest to satisfy the ego of Imran Khan.

Furthermore, Daudzai added that JUIF is always the first choice of the masses and the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has shown great confidence in the Local Government election held last year. He added that JUI-F has always prioritize uplift of public at large especially women as marginalized segment in the society.

Answering to issuance of party's candidatures and political alliances, he proclaimed that JUIF is keen to go to elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab without forming any alliances but case to case bases adjustments are always an option. He added that the party's policy asserting on maximum participation in the both provinces.

JUI-F leader specified that women represent half of the population and there for party has already considered



their views in policy making. He added that JUI-F has developed exclusive policy for diverse opinions within party to ensure maximum representation of society.

Meanwhile, JUI-F has proven the agenda of women uplifting while it was in power in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa the then North West Frontier Province (NWFP) by establishing Women University, women medical College, women sports directorate, Daudzai asserted. He added that in the federation our MNA is serving as Parliamentary Secretary in the current coalition government of Pakistan Democratic Movement.

In the meantime, women's participation to contest on general seats seems at distance with respect of culture and norms of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but they have their participation on reserve seats while actively taking part in the assembly. JUI-F has issued party's tickets to women in the local government election in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and have won in large numbers, Daudzai concluded.



UN envoy: Iraq’s new leaders must keep fighting corruption

UNITED NATIONS (AP): The UN special envoy for Iraq urged the country's new government to keep fighting corruption and move quickly on much-needed economic, fiscal and financial reforms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert told the UN Security Council many other areas also need immediate government attention, among them ensuring human rights, resolving issues with the Kurdistan Regional Government, improving public services, addressing environmental challenges, and continuing to return Iraqis from camps and prisons in northeast Syria.

"The hope is that the confirmation of Iraq's new government will provide an opportunity to structurally address the many pressing issues facing the country and its people," she said. "The urgency is for Iraq's political class to seize the brief window of opportunity it is awarded, and to finally lift the country out of recurring cycles of instability and fragility." A more than year-long political stalemate punctuated by outbreaks of street violence ended in late October with the confirmation by Iraq's Council of Representatives of a new government and Cabinet led by Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani.

Hennis-Plasschaert said that during its first three months, al-Sudani's government has shown a commitment to tackle endemic corruption, poor public services and high unemployment. Turning to the fight against corruption, she pointed to a number of important steps taken by the government, including trying to recover stolen funds and investigating allegations of graft. "That said, I can only encourage the Iraqi government to persevere, as those who stand to lose will undoubtedly seek to hinder these efforts," she said. "But if Iraq is to build a system that serves the need of society instead of serving a closed community of collusion, then ensuring accountability across the spectrum is absolutely essential."

The UN special representative said "systemic change" is vital to address corruption and improve services that directly affect people's lives. As for economic, fiscal and financial reforms, Hennis-Plasschaert expressed concern at the increase in the exchange rate on the parallel market "adding to the pressure on

everyday Iraqi women and men." "On the short term, it is obviously essential that the federal budget is passed expeditiously," she said. "A further delay will only result in worsening the situation due to the well-known spending constraints."

Despite high unemployment, Hennis-Plasschaert cautioned against any "further bloating" of Iraq's "already extremely inflated public sector." She cautioned the government against relying totally on the country's oil, which is vulnerable to price shocks, and urged it to focus on diversifying the economy, including by developing an employment-generating private sector.

Hennis-Plasschaert said the government also needs to swiftly implement the Sinjar Agreement brokered by the UN in October 2020 between Baghdad and the Kurdish-run regional government to jointly manage the Sinjar region. It is home to Iraq's Yazidi religious minority, and the agreement aims to restore the state's hold over the patchwork of militia groups and competing authorities in the area after the defeat of Islamic State extremists. When IS fighters swept into northern Iraq in 2014 the militants massacred thousands of Yazidi men and enslaved an estimated 7,000 women, including Nadia Murad, who won the Nobel Peace Prize for her campaign to end sexual violence as a weapon of war. She returned to her home village in Sinjar this week with actress and activist Angelina Jolie to meet survivors of IS brutality and see progress in redeveloping the region. US deputy ambassador Richard Mill called on the government to improve its respect for human rights and commit to implementing the Sinjar Agreement in close consultation with the Yazidi community.

He said the United States supports the prime minister's efforts to root out corruption and improve public services, particularly providing electricity, and encourages development of the private sector and job growth, "with a focus on increasing women's participation in the workforce." Mills added that the Biden administration is eager to work with the government on addressing the negative impacts of climate, including through the use of renewable energy and reducing gas flaring

Vienna court convicts 2020 gunman’s helpers

VIENNA (AP): An Austrian court has convicted four men of terrorist offenses and participation in murder over their alleged links to a sympathizer of the Islamic State group who carried out a deadly shooting in Vienna in 2020. Two of the men were sentenced to life in prison by the Vienna state court and the others to 20 and 19 years, respectively, the Austria Press Agency reported.

Another two defendants were acquitted of the main charges, but were convicted of membership in IS and spreading the group's propaganda. They were given partially suspended two-year sentences. Four people were killed in the attack on Nov. 2, 2020, and the gunman also died. More than 20 other people, including a police officer, were wounded. Assailant Kujtim Fejzulai, a dual national of Austria and North Macedonia, had a previous conviction for trying to join IS in Syria. The six men who went on trial in mid-October weren't accused of direct participation in the attack, but they allegedly helped or influenced Fejzulai as he prepared for the shooting. In one case, those alleged activities included procuring the weapons used in the shooting.

Germany drops to No. 2 WHO donor

GENEVA (Reuters): Germany will give 130 million euros (\$141.87 million) to the World Health Organization this year, its health minister said following a meeting with the UN health agency's head. However, the announcement was not enough to return it to the top donor spot after Berlin temporarily overtook the main historical contributor Washington in the last funding period 2020-2021 due to Trump-era funding cuts, WHO data showed.

"We are happy to contribute 130 million euros to WHO this year," Karl Lauterbach told reporters at the WHO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, following a meeting with Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. "The WHO must be strengthened financially so that humanity is better prepared for the next pandemic," Lauterbach added on Twitter. Lauterbach met with Tedros on the sidelines of the agency's executive board meeting this week where it is seeking a reinforced role in global health but still seeking answers on how to fund it. The body's funding system, which currently has a nearly \$1 billion gap, is widely seen as needing major reform given its over-reliance on donor whims.

"We appreciate the strategic support," Tedros told reporters on Berlin's latest contribution. Germany, which helped Ethiopia's Tedros get re-elected for his second term, has so far contributed \$776 million for the current funding period versus \$1.12 billion from the United States, WHO data showed. Those figures did not include the latest announcement.

Mexico’s leader promises total withdrawal after term ends

MEXICO CITY (AP): Mexico's president is probably the most powerful political figure the country has had in decades, but he said that after his term ends in September 2024, he will totally withdraw from politics. There had been speculation that President Andrés Manuel López Obrador would remain a power behind the scenes in his now-dominant Morena party.

But the president vowed at his daily press briefing that he would not mix with politicians, speak about politics or appear at political events. López Obrador had previously said he would retire to a ranch he inherited in southern Mexico and write books. But declaration was far more categorical than what he has said before, "I am going to retire completely," he said.

US expresses concern over Sudan freeing diplomat’s killer

CAIRO (AP): The US said it is "deeply concerned" by Sudan's release of a man convicted in the 2008 killing of a US diplomat and embassy employee in a drive-by shooting in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum. State Department spokesman Ned Price said in a statement that Abdel-Raouf Abu Zaid, the Sudanese man who was found guilty of the murders, remains a "specially designated global terrorist."

He was convicted of murdering John Granville, an official with the US Agency for International Development, and his Sudanese driver, Abdel Rahman Abbas. They were shot while returning early in the morning on Jan. 1, 2008, from a New Year's Eve party. Price said any insinuation that the release was agreed by the United States as part of a settlement between the US and Sudan was false. In 2020, Sudan agreed to pay \$335 million to settle compensation lawsuits at US courts related to the 1998 bombings of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the 2000 attack of the USS Cole at Yemen's southern port of Aden that killed 17 sailors and Granville's killing.

The settlement was made by Sudan's former transitional government with the Trump administration to stop any future compensation claims being filed against the African country in US courts. Abu Zaid was captured weeks after the shooting. He was convicted and sentenced to death for murder. Three other men also



were sentenced to death in the case, while a fifth received a two-year sentence for providing the weapons used in the attack. The four awaiting hanging broke out of prison in June 2010, killing a Sudanese police officer and wounding another in a shootout in Khartoum's twin city of Omdurman, according to a Sudanese notice to the international police agency, Interpol. Abu Zaid was re-arrested weeks later and returned to Kubar Prison. The three other men remained at large. "We are deeply troubled by the lack of transparency in the legal process that resulted in the release of the only individual remaining in custody," the State Department statement said, adding,

that the US "will continue to seek clarity about this decision." Earlier this month, Abu Zaid's family apologized for the killing of Granville and his driver, saying in a video message: "We, as a family, apologize and acknowledged Abdel-Raouf's mistake, and he already admitted his mistake and expressed his regret and remorse for what has happened."

Granville, 33, was working to implement a 2005 peace agreement between Sudan's north and south that ended more than two decades of civil war. A vehicle intercepted his car and gunmen inside opened fire, killing Granville and the driver, who also was a USAID employee.

Military places restive areas of Myanmar under martial law

BANGKOK (AP): Martial law was declared in several areas of military-run Myanmar, a day after authorities extended a state of emergency throughout the country wracked by violence that some UN experts have described as a civil war. State-run MRTV television broadcast an announcement by Aung Lin Dwe, secretary of the military's State Administration Council, imposing martial law in 37 townships across eight of the country's 14 regions and states. Eleven of the townships are in Sagaing region and seven in Chin state, areas in the northwest where fighting has been fiercest between the army and guerrillas belonging to pro-democracy People's Defense Forces and their allies in ethnic minority militias.

The army has been struggling to contain a nationwide insurrection by opponents of military rule who took up arms after peaceful protests against the army's Feb. 1, 2021, seizure of power were suppressed with lethal force. The military has declared martial law before, most notably in early 2021 in Yangon, the country's biggest city, after which the violence escalated against protesters. According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, an independent watchdog group

that tracks killings and arrests, at least 2,948 civilians have been killed since the army takeover. Aung Lin Dwe said in a statement that it was necessary to declare martial law to effectively carry out security and the rule of law. Martial law supersedes all other laws, giving the military total authority over a specified area, including administrative, judicial and law enforcement functions. The other areas where martial law was declared are in Magway, Bago and Tanintharyi regions, and Kayah, Kayin and Mon states. A spokesperson for the opposition's underground National Unity Government, which acts as a shadow government opposed to army rule, told The Associated Press that he believes the military will increase killings and torture of people under the pretext of stabilizing the country.

"We want to inform the soldiers and policemen who are protecting the junta not to continue fighting the unwinnable war, that the people are fighting them back," Nay Phone said. A separate statement from the military said all administrative and judicial work in the specified areas must be led by regional military commanders, who can initiate military tribunals for 23 offenses with punishments

including the death penalty and indefinite imprisonment. While no appeals will be allowed, submissions for a revision of the punishment can be filed within 15 days. The offenses that can be heard by military tribunals include those under the Counter-Terrorism Law, sedition, treason, incitement, corruption, unlawful association, murder, rape, media law, publishing law, immigration and electronic transactions charges.

The military government announced it has extended the state of emergency it imposed when it seized power two years ago, a move that sets back plans for a general election that had been expected in August. It said it was necessary to extend the emergency for six months because the country remains in an abnormal situation and time is needed to prepare for a peaceful and stable election. A major reshuffle of the Cabinet and the military's State Administration Council was also announced. A report on the reshuffle in Global New Light of Myanmar and other state-run newspapers said the Cabinet has been reorganized "for the emergence of a modern, developed, genuine and disciplined democratic nation and for the benefit of the nation and the entire ethnic people." No

specific reasons were given for any transfers or dismissals.

The Cabinet, in theory the nation's top administrative body, in practice has less power than the military-dominated State Administration Council. The Cabinet's power is diminished further under the state of emergency, which allows the military to assume all government functions, and gives the military chief, Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, legislative, judicial and executive powers. The ministers of defense, home affairs, transport and communications, and planning and finance were appointed to serve concurrently as deputy prime ministers, joining Vice Senior Gen. Soe Win in that position. Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin, one of the few members of the leadership with an international profile, was moved from his job to the State Administration Council. The ministers of agriculture, livestock and irrigation, construction, hotels and tourism, and ethnic affairs were also replaced. A separate announcement said nine out of the 20 members of the State Administration Council were replaced, with most of them moved to a newly formed Central Advisory Body.

Trump campaign staff on 2020 election lies: ‘Fan the flame’

MADISON, Wis. (AP): A newly released audio recording offers a behind-the-scenes look at how former President Donald Trump's campaign team in a pivotal battleground state knew they had been outflanked by Democrats in the 2020 presidential election. But even as they acknowledged defeat, they pivoted to allegations of widespread fraud that were ultimately debunked - repeatedly - by elections officials and the courts.

The audio from Nov. 5, 2020, two days after the election, is surfacing as Trump again seeks the White House while continuing to lie about the legitimacy of the outcome and Democrat Joe Biden's win. The Wisconsin political operatives in the strategy session even praised Democratic turnout efforts in the state's largest counties and appeared to joke about their efforts to engage Black voters, according to the recording obtained by The Associated Press. The audio centers on Andrew Iverson, who was the head of Trump's campaign in the state. "Here's the deal: Comms is going to continue to fan the flame and get the word out about Democrats trying to steal this election. We'll do whatever they need. Just be on standby if there's any stunts we need to pull," Iverson said.

Iverson is now the Midwest regional director for the Republican National Committee. He deferred

questions about the meeting to the RNC, whose spokesperson, Keith Schipper, declined comment because he had not heard the recording. The former campaign official and Republican operative who provided a copy of the recording to the AP was in the meeting and recorded it. The operative is not authorized to speak publicly about what was discussed and did not want to be identified out of concern for personal and professional retaliation, but said they came forward because Trump is mounting a third attempt for the White House. In response to questions about the audio, Trump campaign spokesperson Steven Chung said: "The 2024 campaign is focused on competing in every state and winning in a dominating fashion. That is why President Trump is leading by wide margins in poll after poll."

Wisconsin was a big part of Trump's victory in 2016, when he smashed through the Democrats' so-called "Blue Wall" in the upper Midwest, and his campaign fought hard to keep the swing state in his column four years later before his loss to Biden. Biden defeated Trump by nearly 21,000 votes in Wisconsin in 2020, a result that has withstood independent and partisan audits and reviews, as well as lawsuits and recounts in the state's two largest and Democratic-leaning counties. Yet, two days after the

election, there was no discussion of Trump having won the state during the meeting of Republican campaign operatives.

Instead, parts of the meeting focus on discussions about packing up campaign offices and writing final reports about how the campaign unfolded. At one point on the recording, Iverson is heard praising the GOP's efforts while admitting the margin of Trump's defeat in the state. "At the end of the day, this operation received more votes than any other Republican in Wisconsin history," Iverson said. "Say what you want, our operation turned out Republican or DJT supporters. Democrats have got 20,000 more than us, out of Dane County and other shenanigans in Milwaukee, Green Bay and Dane. There's a lot that people can learn from this campaign." The meeting showcases another juxtaposition of what Republican officials knew about the election results and what Trump and his closest allies were saying publicly as they pushed the lie of a stolen election. Trump was told by his own attorney general there was no sign of widespread fraud, and many within his own administration told the former president there was no substance to various claims of fraud or manipulation - advice Trump repeatedly ignored.

In the weeks after the election, Trump and his

allies would file dozens of lawsuits, convene fake electors and pressure election officials in an attempt to overturn the will of the voters and keep Trump in office. It's unclear whether the staff in Wisconsin coordinated their message directly with campaign officials in Washington. Parts of the Nov. 5 meeting also center on Republican outreach efforts to the state's Black community. At one point, the operatives laugh over needing "more Black voices for Trump." Iverson also references their efforts to engage with Black voters.

"We ever talk to Black people before? I don't think so," he said, eliciting laughter from others in the room. Another speaker on the recording with Iverson is identified by the source as GOP operative Clayton Henson. At the time, Henson was a regional director for the RNC in charge of Wisconsin and other Midwestern states. They gave a postmortem of sorts on the election, praising Republican turnout and campaign efforts while acknowledging the Democrats' robust turn-out-the-vote campaign. Henson specifically references Democratic turnout in Dane County, which includes Madison, the state capital, and is a liberal stronghold in the state. A record-high 80% of the voting-age population cast ballots in 2020 in the county, which Biden won with 76% of the vote.

US ambassador’s views on Hungary ‘irrelevant’

BUDAPEST (AP): The Hungarian foreign minister accused the United States ambassador to Budapest of trying to interfere in Hungary's internal affairs, amid a growing diplomatic rift between the US and the Central European country. At a news conference in Budapest, Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto lashed out at comments in Politico this week in which Ambassador David Pressman referred to Hungary's approach to the war in neighboring Ukraine as pushing "policies endorsed by (Russian President Vladimir) Putin."

Szijjarto said it is "completely irrelevant what (Pressman) or any other ambassador thinks about the domestic political process in Hungary, because it has nothing to do with him." "It is not his place to interfere in Hungary's internal affairs," Szijjarto said. Pressman, an appointee of the Biden administration

who earlier served as US Ambassador to the United Nations for Special Political Affairs, has faced significant headwinds since taking office in Hungary in August last year.

Local media loyal to the right-wing government of populist Prime Minister Viktor Orban have accused the diplomat of meddling in Hungary's judiciary, and of pushing American colonialism. Since taking office, Pressman has been vocal about a growing wave of anti-American sentiment in Hungary, and on the reluctance of Orban's government to join the European Union in imposing sanctions on Moscow for its war in Ukraine. Writing on Twitter in January, Pressman asked, "How does protecting Russian oligarchs from sanctions serve Hungary and Hungarians?"

Yet Hungary's government, which had an amica-

ble relationship with the US administration under former President Donald Trump, has insisted that sanctions are hurting European countries more than Russia, and declared that only negotiations between Moscow and Washington - and not the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine - can bring an end to the war. Szijjarto said Pressman would "have a very difficult job in terms of working effectively to improve cooperation" between Hungary and the US if he criticized Budapest's policies.

"That era is over. Hungary is a sovereign country," Szijjarto said. "No one from outside can tell us how to live." Responding to Szijjarto's comments in a tweet, Pressman wrote, "Respectfully, we do not consider Russia's attempt to unilaterally redraw the borders of Europe as just a 'domestic political development in Hungary.'"

Syria slams chemical watchdog report on 2018 attack

DAMASCUS (AP): Syria dismissed the global chemical weapons watchdog's statement, which said that investigators had found "reasonable grounds to believe" the Syrian air force dropped two cylinders of chlorine gas in 2018 on then-rebel-held town of Douma. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons produced a detailed report following a fact-finding mission that investigated the April 7, 2018 attack. Medical workers and activists said at the time more than 40 people were killed in the attack. OPCW inspectors headed to the site of the attack days later.

The United States, Britain and France blamed Syrian government forces and launched airstrikes. Syria and key ally Russia deny any chemical attack. Douma was the final target of the Syrian government's sweeping campaign to reclaim control of the eastern Ghouta suburbs of the capital, Damascus, from the rebels, who gave up the town days after the alleged chemical attack. Syria's permanent representative to OPCW, Ambassador Milad Atieh, told reporters that the OPCW has been biased

towards "Western positions."

"The OPCW's report relied mostly on information obtained from countries hostile to Syria and some other media and social networking sites run by terrorist organizations," he said. "The report contained false accusations aimed at increasing pressure and escalating Western positions hostile to Syria." Atieh claimed the report's methodology had "serious irregularities and defects" and false accusations that impacted its credibility, though he did not give any examples or offer evidence to support his statement. In an attempt to ensure accountability for crimes in Syria, the United Nations has established a commission entitled "International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism." It is mandated to preserve and analyze evidence of crimes and prepare files for trials in "national, regional or international courts or tribunals that have or may in the future have jurisdiction over these crimes, in accordance with international law."

Atieh however accused the United States and Western countries of political interference with the

UN commission. The OPCW's director general, Fernando Arias, briefed the organization's member states on the report at a meeting. "The report and its facts are now in your hands, and it will be up to member states of the organization, and to the international community as a whole to take any further action," he told them, according to a tweet by the organization. US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken in a joint statement with his British, French, and German counterparts last week commended the OPCW report and called on key Syrian ally Russia to "stop shielding Syria from accountability for its use of chemical weapons."

"Syria must fully declare and destroy its chemical weapons program and allow the deployment of OPCW staff to its country to verify it has done so," the statement read. The ongoing conflict that started in Syria more than a decade ago has killed hundreds of thousands and displaced half the country's prewar population of 23 million. Syria joined the OPCW in 2013 under severe international pressure after a deadly chemical attack on a Damascus suburb.

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JALIL AFRIDI
Managing Editor

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Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573
E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com
Lahore Office: 0335-4026284
Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com
Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253
Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com
Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907
Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

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Energy, a key to national revival

PAKISTAN inaugurated the third unit of the Karachi Nuclear Power Plant (KANUP), commonly known as K-3 on Thursday. As said that the newly constructed unit will add another 1,100 megawatts of energy to the national electricity grid. Pakistan's crippling energy needs had become a foremost economic challenge for the rulers because it is seriously hurting the national economy and undermining both national security and the economic sovereignty of the state. Today, there is no concept of life without light, from kitchen heating to industrial production, health centers to agriculture and farming while vehicular traffic, air travel, and sea exploration are not possible without energy.

The state of Pakistan faces a bulk of the issues connected with the energy crisis as the country's energy import bill has touched \$ 27 billion per annum, even though people are unable to get dearly needed high-cost electricity to satisfy their domestic and commercial needs. The administrators face multiple handicaps including the nonavailability of cheaper electricity fuel/ thermal oil, line losses, no payment of electricity bills, and colossal circular debt of the power sector along with an ever-increasing demand-supply gap of the highly essential commodity. Thus, this fiasco has turned into an unsolvable puzzle for the bureaucrats and leaders who failed to manage the problem over the past decades.

Historically, Pakistan's energy plan got a server setback when the 3600 megawatts proposed Kalabagh hydel power project became prey to political rivalry in the early eighties and no successive governments could start its construction due to political reasons. Thus, Pakistan's energy grid gradually shifted to costly thermal power, whereas highly controversial purchase contracts with the IPPs along with the capacity payments proved to be the last nail in the coffin of Pakistan's economy. Over the years, high costs and no electricity had brought about significant damage to the national economy resulting in the closure of thousands of industrial units, exacerbating employment, reducing foreign exports, and paralyzing national growth.

To date, bad governance and poor planning present a meek future for Pakistan's economy, as Pakistani leaders failed to keep energy production at par vis-a-vis population and economic growth over the past decades. Pakistan could neither use domestic hydel, coal, and wind resources for energy production nor procured a low-cost unrestricted power supply from abroad including the completion of Pak-Iran gas pipelines, CASA-1000, TAPI and other multilateral energy projects in the region.

The recent geopolitical events had changed the dynamics of national sovereignty as economic independence and energy security has become vital for the survival of any nation. Nations across the globe are diversifying their energy resources by rapid conversion over alternative energies including solar, wind, and nuclear energy to compete for future challenges. Pakistan is also actively working to increase solar, wind, hydel, and nuclear power share in its energy grid, and the operationalization of K-3 is an important milestone in this regard. Presently, we are producing costly thermal and LNG-based electricity, that had increased production costs and added a massive financial burden to local industry and domestic users in the country. Therefore, Pakistani strategists need to focus on cheaper and renewable energy resources to boost the country's export and provide relief to the masses, so the nation moves toward economic self-reliance and industrial growth.

Yemeni crisis and Hegemonism

ACCORDING to the media, recently the French Navy has seized thousands of assault rifles, machine guns, and anti-tank missiles in the Gulf of Oman coming from Iran heading to Yemen's Houthis militia. According to the US Central Command, the interdiction was carried out along routes historically used to traffic weapons unlawfully from Iran to Yemen, which led to the seizure of more than 3,000 rifles and 578,000 rounds of ammunition and other weapons.

The Republic of Yemen and the broader Middle East region had been at the center stage of global rivalry over the past several decades, because of unending competition between the major powers along with hegemonic designs of the Jewish state to realize its so-called agenda of the greater Israel. At the same time, the Iranian cleric regime had also precisely financed and supported its proxies in the region, particularly in Iraq, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, Lebanon, and other nations. So, the entire MENA region faces religious militancy, and political disarray and overall portrays a gloomy picture of the region.

The conflict in Yemen erupted in late 2014 when Iran-backed Houthis militia seized the Yemeni capital and a larger chunk of Yemen's landmass while a Saudi-led coalition launched a military offensive against Houthis militia to liberate Yemen and help restored a globally recognized Yemeni government in the country. Unfortunately, the Arab coalition could not liberate Yemen from Houthis occupation but the years-long war resulted in mass displacement, human casualties, hunger, and severe malnutrition in the conflict-hit nation.

Historically, the UN has imposed an arms embargo against Iran-backed Yemeni Houthis militia in early 2015 to confine the conflict. Previously, US Navy captured a huge cache of weapons and missile parts meant for Yemeni Houthis from Iran, and currently, the French Navy has stopped another shipment of deadly weapons from going into the hands of assassins. Unfortunately, the Iranian cleric regime does not permit its citizens to whisper a single word in its opposition but channels millions of dollars in economic and military support to terrorists in neighboring nations from the Red Sea to the Nile to fuel bloodshed and satisfy its hidden interests. Although, nature created the entire universe for mankind yet some hegemon turned it into hell and squeezed for others.

US pledges Africa investment

RECENT visits to Africa by US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield and US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen came as a new study found China's overseas investments in the COVID-19 era are at a 13-year low. China has invested heavily in Africa through its Belt and Road Initiative and the US has also recently pledged investments, with analysts saying Washington is trying to compete with China for influence on the continent.

The report by Boston University's Global Development Policy Center found loan commitments from China's two policy banks (China Development Bank and the Export-Import Bank of China) totaled \$3.7 billion in 2021. In contrast, from 2008 to 2021 that amount was \$498 billion, an average of \$35.6 billion a year. China has struggled to recoup its money from several African countries and now has to participate in complicated debt restructuring negotiations. Currently, debt talks are happening in Zambia.

Asked if Beijing had been chastized by these experiences, causing the drop in loan commitments, senior academic researcher Rebecca Ray, who co-authored the paper, said that while China has stopped offering new loans to some countries that have been unable to pay existing debt, like Venezuela, it has also been finalizing negotiations on large future loans to another indebted nation, Pakistan. "While China may be hesitating to 'send good money after bad,' in some cases of borrowers who are simply unable to repay, high existing debt levels don't seem to be a complete deterrence for

them," she noted.

In Africa, Thomas-Greenfield blamed China for indebting African countries. She also noted that while Qin Gang, China's new foreign minister, was also on the continent recently, "what I heard from ... people and leaders when I was there very clearly was that America is in their hearts, and they are extraordinarily appreciative of the African Leaders Summit that we just hosted

Kate Bartlett

sive debt. Yellen's comments drew a swift and cutting rebuke from China's embassy in Zambia, which pointed to America's own debt problems, and an opinion article in state media Xinhua that read, "The airports where the US officials landed and the roads and bridges their convoys passed during their Africa visits were likely built in cooperation with Chinese

bring infrastructure to developing countries is not gone altogether, the authors of the Boston University study said; it's just transforming the way money is spent. "This trend is emblematic of the 'small is beautiful' approach to Chinese economic engagement in recent years, which prioritizes smaller and more targeted projects," the study

less conducive to large amounts of development finance than they were a decade ago ... is concerning, as the need for development finance is at an all-time high due to the poly-crisis of financial instability, climate change and pandemic," noted co-author Kevin P. Gallagher.

However, Harry Verhoeven, a senior research scholar at the Center on Global Energy Policy of Columbia

scaling of new Chinese loans. ... But questions can be raised regarding the administrative capacity and willingness of Chinese policy banks and other government institutions to manage a much broader (and more detailed) portfolio of smaller loans." There are signs that large-scale development lending could rebound. Since China reversed its zero-COVID-19 policy and reopened this year, its manufacturing, services and construction sectors expanded for the first time in four months.

While economists had expected slow growth in China this year, investment banks like Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley have since upgraded their forecasts. The International Monetary Fund also raised its economic growth outlook for China this week, saying it expects the economy to grow by 5.2% in 2023. But Ray told VOA she didn't foresee that making much difference. "We have already seen the availability of capital for China rebounding, so I doubt that the increased economic growth will change much. The Chinese government still has significant incentives to be supporting the liquidity of its domestic financial system," she said.

China's economy is trying to recover after the lengthy lockdowns during the zero-COVID-19 policy and wave of infections following the policy's reversal. As for influence overseas and in Africa, Ray said, "It is noteworthy that Yellen did not sign any major new agreements or announce any major new projects while in Africa. If the US does step into the infrastructure finance gap left by China's declining development finance, it may be more likely to emerge through multilateral fora." **VOA**

Sweden has become a gangster's paradise - and a case study in how not to integrate migrants

WHEN my wife first moved over from Stockholm, she took a while to adjust to the crime. Yellow police signs appealing for witnesses after a stabbing would terrify her. She'd tool up when venturing out of an evening, as if readying for battle. How times have changed. In London, a city with about the same population as Sweden, no one was shot dead in the six months leading up to spring last year. In the next six months, four were shot dead in Södertälje, a city half an hour's drive south-west of Stockholm.

Since then, things have become far worse. A gangland war erupted on Christmas Day and warring factions have been rampaging around the city in a manner resonant more of 1930s Chicago than contemporary Scandinavia. Gangsters use bombs to send each other warnings; assassins to shoot one another dead. There were 61 fatal firearms attacks last year, six times more than the combined total for Denmark, Finland and Norway. Children young enough to be immune from prosecution under Swedish law are, increasingly, sent to carry out the attacks.

For those of us who zoom in and out of Sweden's national debate, the most striking aspect is the language. Events that ought to scandalise an entire country are now being reported as part of everyday life. "For me, it has become normal," said an eyewitness quoted in a report after last weekend's murder of a 15-year-old in a shopping centre in Skogås, a suburb of Stockholm. "It's the third or fourth time it's happened and took place close to the shopping centre, so it wasn't that shocking."

Sweden gave the world Scandi-noir fiction. Now true crime is taking over - with podcasts, books and reports into a nationwide murder mystery that has the nation stumped. Why Sweden? Why so bad? Why children? Why is it getting worse? Yes, the 2015 asylum wave saw Sweden import all kinds of criminality among the record numbers of people it took in. But Germany took in even more and doesn't have such problems. Sweden's police has seen its budget rise by 75 per cent in recent years but is still losing. Worse, they're not sure how to win. Max Åkerwall, a Stockholm police chief, spoke about it

earlier this week. Locking up a gang leader, he said, creates a vacuum which leads to a violent power struggle among rival factions (police have counted 52 gangs). Hence more bombs, guns and murders. So it's not a matter of a few Mr Bigs. It's the emergence of a whole subculture of violence, unwittingly incubated by Sweden's liberal immigration and criminal justice system.

"We now have parallel societies in Sweden," said Magdalena Andersson before she lost power as prime minister last year. "We live in the same country, but in completely different realities." The phrase "no-go" area is deeply controversial in Sweden but certainly applies to neighbourhoods where authorities - even ambulance workers - cannot go for fear of attack. Sweden has long seen itself as a "humanitarian superpower" and its generosity with migrants once saw it take in my wife's parents, who fled the Soviets after the 1968 Prague Spring. My Stockholm-born spouse was taught a "home language" - Czech - even though Sweden was her

Fraser Nelson

home. This nods to the other problem: Sweden's generosity to accommodate asylum seekers is rivalled only by the problems it has always had with integrating them into society.

Perhaps the best measure of integration is the difference in unemployment rates between natives and locals. In Britain, it's negligible but Sweden has the worst gap in the developed world (15 vs 4 per cent). If you allow people smugglers to pour tens of thousands of usually male asylum seekers into a system unable to absorb them, you fill up edge-of-town estates where organised crime is the big business. Police in Germany and Britain are more used to dealing with imported bad guys - jihadists and other assorted terrorists - and our laws are harsher. Sweden's courts have always been keener on the wellbeing of offenders, especially the young. A few years ago, a law was passed declaring that arrest, detention or imprisonment of anyone under 18 should only take place "as a last resort". This delighted the gangsters, who quickly took it as a licence

to use children as their foot soldiers.

Police say that children account for most of those arrested for gang-related violence, with about 1,200 of these so-called "child soldiers" now at large. In England, the age of criminal responsibility is 10. In Sweden, it's 15: no one under that age can be sentenced to any punishment. Half of those arrested in raids after Stockholm's post-Christmas murders are school-aged. Their trademark weapon is the thermos bomb: homemade and carried in flasks which, in a child's hand, don't look suspicious. The emergence of "child soldiers" makes reading Sweden's newspapers all the more surreal. "More than 25 shots were fired at the apartment building," ran a report in Aftonbladet last week. "Police are working on the theory that the perpetrators shot at the wrong door. Another 15-year-old has been detained."

And this, from a few days earlier: "A 13-year-old and a 14-year-old were stopped at the last moment from committing a crime with automatic weapons in Hammarbyhöjden, in southern Stockholm." Sweden was late to allow police to bug mobile

phones, late to subject 19-year-old murderers to life sentences. Lise Tamm, a former chief prosecutor, complained about the "naivety" of the system as a whole. Thousands of decent people, she said, are being left in the lurch "as we protect the integrity of criminals and ignore the victims".

You can see her frustration. There are plenty of calls for laws to change - but must a whole country abandon its liberal values to adjust for a new criminal minority? Then again, Sweden is running out of options. Overall, its crime rate is still about the European average but for this specific sort of crime - the exploitation of children, thermos bombs and gangland shootings - it has somehow become one of the worst in the developed world. So the compassion for which Sweden is famous - which so many members of my own extended family owe so much - has started to incubate the worst kind of criminality. My hunch is that this amazing country will, in the end, find a way out of this. But in the meantime, it is offering the world a case study in what not to do.

The Telegraph

Pentagon says it is monitoring Chinese spy balloon spotted flying over US

THE Pentagon has said it is tracking a Chinese spy balloon flying over the United States but decided against shooting it down for safety reasons. Defence officials said the balloon has been watched for a couple days since it entered US airspace, flying at high altitude. It has been monitored by several methods including manned aircraft, and has most recently been tracked crossing over Montana, where the US has some of its silo-based nuclear missiles. As a precaution, flights out of Billings Logan airport were suspended on Wednesday.

"The balloon is currently traveling at an altitude well above commercial air traffic and does not present a military or physical threat to people on the ground," the Pentagon said in a statement. "Instances of this kind of balloon activity have been

observed previously over the past several years. Once the balloon was detected, the US government acted immediately to protect against the collection of sensitive information." The incident comes just ahead of a visit to China by Antony Blinken, expected this weekend, when it is believed the US secretary of state will meet Xi Jinping. The trip has not been formally announced, but both Beijing and Washington have been talking about his imminent arrival.

A senior US defence official said the US has "engaged" Chinese officials through multiple channels and communicated the seriousness of the matter. Pentagon officials said there was "high confidence" that it was Chinese, and that Joe Biden was briefed on the situation. The president asked for military options, but it was decided that there was too great a danger of debris

harming people on the ground were it to be shot down. Another factor in the decision was that, although it was flying over sensitive nuclear sites in Montana, it did not appear to be gathering any intelligence that could not be collected from satellites, so it was judged to be of little benefit to the Chinese.

Montana is home to one of the nation's three nuclear missile silo fields at Malmstrom Air Force Base. All air traffic was halted at Montana's Billings Logan international airport from 1.30pm to 3.30pm on Wednesday, as the military readied fighter jets and provided options to the White House. Congressional leaders were briefed on the matter Thursday afternoon. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy later tweeted: "China's brazen disregard for US sovereignty is a destabilis-

Julian Borger

ing action that must be addressed." Montana Governor Greg Gianforte said he was briefed on Wednesday about the situation after the state's National Guard was notified of an ongoing military operation taking place in its airspace, according to a statement from the governor and spokesperson Brooke Stroyke.

The object first flew over Alaska's Aleutian Islands and through Canada before appearing over the city of Billings, Montana, on Wednesday, officials said. Military experts say that use of high-altitude balloons is likely to increase over the coming years. They are much cheaper than spy satellites, are hard to spot by radar and difficult to shoot down, sometimes lingering for days after they have been punctured. They can "steer" by changing altitudes, using com-

puters to calculate how to use winds going in different directions at different layers of the atmosphere. As well as surveillance, they could also carry bombs, in times of conflict. In 2019, the US military used up to 25 experimental solar-powered high-altitude balloons to conduct wide-area surveillance tests across six mid-western states. The balloons were equipped with hi-tech radars designed to simultaneously track many individual vehicles day or night, through any kind of weather, and were intended to be used to monitor drug trafficking and potential homeland security threats.

Tensions with China are particularly high on numerous issues, ranging from Taiwan and the South China Sea to human rights in China's western Xinjiang region and the clampdown on democracy activists in Hong Kong. Not least on the list of irri-

tants are China's tacit support for Russia's invasion of Ukraine, its refusal to rein in North Korea's expanding ballistic missile program and ongoing disputes over trade and technology. Some Montana residents reported seeing an unusual object in the sky during the airport shutdown, but it's not clear that what they were seeing was the balloon. From an office window in Billings, Chase Doak said he saw a "big white circle in the sky" that he said was too small to be the moon.

He took some photos, then ran home to get a camera with a stronger lens and took more photos and video. He could see it for about 45 minutes and it appeared stationary, but Doak said the video suggested it was slowly moving. "I thought maybe it was a legitimate UFO," he said. "So I wanted to make sure I documented it and took as many photos as I could."

The Guardian

Trump’s first challenger is the one GOP needs

NIKKI R. Haley, the former United States ambassador to the United Nations and former South Carolina governor, is expected to announce her 2024 presidential bid in the coming days. Haley, whose camp has been distributing invitations to a "special announcement" set for February 15 in Charleston, South Carolina, will be the first Republican to officially declare a challenge against former President Donald Trump for the 2024 Republican nomination.

As someone who has worked for both Haley and Trump, I believe Haley is exactly the right candidate for the Republican Party at this moment - and fellow Republicans should think twice before underestimating her. Haley was an unknown in 2004 when she took on and defeated the longest serving Republican in the South Carolina House of Representatives by running a grassroots campaign that positioned her as an energetic and fresh-faced underdog.

Her star rose quickly as the majority whip in the South Carolina General Assembly, and she jumped into the South Carolina gubernatorial race in 2009. In the good ole' boys club that is South Carolina politics, Haley wasn't taken seriously as a gubernatorial candidate by many until former Alaska governor and 2008 Republican Vice-Presidential nominee, Sarah Palin, visited the Palmetto State in May 2010 and endorsed her. Palin, who also appeared in a campaign ad calling Haley a "strong, pro-family, pro-life, pro-second amendment, pro-development, conservative reformer" helped boost Haley's campaign, which went from being on life-support to frontrunner-status in a field of all white male opponents.

Nikki shocked the political establishment in South Carolina when she won the Republican primary just a month later. In November 2010, Haley trounced her Democratic challenger in the general election - earning her the distinction of becoming both the

first female governor of South Carolina and the second governor in the country of Indian descent. Under Nikki Haley's leadership, South Carolina thrived. Unemployment rates fell and South Carolina's Department of Commerce announced tens of thousands of jobs had been created under her tenure and billions in capital investment flowed into the state. She also spearheaded efforts

Gavin Smith

Carolina State House grounds. Later that year, she was calm and composed leading the state when Hurricane Matthew made landfall and historic floods wreaked havoc on residents of our state. Despite these accomplishments, and a very successful reelection campaign in 2014, however, Trump is said to have rejected Haley as a potential secretary of state, citing a "complexion problem," and noting the

In November 2010, Haley trounced her Democratic challenger in the general election - earning her the distinction of becoming both the first female governor of South Carolina and the second governor in the country of Indian descent. Under Nikki Haley's leadership, South Carolina thrived. Unemployment rates fell and South Carolina's Department of Commerce announced tens of thousands of jobs had been created under her tenure and billions in capital investment flowed into the state. She also spearheaded efforts to pass a law that added transparency to the legislative process and required South Carolina lawmakers to vote on the record more frequently. In the aftermath of the 2015 mass-shooting at Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina, Haley worked tirelessly to unify our state and successfully led the efforts to remove the Confederate Flag from the South Carolina State House grounds.

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"blotch marks on her cheeks" in a conversation with then-Chief-of-Staff John Kelly, according to the book "The Divider," by New Yorker writer Susan Glasser and New York Times' Peter Baker.

He opted instead to appoint her the US ambassador to the United Nations, where she quickly became a leader in the Republican Party for her no-nonsense and direct approach to diplomacy. From cut-

ting more than \$285 million from the UN budget to leading the charge to pull out of the disgraced UN Human Rights Council, Nikki Haley quickly built a name for herself as a successful US diplomat who got things done. When she resigned in 2018, she was one of the few Trump administration officials to stay in the good graces of the former president, with the New York Times editorial page praising Haley as "that rarest of Trump appointees: one who can exit the administration with her dignity largely intact." But Haley's relationship with Trump has grown more complicated since she left the administration. She spoke out against him after the January 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol before changing her tune in October 2021, telling the Wall Street Journal, "We need him in the Republican Party. I don't want us to go back to the days before Trump."

And when the news broke that she was expected to announce a run for president, Trump took a shot at her by sharing a video of Haley from April 2021, when she said she would "not run if President Trump ran" in 2024. When Fox News host Bret Baier brought up those same comments last month, Haley responded by calling for generational change, citing issues like inflation and crime and saying, "A lot has changed." Ultimately, a dust-up between the former president and any Republican challenger is inevitable. What matters is that Haley is a formidable candidate who brings the executive experience from her days as governor as well as the foreign policy experience from her time as ambassador. This experience, paired with her ability to bring people together, her background as a mom and a military spouse, and her track record of fighting the uphill battle of running against old white men - is exactly why she is the right candidate, at the right moment, for Republicans to rally behind as we look to win back the White House in 2024.

CNN



Britain is becoming too woke to defend itself

Allison Pearson

NOT much of my youth was mis-spent, although I did for a time go out with Jonny, a trainee pilot at RAF Cranwell. If you want to know what a near-death experience feels like, try riding pillion on a motorbike behind a man who will soon be in command of a jet that can reach 1,100 mph in a little over two minutes from take-off.

Going into a corner, we went so low I could have picked up the cigarette butts lying on the road. I'm not sure what centripetal or gyroscopic forces kept us aloft; I do know that I had complete confidence in the reflexes of my RAF chap. Actually, there weren't many corners. Just miles of arrow-straight Lincolnshire roads, ideal for Jonny to get some practice breaking the motorbike land-speed record with a squealing blonde in tow.

All of the guys in his Cranwell intake were from the same breed. Truth is, you could probably have picked them out at junior school. They have a different relationship with fear than most mortals - respectful, but undaunted - and their hand-eye co-ordination is second to none. It needed to be. Soon they would be up above the clouds, learning how to eliminate the enemy while creating a sonic boom. Mach the Knife.

Would Jonny and his flying band of brothers be picked to serve their country today? They would still

have all the necessary attributes except, that is, two X chromosomes and non-indigenous origins. I guess if Jonny were prepared to say that he self-identified as Joanne and started wearing heels and a frock then he might still make the cut. Trouble is, Jonny and his kind would rather cut off their own balls with a breadknife than pander to such progressive idiocy. Nature's warriors are physically strong, clear-sighted, usually male and, therefore, unlikely to be badly shaken by the news that the British Armed Forces are "predominantly made up of white men".

Seriously, who thinks that's a bad thing? Well, Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston for one. Under his command, the RAF disgracefully stands accused of discriminating against 160 white men in an attempt to meet "aspirational diversity targets". In November 2020, Group Capt Elizabeth Nicholl was placed in charge of recruiting more women and ethnic minorities into the service. She quit after finding "around 160 cases of positive discrimination". Good for her. When the defence of our nation is actively undermined by the wishful-thinking and woke priorities of Human Resources, you know we are in big trouble. A 5ft 4in female may speak Gujarati and tick a box, but she simply does not have the aerobic capacity or the weight necessary

to be a fighter pilot. If you think that's unfair, take it up with God.

Plus, you don't give someone an £88.8?million piece of kit to fly because they'll look diverse in a recruitment poster. In the Oscar-nominated Top Gun: Maverick, the squadron has acquired one female member, Phoenix, but women fighter pilots are still rare. They probably always will be. It is outrageous to try to fix what Sir Mike calls "a woeful gender diversity" problem in the RAF by excluding all the Oscars and Alexanders who have dreamt of being pilots since they were small boys.

On summer evenings, Jonny used to take me on the bike to a pub in the Woods. On the wall behind the bar was a montage of black-and-white photographs grown sepia-toned with age: wonderful faces of pilots and air-crew who had drained their last pint there before heading to the nearby airfield to take off and do battle with Hitler's Luftwaffe. They were white and male, but Death did not discriminate against them. A pilot considered himself old if he made it to 25. Eighty years later, the RAF is accused of discriminating against the great-grandsons of those men. How dare they? The country for which so many gave their lives has lost its mind and busily enfeebles itself to the delight of its enemies. It makes you want to cry with shame. Air Chief Marshal Wigston should resign with immediate effect.

Tories will regret surrendering power

David Frost

I'M not here to defend Nadhim Zahawi. I'm here to look at what his brutal political execution last weekend tells us about how Sir Laurie Magnus carried out his duties as the Prime Minister's new ethics adviser. The Ministerial Code and guidance say that Sir Laurie has a role in "advising" the Prime Minister about adherence to the code.

It is the Prime Minister who "determines" whether a breach has occurred, and who may ask Sir Laurie for "confidential" advice on the appropriate sanction. It is crystal clear that the decision on whether a minister remains in office is for the Prime Minister.

Sir Laurie's January 29 letter to the Prime Minister pushes this to the limit. He doesn't advise. He "considers" there has been a "serious failure to meet the standards set out in the Ministerial Code". His final sentence concludes: "My overall judgment [is] that Mr Zahawi's conduct as a minister has fallen below the high standards that, as Prime Minister, you rightly expect from those who serve in your government." That doesn't leave the Prime Minister a lot of choice. It isn't advice. It's Sir Laurie's judgment - take it or leave it. And his parting words hardly allow any room for "confidential" advice about the "appropriate" sanction. Only one outcome is possible.

Now, maybe this time round this suited the Prime Minister, who, not having acted decisively the first time round, was looking for a way to move Mr Zahawi out. But a precedent has been set. The Prime Minister effectively outsourced this decision. It wasn't Rishi Sunak who "determined" whether the breach of standards had happened: it was Sir Laurie. It won't be easy to roll this back even if the next case is much

more ambiguous. Gradually, the Prime Minister's right to determine the members of his own government, and defend them, is being eroded. Unfortunately this is part of a pattern - and not just with the current government. All sorts of decisions are outsourced to supposedly neutral experts. Regulating the City? Leave that to the regulators and keep the elected government out. Want to change fiscal policy? Only if the Office for Budget Responsibility says you can. Pay rises for nurses? Leave that to the pay review bodies. Or, most absurdly, do you think there is a problem with English football? Then bring in an independent regulator to tell them how to run things.

This happens because too many people believe that independent figures do things better. Many people now seem to hold the Institute for Government's world view, that all kinds of judgments are best made by an official caste of Platonic guardians, people who know best and intuitively understand the correct standards - a new establishment setting the tone just as the old one did. I'm sure readers can see the obvious problem with this. It's that independent figures and bodies do not come down untouched from on high. They have their own views and those are generally the conventional wisdom of our society. Unfortunately, that conventional wisdom nowadays is highly collectivist and highly judgmental regarding "woke" values.

So when our regulators take decisions, you will find all kinds of unexamined assumptions about the right distribution of income in society, how to improve social inclusion, or even just how best to live your life. When it's a question of standards, it is a brave minister who will feel happy in letting

the great and the good decide whether they were guilty of "inappropriate or discriminating behaviour" (paragraph 1.2 of the Ministerial Code) or had taken a decision "without discrimination or bias". This isn't just a theoretical question. There is, of course, another ongoing inquiry - the investigation by the barrister Adam Tolley into the bullying allegations against Dominic Raab.

If this investigation was intended to take the heat out of the question, it has clearly failed. It has allowed any civil servant with any animus against the Justice Secretary to pile in to this secret process, prolonging it for who knows how long and creating a sense of "no smoke without fire". Certainly the Prime Minister and the No 10 machine are not exactly rushing to defend Mr Raab. I don't know whether Mr Raab is a bully, and neither do you. So a lot rests now on Mr Tolley's ability to assess the evidence and be careful about value judgments that not everyone may share. The definitions applied by Civil Service HR may not be ones that others would endorse, and Mr Raab may want to defend himself accordingly. One person's bullying is another's determination to get the job done. And after all, government is serious. It isn't a game or a play. The actions of officials who work in it affect many people's lives and sometimes even the honour and reputation of the country. Personally, I think they should feel under pressure to do their jobs properly.

The truth is that you can't take the politics out of politics. Outsourcing decisions just allows others to shape them - and sometimes take them for you. The most successful governments are those which work out what the right action is and get on with it. That's what we need to see more of.

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Federal system would allow Lebanese to steer clear of scorpions

Khaled Abou Zahr

DO you know the story of the scorpion and the frog? The two animals are facing a wildfire and need to cross a river to survive. The scorpion tells the frog: "Carry me on your back and help me cross the river and I will protect you from any aggressor in the future." The frog swiftly answers: "Never. You will sting me and I will die." The scorpion then says: "Why would I do that? In that case, I would also drown and die." It is enough to convince the frog, who hopes for future protection. As the fire gets closer, it jumps into the river with its new scorpion friend on its back. As it reaches the middle of the river, the inevitable happens and the scorpion stings the frog. As they are both sinking to their death, the frog asks: "But why?" And the scorpion answers: "It is my nature."

I see many similarities between this story and the relationship between the people of Lebanon and their political leaders. Each confession lets its own leaders climb on their back in the hope of protection against the others. And so these leaders are blindly empowered by their own people. They promise to get them out of chaos but in fact they are bringing everyone to their death. It is the nature of the Lebanese politicians to sting their own people and destroy the country. It has hence become clear that they can no longer be trusted or

empowered to bring Lebanon to the safe side of the river.

The reality is that Lebanese politicians have no incentive for change. They have no incentive to build a new system that would bring stability, security and prosperity to all. Their endgame is to use and control their own confessional base and to trade on it. Moreover, there is no accountability for any of their actions. They have perfected the exploitation of the political system for their own benefit. They are undoubtedly still giving protection to the current occupation of Lebanon by Hezbollah and Iran, just like they did with Syria before that.

It is quite surprising that, despite years of collaboration with the Syrian occupier, none have been judged for high treason. This might have been a mistake following the withdrawal of the Syrian troops. There should have been an equivalent of the Vichy trials after the Second World War, which judged all those responsible for collaborating with the enemy. This historical lack of accountability and the capacity to elude justice has given superpowers to politicians. Many should be barred from political activities for life. Yet, this cannot change as long as Hezbollah controls the decaying state and keeps stinging any free Lebanese voice.

This is the reason Lebanon needs a new political leadership to

build a new political system. The confessional system has been tried and tried again and it is a complete failure. Moreover, it has invited occupation after occupation and killed any independent thinking or honorable politician and corrupted the rest. There is no saving it or its current representatives. But then, what is the solution that could work? How does Lebanon survive the repeated scorpion stings?

There is absolutely no doubt that federal political systems make for better outcomes in countries with large diversity such as Lebanon. A simple example is Switzerland, with its many ethnicities and languages. The canton system solves everything, simply because the lower level of decision-making allows for each community to solve its own problems and make things work, especially on issues that matter: school, security, health. More importantly, political representatives are accountable and cannot trade off with other leaders. A recent social media clip shared by a friend proved this point by stating that nobody knows the names of Swiss politicians because they do not create political issues, but rather work on making a better life for their people, unlike some of their neighboring countries. I would agree to a large extent.

Yet, the road to this new political system will not be built

overnight. It also needs architects: A new breed of politician that understands the changing world and is willing to bring this new system to life is badly needed. Voices to inspire and enlighten. And, here I repeat over and over again: Lebanon does not need technocrats. They are as much responsible for the current situation as the politicians that brought them in to cover up their dealings. They have benefited from the system and collaborated with the enemy while absolving themselves of any wrongdoing. As if stating, "I was in a technocratic government," serves as an absolute clearance. They knew exactly what they were doing. When the occupation has murdered politicians, officers, judges, journalists and free thinkers, you know exactly what accepting to participate means.

Lebanon cannot survive as long as it keeps a pyramidal decision-making system. It is not suited to the country and even a decentralized system will not be enough. There is a need to allow the country to move forward without being consistently blocked by Hezbollah. The Iranian proxy's status on top of the state or within the state - depending how you look at it - comes to an end with federalism. This system would allow for the people to decide their own fate and never again have to beg for the protection of any scorpion.

Arab News

Welcome to Broken Britain 2023 and a new ‘Winter of Discontent’

Matthew Gwyther

I was walking on the South Bank of the Thames in central London one evening last week with my black pug. A young man pushing a pram containing his sleeping 3-week-old daughter stopped to admire Percy - an infrequent occurrence, as he's pug-ugly. The chap said he was taking a breather from caring for his wife, who was in St. Thomas' Hospital nearby.

On New Year's Eve, he said, his eight-and-a-half-months-pregnant wife had fallen down the stairs of their home, badly breaking her leg. He called for an ambulance, but none arrived. Nor was one promised to arrive. So he packed his wife, now in agony, into the car and drove her to the hospital. The baby was delivered by emergency Caesarean section, and shortly afterward the mother's leg was pinned and plated back together in a lengthy operation.

Ambulance service in England - already abysmal, with record-long wait times reported for December - has been further hampered by striking ambulance drivers, twice in December and once in January, with several more stoppages planned for February and March. As I sit here writing on Wednesday, my 13-year-old daughter is upstairs mindlessly scrolling through TikTok - her schoolteachers went

on strike. Train drivers, too. During the past few weeks, industrial action has been taken by bus drivers, National Highways workers, Royal Mail staff, driving test examiners and staff at the Rural Payments Agency.

Keen exponents of the spreadsheet have produced monthly documents showing which services will be strike-struck, to give those hoping to live a normal life some chance to plan ahead. Welcome to Broken Britain 2023.

We're in quite a mess at the moment. It takes me back to a previous era. I'm old enough to recall what was known as the "Winter of Discontent" in 1978-1979, when famously even the Liverpool gravediggers downed spades, and the bodies piled up in mortuaries. Leicester Square, buried under mounds of uncollected rubbish, was dubbed "Fester Square." This followed hard on the heels of the mid-1970s coal miners' strikes; amid the resulting power cuts, I recall, I did my homework by candlelight.

Today, the lights are still on - a record 87 percent of electricity on the British grid came from renewables and nuclear energy on Dec. 30 - but something is amiss and deeply unhappy in the national

psyche. Tuesday was the third anniversary of formal Brexit, when we cut our remaining ties with the European Union. A bright new future was promised by earnest Brexiteers, free from the antidemocratic bonds and red tape of European bureaucracy. But widespread gloom has been the result, with the areas that voted for Brexit, in particular, doing worse than they were three years ago.

We are teetering on the edge of a recession, and the International Monetary Fund says our medium-term economic prospects are the worst of any advanced country it surveys - even worse than Russia's. There is precious little "Dunkirk spirit" about the place. After the knockabout comedy of Boris Johnson's premiership, we had a brief and weird interlude of Liz Truss and her chancellor of the exchequer, Kwasi Kwarteng, which alarmed financial markets so much the pound and bond markets nosedived. The cost of that excursion has been estimated at 30 billion pounds. With Rishi Sunak now in charge, a fresh round of Conservative fumbling has begun.

Slightly world-weary folk like me, who wouldn't mind a bit of simple managerial, political competence, are chided for a "declinist

Washington Post



Country needs all parties' collaboration to ensure economic stability: Ahsan

ISLAMABAD (APP): In the wake of deep economic crisis being faced by the country, Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal on Friday called upon all the politicians, irrespective of the party affiliation, to work as a team to come out of the crises.

"Pakistan is passing through the worst economic crisis so, it is not the time to fight with each other but to work in collaboration to elevate the country among the world's top economies", he said while speaking as chief guest at the launching ceremony of British Council's report here. The minister also urged all stakeholders

including the establishment, judiciary, and the politicians to 'put heads together to ensure sustainable socio-economic development of the country.

Ahsan Iqbal said Pakistan has a huge proportion of young people who should be given the best socio-politico-economic environment to ensure a strong and stable Pakistan in next decade or so.

He said Pakistan is celebrating its 75th years of formulation, but still its economy is so weak that it seems helpless in front of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to get few billions of dollars of loans.

"Corruption isn't the major reason behind our

failure because we are as honest as is the rest of the world is and as corrupt as others are," he said adding that the main reason is disruption in the democratic system and policies. He said whatever the government system the state adopts, it must be ensured that there must be continuity of policies.

Ahsan Iqbal said that in order to empower youth, the government has launched an internship programme for youth under which 60,000 young graduates from across the country would get paid internships.

Similarly, he said the government would impart Information Technology

(IT) based skilled training besides providing an opportunity to another 100,000 young people to get technical and vocational training.

On the eve of 75th year of independence of Pakistan, he said the government is also offering 75 scholarships to those who manage to secure admissions in the top 25 universities in the world.

Likewise, the minister added that 100,000 university students would also be provided laptops to make them digitally empowered.

"In our previous tenure, we provided one million laptops that resulted in the promotion of free-lancing culture among the youth", he added.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor frying and selling fish to attract the customers at Khanna Pul.

Services exports increased 2.77% in 6 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Services exports from the country during the first six months of the current financial year increased by 2.77 percent, whereas services imports into the country decreased by 30.28 percent as compared to the corresponding period of last year.

During the period from July-December, 2022, services exports from the country were recorded at US\$ 3.526 billion as against the exports of US\$ 3.431 billion in the same period last year, according to the data of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

Meanwhile, services imports into the country during the first two quarters of the current financial year came down from US\$ 5.571 billion to US\$ 3.884

billion during the period from July-December 2022, which witnessed about 30.28 percent reduction as compared to the imports of the corresponding period of last year.

During the period under review, the services trade deficit reduced by 83.29 percent as compared to the first six months of the last financial year, whereas on a year-on-year basis, the services trade deficit narrowed by 111.21 percent in December 2022 as compared to the same month of last year.

During the month of December, 2022, exports of services decreased by 3.16 percent as it was recorded at US\$ 667.17 million in contrast to the exports of US\$ 688.93 million in the same month of

last year.

Meanwhile, during the month of December 2022, the services imports reduced by 44.45 percent as it was recorded at \$619.40 million as against the imports of US\$ 1.111 billion in the corresponding month of last year.

On a month-on-month basis, the services trade deficit swelled by 37.15 percent in December 2022, as services exports were recorded at \$667.17 million as compared to the exports of US\$ 654.95 million of November 2022, whereas services imports decreased by 0.12 percent and it was recorded at US\$ 619.40 million during the month of December 2022 as against the imports of \$620.11 million of the previous month.

OGDCL donates PKR 100 mln to PM's Flood Relief Fund

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: As a responsible corporate entity, the Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) – the leading Exploration & Production Company of Pakistan – has donated PKR 100 million to the Prime Minister's Flood Relief Fund for the relief and rehabilitation of the flood-affected people of the country.

Mr. Khalid Siraj Subhani, Managing Director/CEO OGDCL, presented the cheque of PKR 100 million to the Honorable Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mohammad Shehbaz Sharif, during a ceremony held at the PM Office. The donated amount will be spent on the relief and rehabilitation of the flood victims.

With a generous Corporate Social Responsibility doctrine to sponsor initiatives for socio-economic development in the country, OGDCL extended much-needed financial support to flood-affected people.

Earlier, the company had also contributed PKR 115 million as relief assistance to mitigate the sufferings of the flood-affected people of Balochistan, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces. Torrential rains and catastrophic floods caused widespread devastation in several parts of the country in July 2022.

PSX loses 262 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Friday, losing 262.35 points, a negative change of 0.64 percent, closing at 40,471.16 against 40,733.51 points the previous day.

A total of 105,053,350 shares were traded during the day as compared to 124,087,701 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 4.181 billion against Rs 6.120 billion on the last

trading day.

As many as 320 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 116 of them recorded gains and 182 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 22 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were Hub Power Company with 7,912,174 shares at Rs.67.03 per share, Cnergyco Pk with 7,490,206 shares at Rs 3.72 per share, and Dewan Motors with 5,698,000

shares at Rs.14.45 per share.

Nestle Pakistan witnessed a maximum increase of Rs64.00 per share price, closing at Rs.5,364.00 whereas the runner-up was Bata (Pak) with a Rs.47.00 rise in its per share price to Rs1,795.00.

Pak Services witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.145.35 per share closing at Rs 1,792.65 followed by Sapphire Textile with Rs 80.00 decline to close at Rs1,020.00.

Turkish ambassador emphasises on connectivity to achieve economic targets

LAHORE (APP): Ambassador of Türkiye Dr Mehmet Pacaci has said that both the countries will have to increase relations in every sphere as we have a target to increase the bilateral trade to 5 billion USD which was set by the respective leaders of both the countries.

He was speaking at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry here on Friday. LCCI President Kashif Anwar, Senior Vice President Zafar Mahmood Chaudhry, Turkish Consul General Emir Ozybek and LCCI Executive Committee Members also spoke on the occasion. The ambassador said that the relations between Türkiye and Pakistan were unique. Our relations go back to centuries and were more than trade or economy but heart to heart relations. People of both the countries love each other and find many things in common.

He said that our commercial relations unfortunately were low as the President of the Lahore Chamber pointed out and summarized the situation of economic relations. The ambassador said that in this regard connectivity between Pakistan and Türkiye played a pivotal role. He said "we have alternatives for connectivity. For example roads, railways, sea and air and those connectivity mediums have their positive aspects and negative

aspects also. But all these depends on our abilities and capacities to resolve the issues of connectivity".

The Ambassador said that we have to introduce our businessmen to each other to know better each other's abilities. In this regards, the main obstacle was to get to know the sectors in which we can cooperate, and to identify those sectors, we have to work harder.

LCCI President Kashif Anwar said that Türkiye and Pakistan were key members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and are bonded together by old historical links and enjoyed cordial relations based on commonality of religion. The relations between two countries were growing in different domains including economic, political, defence, culture and education.

He said it was very encouraging that both the countries achieved a significant milestone in bilateral relations by signing a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) last year. He hoped that PTA would open up new opportunities to expand mutual trade ties across various sectors.

The LCCI President said that according to the State Bank of Pakistan's data, Pakistan's exports to Türkiye were around 268 million dollars in 2020-21 which increased to 355 million dol-

lars in 2021-22. Similarly, Pakistan's imports from Türkiye were 867 million dollars in 2020-21 that increased to over 944 million dollars in 2021-22.

He said that Pakistan's exports to Türkiye were heavily dominated by textiles whereas our imports mainly comprise machinery, iron & steel, and plastic items, among others. He said that we need to make efforts to bridge Pakistan's trade deficit and to enhance the trade volume to at least 5 billion dollars utilizing the market access on nearly 261 tariff lines provided by Türkiye in the existing Preferential Trade Agreement.

Kashif Anwar said that under the PTA, Pakistan has gained market access in traditional sectors such as leather, rice, dates, mangoes, cutlery, sports goods and non-traditional sectors including seafood, processed agricultural products, rubber tubes and tyres, plastics, and engineering goods etc. "We are hopeful that Pakistan can utilize this market access and enhance its exports to Türkiye considerably in these sectors," he said. He said that there were multiple Pakistani sectors where both countries can enhance economic cooperation, especially the pharmaceutical sector of Pakistan, which was ideal for joint ventures between the two sides.

Gold price up by Rs 1,300 to Rs 208,500

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 1,300 on Friday and was traded at Rs 208,500 against Rs 207,200 the last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 1,114 to Rs 178,755 against Rs 177,641, whereas that of 10 grams of 22 karat went up to Rs 163,858 from Rs 162,837, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of one tola gold increased by Rs 50 and was traded at Rs 2,350 whereas that of 10-gram silver went up by Rs 42.86 to 2,014.74. The price of gold in the international market decreased by US\$44 to US\$ 1,911, against its sale at \$1,955 the Association reported.

Adani denies rise due to Modi as shares slump again

MUMBAI (AFP/APP): Beleaguered Indian tycoon Gautam Adani denied Friday that his rise to become Asia's richest man -- a title he has lost in a phenomenal stock rout -- was due to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, as shares in his conglomerate slumped again.

His listed units' combined market capitalisation has collapsed by more than \$100 billion since US short-seller Hindenburg Research -- which makes money by betting on shares falling -- released an explosive report last week.

It accused Adani of accounting fraud and artificially boosted its share prices, calling it a "brazen stock manipulation and accounting fraud scheme" and "the largest con in corporate history". Critics say Adani's close relationship with Modi, who is also from Gujarat state, has helped him win business and avoid proper oversight. "These allegations are baseless," Adani told India Today television on Friday, adding that their shared origins made him an "easy target" for such claims.

"The fact of the matter is that my professional success is not because of any individual leader," he insisted. His comments came as shares in his flagship firm Adani Enterprises were repeatedly suspended on the Bombay Stock Exchange, hitting multiple trading stops on the way to falling by 25 percent. Adani Power, Adani Green Energy, Adani Total Gas -- in which French giant TotalEnergies has a 37.4 percent stake -- and Adani Transmission were also suspended when they hit their limits.



MULTAN: A vendor is cleaning sugar cane before making pieces at his roadside setup.

Rate hikes and tech optimism send stocks higher

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): European and US stock markets mostly rose on Thursday after the European Central Bank and Bank of England raised interest rates, joining the US Federal Reserve in moving once again to cool sky-high inflation amid a less dire outlook.

Forecast-beating results by Facebook-owner Meta helped drive a rally in tech stocks that sent the Nasdaq Composite up by more than three percent, while Google parent Alphabet, Apple and Amazon reported earnings after the bell.

Online shopping giant Amazon beat expectations

with its quarterly sales numbers but Alphabet and Apple fell short, with the iPhone maker seeing a fall in sales of its flagship product. Investor sentiment in the United States however was boosted by hopes that the Federal Reserve will soon end its cycle of interest rate hikes, after it unveiled a smaller increase amid progress on cooling inflation.

Gains by equities in London, Frankfurt and Paris accelerated after the ECB and BoE each announced half-percentage-point rate hikes as anticipated. Germany's DAX climbed 2.2 percent

to hit an 11-month high.

The euro and the pound both fell around one percent against the dollar before clawing back some ground, despite the latest rate increases being larger than the Fed's quarter-point hike. The ECB said another half-point increase would come in March, adding that it would "stay the course in raising interest rates significantly at a steady pace."

BoE governor Andrew Bailey said inflationary pressures were still present and it was "too soon to declare victory," even as the central bank forecast a UK recession that would be

shallower than expected this year as the country faces a cost-of-living crisis.

"While the tone of both press conferences would appear to suggest that both central banks have further to go in raising rates, markets appear to be taking the view that we're near a peak," said analyst Michael Hewson of CMC Markets.

Signs are growing the eurozone may have passed the worst of an economic shock, with inflation slowing from a high in October and the single currency area eking out growth at the end of 2022. Wall Street picked up where it left off Wednesday, with the tech-

heavy Nasdaq surging 3.3 percent after Facebook and Instagram-owner Meta beat sales expectations.

While Meta reported its first annual sales drop since the company went public in 2012, the one percent fall to \$116.6 billion was less brutal than expected and the company's shares shot up 23.3 percent.

But the blue-chip Dow closed 0.1 percent lower while the broad-based S&P 500 picked up 1.5 percent.

Tech firms had led a surge on the Nasdaq and S&P 500 indices Wednesday after the US central bank unveiled a smaller interest rate

increase.

The decision to lift rates by the smallest amount in almost a year came after a series of indicators suggested the world's largest economy was slowing, with US inflation at its lowest level since October 2021.

"Overall, the capital markets behaved as if they are confident in the idea that the Fed will be pausing its rate hikes soon and that a rate cut before the end of the year is not out of the question," said analyst Patrick O'Hare at Briefing.com.

In Asia, the main equity indices closed mixed ahead of European rate decisions,

with investors unable to maintain an early rally.

New York - Dow: DOWN 0.1 percent at 34,053.94 (close)

New York - S&P 500: UP 1.5 percent at 4,179.76 (close)

New York - Nasdaq: UP 3.3 percent at 12,200.82 (close)

London - FTSE 100: UP 0.8 percent at 7,820.16 (close)

Frankfurt - DAX: UP 2.2 percent at 15,509.19 (close)

Paris - CAC 40: UP 1.3 percent at 7,166.27 (close)

EURO STOXX 50: UP 1.7 percent at 4,241.12 (close)

Tokyo - Nikkei 225: UP

0.2 percent at 27,402.05 (close)

Hong Kong - Hang Seng Index: DOWN 0.5 percent at 21,958.36 (close)

Shanghai - Composite: FLAT at 3,285.67 (close)

Euro/dollar: DOWN at \$1.0918 from \$1.0995 on Wednesday

Pound/dollar: DOWN at \$1.2225 from \$1.2378

Euro/pound: UP at 89.21 pence from 88.76 pence

Dollar/yen: DOWN at 128.62 yen from 128.90 yen

West Texas Intermediate: DOWN 0.7 percent at \$75.88 per barrel

Brent North Sea crude: DOWN 0.8 percent at \$82.17 per barrel



In brief

Pak women team to start training

CAPE TOWN (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan women team will start training for the Women's T20 World Cup on Saturday. The trophy of the mega event will be unveiled in Cape Town. While captains of all the teams will also be participating in the ceremony. Pakistan women team will play two practice matches before their opening match. Pakistan's first practice match will be against Bangladesh on Feb 6 while the Green Shirts will play their second match against hosts South Africa on Feb 8. Pakistan women team have been added in the Group B of the tournament where they will face England, India and West Indies. They will play their first match against the arch-rivals India on Feb 12. Total 10 ten teams will be facing each other for the title of ICC Women's T20 World Cup. The final match of the mega event is scheduled on Feb 26 while there is also a reserve day for the final which is Feb 27.

Kashmir Day Cycle Race

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cycling Association will hold a Kashmir Day Cycle Race on February 5 at 8.00 am in connection with Kashmir Day, which will cover 28 kilometers from Patang Chowk to Northern Bypass. President of the Association, Nisar Ahmed, while talking to the media, said that like every year, a bicycle race is being organized on the occasion of Kashmir Day. He said that players from different divisions are participating in this race. President of Pakistan Cycling Federation Azhar Ali Shah will inaugurate this race while former MPA Arbab Jehandad Khan will be the chief guest on the occasion of the closing ceremony and would distribute trophies and certificates among the position holder cyclists.

Joshua's comeback set

LONDON (Agencies): Heavyweight Anthony Joshua's comeback fight will take place on 1 April at the O2 Arena in London, promoter Eddie Hearn has announced. Joshua, 33, is likely to fight American Jermaine Franklin, who lost on points to Dillian Whyte last November. A news conference will be held next week to officially announce the fight. "It's a really tough fight with loads of pressure to come back because if AJ doesn't win this fight, then we've got a major problem," said Hearn. "I believe you'll see a statement from a guy who is very dangerous, very motivated to become a three-time heavyweight world champion." Joshua has lost his last two fights, both to unified heavyweight world champion Oleksandr Usyk. The Watford fighter is a two-time heavyweight world champion and has 24 wins, as well as three defeats. Matchroom promoter Hearn dismissed the suggestion 29-year-old Franklin was an easy opponent for Joshua. Franklin was unbeaten before losing to Whyte and was unhappy with the scoring of that fight, feeling he won the contest. "There's so much contradiction: 'Anthony Joshua is finished, mentally he's shot, but he'll knock out Jermaine Franklin inside three rounds,'" Hearn told 5 Live Boxing in New York. "The same people that say Jermaine Franklin beat Dillian Whyte but he's a terrible opponent for Anthony Joshua, in a comeback fight after two defeats to the pound-for-pound number one.

Yasir Arafat on Mickey Arthur's radar to be Pakistan's new bowling coach

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Mickey Arthur, who is in line to become the team director of the Pakistan men's national team, has reached out to Yasir Arafat, the former fast bowler, for the role of bowling coach. It is understood that the PCB wants three separate coaches - for batting, bowling and fielding - to work with Arthur after he comes on board.

As things stand, there is no formal arrangement between Arthur and the PCB, an in-principle agreement has been reached. It is also understood that as team director, Arthur will not be with the Pakistan team at all times, or travel with them, but link up only during major assignments. This is to ensure Arthur can continue to work with Derbyshire in the English county circuit.

Arthur has also shortlisted Grant Bradburn, the former Pakistan fielding coach



and head of coaches' education at PCB's high-performance centre till late 2011, as an assistant coach.

Arafat, now 40, has worked in coaching roles with Sussex in England, and with the Hong Kong men's team, and recently completed the ECB's Level 4 coaching course.

Though he played just 27 games in the international arena, across formats, he has a wealth of experience in domestic cricket, playing 207 first-class games, 257 List A games and 226 T20s in a career that lasted over

two decades. Along the way, he played in Scotland, Bangladesh, England, New Zealand, South Africa and Australia, apart from Pakistan. His last representative game was a first-class affair for MCC, in Kirtipur against Nepal in 2019.

While he made his international debut against Sri Lanka, in an ODI in Karachi in 2000, Arafat's Test debut in December 2007 in Bengaluru - as well as last international appearance - at the 2012 T20 World Cup - came against India.

The PCB is trying to put the coaching staff in place after an overhaul at both the administrative level and the cricketing level late last year. Shaun Tait was the last Pakistan bowling coach, in the staff led by Saqlain Mushtaq. Their next series is in late March against Afghanistan in Sharjah, and will be followed by a tour by New Zealand.

Poland says up to 40 countries want Russian athletes banned

WARSAW (Agencies) Up to 40 countries will demand that the International Olympic Committee bar Russian and Belarusian athletes from competing in the 2024 Paris Olympics, the Polish sports minister said.

"Of course, it is a tough position to oppose the participation of Russian and Belarusian representatives in the Olympic Games," Kamil Bortniczuk told Polish news agency PAP.

Poland and several other EU member states as well as Australia, Canada, Japan, South Korea and the United Kingdom will make their position known at the IOC's meeting on February 10. He said this gives the Olympic Committee time to "reflect." The IOC's executive committee announced last week that it may allow Russian and Belarusian athletes to compete in Paris under a neutral flag. Ukraine condemned the committee's position and threatened to boycott the games.

Watson out of Thailand Open

LONDON (Agencies): Heather Watson is out of the Thailand Open after a three-set defeat by Chinese seventh seed Wang Xinyu in the quarter-finals.

The British number six was beaten 3-6 7-6 4-6 in Hua Hin. It was the 30-year-old's first last-eight appearance since reaching the semi-finals of the Birmingham Classic in June 2021.

Despite defeat, Watson - currently 160th in WTA rankings - will return to the world's top 150. After an even start Wang, 21, reeled off four straight games on her way to taking the first set in 45 minutes.

There were eight breaks of serve in the second set where Watson led 4-1 at one stage before being pegged back, eventually taking it on a tie break.

3rd Allama Iqbal Polo Tournament Remington Pharma, Diamond Paints qualify for main final

LAHORE (APP): Remington Pharma and Diamond Paints qualified for the main final of the 3rd Allama Iqbal Polo Tournament 2023 after defeating their respective opponents in the semifinals played here at the Jinnah Polo Fields on Friday.

Hamza Mawaz Khan's heroics helped Remington Pharma outclass Master Paints/Newage Cables by 10-1 in the first semifinal of the day. Hamza Mawaz Khan was in sublime form and played outstanding polo throughout the semifinal as he fired in five fabulous goals while his teammates Ahmad Bilal Riaz and Basel Faisal Khokhar also played out their hearts and converted a beautiful brace each and Ahmad Zubair Butt struck one goal.

Master Paints/Newage Cables couldn't resist their opponents well, thus conceding huge ten goals against one, scored by Adnan Jalil Azam. Remington Pharma

dominated the entire match and kept on scoring in all the chukkers.

Master Paints/Newage Cables just made their presence felt in the third chukker, when they converted lone goal of the match, thus Remington Pharma winning the match by a huge margin of 10-1. John Fisher and Amirreza Behboudi supervised the match as field umpires. Nico Roberts shone in Diamond Paints' impressive 10-6 triumph over SQ Seagold Polo in the second semifinal.

Nico Roberts emerged as top scorer from the winning side with superb six goals while another top performer of the side was Mir Shoaib Ahmad, who thrashed in three tremendous goals while Lt Col Omer Minhas (R) converted one goal. Raja Jalal Arslan displayed outstanding mallet and pony skills and fired in four fabulous goals while Omer Asjad Malhi and Shiraz Qureshi scored one goal

each for the losing side.

SQ Seagold Polo though started the match well and converted two goals but Diamond Paints made a strong comeback and thrashed in three goals to gain a slight 3-2 lead. Diamond Paints then dominated the second chukker and smashed in five goals against one by SQ Seagold to take a healthy 8-3 lead. They added two more in their tally against one by SQ Seagold to make it 10-4. The only two goals of the fourth and last chukker were converted by SQ Seagold, but they lost the crucial match by 6-10. John Fisher and Amirreza Behboudi officiated the match as field umpires.

On Sunday (February 5), the subsidiary final will be played between FG/Din Polo and Platinum Homes/Master Paints at 1:30 pm while the main final will be played between Remington Pharma and Diamond Paints.

Real Madrid beat Valencia to close gap to Barcelona



MADRID (Agencies): Real Madrid beat 10-man Valencia to cut Barcelona's lead at the top of La Liga to five points.

Los Blancos took the lead through a stunning left-footed strike from Marco Asensio in the 52nd minute. Brazilian forward Vinicius Jr celebrated his 200th Real appearance with his side's second goal two minutes later.

Gabriel Paulista was shown a straight red card for the visitors in the 72nd minute for kicking out at Vinicius. Antonio Rudiger thought he had opened the scoring for the hosts in first-half stoppage time when he headed home from Luka Modric's cross.

However, the goal was ruled out after a video assistant referee intervention for a Karim Benzema foul on Yunus Musah in the box. France forward Benzema, 35, was substituted on the hour mark and walked off the pitch holding the back of his thigh.

Real travel to Liverpool on 21 February for the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie, but manager Carlo Ancelotti said Benzema's injury was "very light". Ancelotti told DAZN: "This is what happens when you play every three days and there is no time to recover."

Neymar ruled out of PSG's game against Toulouse PARIS: Neymar will miss his second straight game for Paris Saint-Germain after being ruled out of Saturday's match at home to Toulouse because of a groin problem, the club announced.

The Brazilian has been receiving treatment and training individually this week. He sat out Wednesday's 3-1 victory in Montpellier, in which Kylian Mbappe picked up a thigh injury. Mbappe faces three weeks on the sidelines and will be unavailable for the first leg of PSG's Champions League last-16 tie against Bayern Munich on February 14.

Raja claims head coach, captain were pressurised to include Shan in team

LAHORE (Web Desk): Former Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Ramiz Raja has claimed captain Babar Azam and Head Coach Saqlain Mushtaq received phone calls when opening batter Shan Masood was benched in the One-Day International (ODI) series against New Zealand.

Ramiz emphasised during a live interaction with cricket fans that the board puts excessive pressure on players. He stated that the pressure applied by the PCB is so intense that players are expected to comply with their demands at all costs.

Ramiz also disclosed information about the appointment of the vice-captain of the Pakistan ODI team, which he learned from his sources. He claimed that the head coach of Pakistan received multiple calls forcing him to include Shan Masood, who was benched for two matches against New Zealand.

He further stated that the PCB is trying to justify its decision to appoint Shan Masood as the vice-captain by putting pressure on the captain and head coach.

Finally, Ramiz criticised the current chairman of the PCB, saying that he has no background in cricket and only attends meetings, posts photos on Twitter, and hands over ICC trophies to Babar.

Pakistani squad reaches Dubai for Al Fujairah Open Taekwondo C'ship

KARACHI (APP): Pakistani Taekwondo team arrived in Dubai to participate in the 10th Al Fujairah Open Taekwondo (G-2) Championship to be played at Sheikh Zayed sports City.

According to a communiqué issued here on Friday, the Pakistan Taekwondo Federation has selected the national squad for this international level event.

South Asian Games gold medalist Haroon Khan, Shahzeb, Abbas Saeed, Mazhar Abbas, Sinan Ashfaq, and Arbaaz Khan, while among the

women players the 4th Combaxx Asian Taekwondo Championship Gold medalist Naqsh Hamdani and Fatima Al-Zahra are part of the squad.

Ashfaq Ahmed is the manager of the national squad while Master Yusuf Karami is the head coach. Shahzad Muhammad Asif is the coach and Faisal Butt is accompanying the squad as trainer.

Haroon Khan, who is part of the national team, is upbeat, saying that the players are fully prepared for the championship.

"Participation in the international event will improve our game further and increase our experience" he said adding "there will also be an opportunity of collaborating with world players to discuss with our contemporary players and professional coaches from other countries, which will be beneficial for us in the future."

"Hamza Saeed said that they were not complacent and would not take any fight easy. "We are only focused to play with fighting spirit, only carrying the spirit of victory for the

country", he added.

Female taekwondo player Naqsh Hamdani said that they wanted to win medals for Pakistan in the championship. President of Pakistan Taekwondo Federation, Col (Retd) Waseem Janjua and Col Omar Saeed, have provided all possible facilities for the preparations of the event, she added.

Head Coach Yusuf Karami of Iran said, "Our players are fully fit both physically and mentally for the Fujairah Open and they will try hard to reach the victory stand by giving their hundred percent."

New boys on the block: Six young stars to watch out for in HBL PSL 8

LHORE (PPI): The HBL Pakistan Super League has served as a launching pad for several talented youngsters over the years as the exposure to quality cricket in the presence of national and international stars helps them to enhance their skillset.

Fakhar Zaman, Hasan Ali, Shadab Khan, Haris Rauf, Haider Ali and Mohammad Harris are examples of players who have shot to prominence from the HBL PSL platform and gone on to prove their mettle on the international stage.

Some of the newcomers excited to showcase their skills in HBL PSL 2023 include Multan Sultans' Arafat Minhas, Karachi Kings' Muhammad Irfan Khan, Peshawar Zalmi's Haseebullah, Lahore Qalandars' Shwaiz Irfan, Quetta Gladiators' Aimal Khan and Islamabad United's Hassan Nawaz.

All six future stars with the exception of Arafat, selected in the supplementary round, have been picked in the emerging category for their respective franchise. This young lot will be eager to establish their credentials as the tournament commences in Multan on 13 February with the opening match between Multan Sultans and Lahore Qalandars.

Arafat Minhas – Multan Sultans Arafat has enjoyed a successful run in the series between Pakistan U19 and Bangladesh U19 in November 2022, where he bagged the player of the series award at the end of the three one-days having scored 171 runs with two half-centuries. He also managed to take three wickets. His impressive performances in the Pakistan Cup saw him being attached to Pakistan Test squad for the first Test against New Zealand in December with the objective of providing international exposure and experience.

Belonging to Multan, Arafat is looking forward to representing the city of his birth. "It is an unbelievable feeling and a great opportunity to express myself. I want to prove that I can compete on big stage. To be honest I am not giving myself and specific targets and goals, I just want to go out and express myself and learn from the biggest stars of the game."

"I hope to get tips from the best hitter in the game David Miller with whom I'll be sharing the dressing room. My favourite memory from the HBL PSL is Rilee Rossouw's breathtaking hundred in Multan against Quetta Gladiators in HBL PSL 2020."

Muhammad Irfan Khan – Karachi Kings

A product of the PCB's age-group programme, middle-order batter Muhammad Irfan Khan has represented Pakistan in two ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cups in 2020 and 2022. The 20-year-old made 141 runs in nine innings in the National T20 2022-23 at a strike-rate of 153.26 with a 31-ball 57 against Balochistan being the highlight of his campaign.

"Getting selected for the first time in the HBL PSL is certainly a satisfying feeling. I want to perform well in this tournament as the HBL PSL stage propels you to the limelight and you can boost your case for selection in the national team." "In Karachi Kings, I will have the opportunity of interacting with my cricketing idol Shoaib Malik, who has a lot of experience playing for Pakistan and in leagues around the globe. He is also a middle-order batter like me so I will definitely use the opportunity to learn from him."

"Daren Sammy's heroics for

Peshawar Zalmi in the HBL PSL 2018 match against Quetta Gladiators was a memorable moment. He was unfit during the chase but still helped Peshawar win the match at a time when they required 16 off 7 balls."

Haseebullah – Peshawar Zalmi Talented prospect from Pishin, Haseebullah Khan has been a prolific performer in the domestic circuit ever since he made his List A debut in March 2022.

He was the leading run-getter in his team's Pakistan Cup 2021-22 winning campaign and was second-highest run-scorer in the subsequent season of the 50-over tournament. His tally of 551 runs and 10 dismissals saw him take home the best wicketkeeper of the tournament award.

Harbouring aspirations of becoming the first Test cricketer from Balochistan, Haseebullah wants to make the most of his maiden HBL PSL season. "Being picked in the HBL PSL draft for Peshawar Zalmi was a proud moment for me. Our team has Babar Azam and Haris Sohail. Haris has been my teammate in Balochistan and I had my first experience with Babar bhai during the second Test against New Zealand. I am happy to share the dressing room with them for an entire season."

"One HBL PSL match I still remember was the Qualifier between Quetta Gladiators and Peshawar Zalmi in 2017 when Mohammad Nawaz successfully defended seven runs in the last over."

Shwaiz Irfan – Lahore Qalandars Shwaiz Irfan built a reputation of being a fierce striker of the cricket ball in the Pakistan Junior League. He was part of the champion side Bahawalpur Royals and blasted a 32-ball 79 studded

with six sixes in the final of the competition. His rollicking show allowed him a chance in the Pakistan U19 team for the home series against Bangladesh U19.

"I am thankful for being picked in Lahore Qalandars and I am definitely excited to play in the HBL PSL for the first time. It will be an exciting occasion to play in front of the passionate fans." "I am stoked to share the dressing room with the likes of Rashid Khan, Sikandar Raza, Shaheen Afridi and Haris Rauf, and it was my wish to be in their company." "My favourite moment in the HBL PSL was when I watched the Lahore Qalandars vs Multan Sultans final live from the Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore. It was an inspiring moment to see my heroes in action."

Aimal Khan – Quetta Gladiators Right-arm pacer Aimal Khan made waves in the opening match of the Pakistan Junior League when he bowled a match-winning spell of 3-15 in four overs for Mardan Warriors. Aimal's ability to generate steep pace and sharp swing makes him a potent option with the new ball.

"The HBL PSL is a big brand and its importance is known in the cricket world. I feel honored to play in this league and be associated with Quetta Gladiators." "Interacting with Naseem Shah will be a satisfying experience. I will be using the tips I receive from him to challenge the likes of Mohammad Rizwan and David Miller in the tournament."

"Seeing Shaheen Afridi hit 23 runs in the last over of the chase against Peshawar Zalmi in HBL PSL 2022 to take the game to the Super Over was a thrilling moment for me."

Hassan Nawaz – Islamabad United

The Layyah-born Hassan Nawaz demonstrated his six-hitting talent in the Kashmir Premier League stint with Mirpur Royals, where he managed 241 runs in six innings at a strike-rate of 148.76 and 14 maximums. Hassan also played five games in the National T20 2022-23, showing glimpses of brilliance.

"Islamabad United has always been my favourite team and I am glad to be a part of the franchise in my first HBL PSL season." "Learning from power-hitters like Asif Ali and Colin Munro would hone my skills and make me a better player in this format."

"Witnessing Asif Ali smashing those three consecutive sixes to Hasan Ali in the final of the 2018 edition was a something special. Being a hard-hitting batter myself I fancy his gameplan."

Upcoming HBL PSL media releases: 4 February – Explosive openers in HBL PSL

5 February - Role of the fast bowlers in HBL PSL

6 February – Significance of HBL PSL 7 February – PCB Podcast, featuring Imad Wasim, Mohammad Rizwan and Shadab Khan

Previous HBL PSL media releases: 20 January - HBL PSL 8 schedule announced

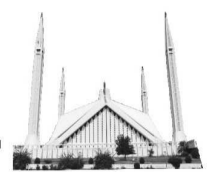
24 January - Fans to nominate Hamarar Heroes for HBL PSL 8

25 January - Teams strengthen rosters in HBL PSL 8 replacement draft

31 January - Babar Azam will aim to notch maiden century in HBL PSL

1 February – Shaheen raring for his comeback in HBL PSL 2023

2 February - Babar, Sarfaraz and Shaheen feature in special edition of PCB Podcast.



In brief

IRSA releases 63,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 63,700 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 50,300 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1491.96 feet and was 93.96 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 15,300 cusecs while outflow as 32,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1130.80 feet, which was 80.80 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 13,300 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 28,700, 40,200, 29,800 and 9,600 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 11,900 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 400 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

ANF recovers over 945 kg drugs

RWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in four operations recovered over 945 kg drugs and arrested four accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Friday. He said that the ANF Balochistan conducted a raid at a hashish factory in Qilla Abdullah and recovered over 934 kg hashish. He added that the factory used to manufacture and pack hashish. During the operation, devices used to manufacture drugs were also seized. He said that in another operation, the ANF recovered five kg hashish from the possession of an accused resident of Quetta, arrested from Sariab Road. In the third operation at Sialkot Airport, the ANF recovered five kg ice drug from the possession of Bahrain-bound two passengers, husband and wife, going on flight no. GF-770. In the fourth operation, the ANF Sindh arrested a drug pusher, resident of Karachi, from Malir area and recovered 1,200 grams of heroin. The spokesman said that separate cases had been registered against the accused while further investigations were in process.

Ashrafi appeals

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Special Representative for Interfaith Harmony and Middle East Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi Friday appealed all stakeholders to make All Parties Conference (APC) a success story keeping in view the current circumstance after the Peshawar tragedy in the country. He, in a video message, said all political and religious leadership should grab this opportunity offered by the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif to cope with the current challenges including the scourge of terrorism being faced by the country. Ashrafi who is also the chairman of Pakistan Ulama Council urged Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan to join this unique platform in larger interest of the country on behalf of his organization and the Ulama and Mashaykh of other schools of thought. He emphasized the need to be united like the Army Public Schools (APS) barbaric incident and devise a collective strategy in a bid to make National Action Plan more vibrant and result-oriented across the country. He expressed the hope that the political and religious leadership would play their constructive role with a unanimous stance of eliminating terrorism and uplifting the economic condition of the country.



ISLAMABAD: A view of banners displayed at a pedestrian bridge ahead of Kashmir Solidarity Day at Faizabad.

NA education body for implementing ICT prohibition of corporal punishment rules

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly Standing Committee on Federal Education and Professional Training appreciated the government for the promulgation of the Islamabad Capital Territory Prohibition of Corporal Punishment Rules, however, directed that implementation of the rules must be ensured in true letter and spirit. The committee passed these remarks during the 36th meeting of the Standing Committee held here on Friday under the Chairmanship of Makhdoom Syed Sami-ul-Hasan Gillani, MNA.

During the course of discussion on an agenda item concerning the framing of rules as an aftermath of "The Prohibition of Corporal Punishment Bill", the Ministry informed the Committee that the rules in question have not only been framed but also promulgated and notified in the Official Gazette on 2nd February 2023. The Committee, while expressing displeasure over the non-attendance of the meeting by the Vice Chancellor, Islamia University Bahawalpur (IUB), directed the Registrar IUB to convey

the VC to ensure attendance in the next meeting. The VC, IUB, was required to hold enquires into two different issues concerning missing admission forms of BA 1st Annual Examination of 2000 and misconduct of an Assistant Professor of IUB namely Dr. Saeed and personally submit reports to the Committee but he did not turn up. On an issue regarding the non-accreditation of engineering degrees of Pakistani students, earned from Hungarian Universities, by Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC), the Committee directed the HEC and the PEC to find out some viable solutions to the issue as the same was causing concerns amongst the students and their parents.

Regarding revision in policy for appointment and promotion of All Pakistan Universities BPS Teachers' Association and release of funds to Tenure Track System (TTS) Teachers against notified salaries, the Committee was informed by the Chairman HEC that he was personally looking into both the issues and the same will be settled in near future with the consensus of

all the stakeholders. On the assurance given by the Chairman HEC, the Committee disposed of both issues.

On the Legislative Business (Bills), the Committee was informed by the Chairman HEC that codal formalities; in respect of the proposed Universities, had not yet been fulfilled by the Movers, therefore, the same could not be supported. The Committee unanimously decided not to take up all those Bills on its agenda till the completion of requisite codal formalities by the Movers. The Committee, however, deferred "The National University of Modern Languages (Amendment) Bill, 2022", "The Pakistan Institute of Research and Registration of Quality Assurance Bill, 2022", "The matter regarding ban on book titled as Ayina-e-Imranyat", "The Federal Urdu University of Arts, Sciences and Technology Islamabad (Amendment) Bill, 2023" and "The National Skills University Islamabad (Amendment) Bill, 2023" due to non-attendance of the Movers.

Vice Chancellors urge Govt to revive HEC Ordinance 2002 in its original form

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Vice Chancellors of all public sector universities of Pakistan have urged the Government to revive the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Ordinance 2002 in its original form and strengthen HEC.

During the 48th Vice Chancellors Committee meeting chaired by Dr. Iqbal Ahmad Khan online, the university heads emphasised that the development of higher education sector made in the past two decades can be consolidated only by strengthening HEC. The forum unanimously opposed the proposed amendments to HEC Ordinance and demanded the Government to ensure HEC's autonomy if it wants the higher education sector to continue playing its part in economic stability and growth. The amendments, if materialised, will cause a severe dent to the higher education sector and will be

tantamount to undoing the progress made so far, they underlined. The university heads also discussed, in detail, the financial, governance and administrative issues of the higher education institutions. They demanded of the provincial governments to share the burden of the federal government and contribute to the universities funding.

Chairman HEC Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed also joined the online session and briefed the Vice Chancellors on the recent developments pertaining to the TTS and BPS models. HEC's quality assurance measures, and the repercussions of amendments to the HEC Ordinance. He emphasised the need for strengthening national institutions and underlined different countries are now setting up higher education entities on the HEC model. Referring to financial crisis, the Chairman asserted that no new universities or

campuses should be established unless there is economic stability in the country. He urged the Vice Chancellors to ensure good financial and administrative governance at the higher education institutions.

Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed underlined that the universities need to strengthen themselves in such a manner that they are approached by the quarters concerned to play the role of think tanks in policy-making at the state level. "Our youth have a great potential, however we need to work on developing in them the skillset relevant to the national and global market," he emphasised. He took a categorical stance on giving affiliations to colleges, saying that HEC will soon ban affiliations as they compromise quality due to anomalies. He also sought input from the Vice Chancellors on resolving the issues arising out of the TTS and BPS models.

Shah Faisal Mosque becomes attraction for local, int'l tourists

ISLAMABAD (APP): Shah Faisal Mosque, one of the country's biggest mosques, is attracting foreign dignitaries and domestic tourists at large, due to its architectural beauty in the heart of scenic Margalla Hills.

Talking to APP, Zulfiqar Ali, a resident of G-9, said he along with his family visited and offered prayers in the Shah Faisal Mosque, whereas its magnificent architecture left them spell bound, as it was designed in a very unique style.

"The mosque's cleanliness and location besides Margalla hills is a source of inspiration for visitors and they love offering the prayers to deliver their religious obligation." "The lovely winter season and peaceful atmosphere is also a key factor for our trip," he added.

He said the security arrangements, book and food stalls made their day so pleasant and marvelous, adding despite of cold weather, the people were visiting and feeling relieved after hearing Azaan and by offering prayers there, as the practice made them feel spiritual and refreshed.

Sajid Ali, a resident of Karachi, said, "Visits to the mosque exemplify the reli-

gious enthusiasm of women, children, young adults, students of various universities and elders."

He stressed the need to allow the women to enter in the main hall of the mosque." He further said, "There is a dire need to further improve and modernize the cleanliness system, security arrangements and availability of hot water for ablution during the winter season."

It is pertinent to mention here that the Shah Faisal Mosque nestled at the foot of Margalla Hills, is one of the most massive and quintessential structures located in capital. Named after its benefactor Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the mosque is not only one of the country's largest mosque but in the world and it is among the most popular and historically significant tourist attractions. Saudi King Faisal allotted a colossal grant of \$120 million for the construction of a mosque in Pakistan when he paid a historic visit to the country in 1966. A competition for the design of the mosque was held, and among 43 authentic proposals from 17 countries, Turkish architect Vedat Dalokay's design for the mosque was deemed worthy of winning the contest.

Holy Quran desecration unbearable for Muslim Ummah: Abdul Shakoor

ISLAMABAD (INP): Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Mufti Abdul Shakoor said the Holy Quran desecration was an unbearable act for Muslim Ummah across the world.

He was addressing the video link conference of the ministers of religious affairs of Muslim countries on the invitation of Head of Turkish Religious Affairs Dr Ali Arbash the other day.

The ministers of religious affairs of Islamic countries including Malaysia, Sudan, Djibouti, Iran, and Palestine participated in the conference.

Condemning the desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden, Minister Abdul Shakoor said the divine command was our basis and foundation and no Muslim could tolerate its desecration anyway.

He said similar incidents had also happened in Canada, New Zealand and other countries but the recent hateful incident of desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden was not acceptable at all. "Islam is a religion of peace and tolerance and we respect everyone," he

added.

He said we thanked the head of Turkish religious affairs for realizing the sensitivity of this issue and uniting his counterparts of various Islamic countries and important personalities to discuss the permanent solution of such incidents. Minister Abdul Shakoor said the government, scholars and people of Pakistan strongly condemned this loathsome incident.

Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Mufti Abdul Shakoor said it was natural for Muslims to be concerned about this and adopt a firm and aggressive stance on it.

He said it was the responsibility of the United Nations and major countries to play their role as there was a dire need to make permanent and effective legislation on this matter.

After the legislation, these laws should be implemented in letter and spirit globally as it would help to stop the reoccurring of such nuisance issues and maintain peace and tranquillity in the comity of nations, he maintained.

Govt committed to supporting returnees to find better employment prospects: Turi

ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Minister for overseas Pakistanis and Human Resources Sajid Hussain Turi Tuesday said that the government was committed to supporting returnees and the local population to find better employment prospects and income sources.

Addressing an event organized by Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF), he applauded OPF and GIZ for their efforts to find out sustained self-employment for the returning migrants.

The event was a part of OPF's efforts to foster decent working conditions in the country in order to realize its vision

of a "prosperous human resource, prosperous Pakistan."

OPF is implementing a program in collaboration with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) in Pakistan. It is commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation & Development Germany, (BMZ) and is part of BMZ support for the voluntary return & sustainable reintegration.

Some 174 participants including women received the toolkits in the fields of culinary arts, Tailoring & fashion designing, Digital tools

and e-banking services, Solar PV systems, plumbing, electrical, carpentry and, masonry. The participants have already completed comprehensive training in their respective fields. Dr. Sebastian Paust, Head of Development Cooperation, Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany was also present at the occasion.

Managing Director OPF, Dr. Amer Sheikh, Tobias Becker, Country Director GIZ, OPF Board of Governors, senior government officials, representatives of international organizations and civil society representatives also attended the event.

Mushaal urges Pakistan to approach ICJ over illegal imprisonment of Kashmiri leadership

ISLAMABAD (APP): Mushaal Hussain Mullick, wife of Kashmiri Hurriyat leader Muhammad Yasin Malik incarcerated in Tihar jail in India on Friday urged the government of Pakistan to approach International Court of Justice for release of Kashmiri leaders imprisoned in various Indian jails and gross human rights abuses being committed by Indian occupation forces in Indian Illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

She was speaking at the opening ceremony of a one-day digital photographic and painting exhibition organized by the Directorate of Electronic Media and Publications (DEMP), a subsidiary of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, marking Kashmir Solidarity Day at the Information Services Academy.

She said that in view of August 5, 2019 unilateral annexation of IIOJK and wilfully changing the demography of the Occupied territory, the UN Security Council should adopt a new resolution and appoint a special envoy on Kashmir.

Executive Director General Directorate of Electronic Media and Publications Dr Tariq Mehmood, APHC leader Abdul Hameed Lone, Director Films DEMP Asifur Rehman, Deputy Director Farina Mughal and other officials of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting attended the ceremony.

Mushaal Mullick said that today's exhibition had highlighted the freedom movement in the best way as the picture makes the world aware of the

reality. She said that India had turned IIOJK into an inferno where genocide of armless Kashmiri people was being committed by the occupational forces. She said the new generation should be apprised that India has been illegally occupying Kashmir and suppressing Kashmiris for 75 years. "There is a complete blackout in Occupied Kashmir and no one can stop India's terrorism in the occupied territory", she remarked.

She said that UN had taken notice of major conflicts in the world, it was but no action had been taken against India's state terrorism in IIOJK.

Mushaal Hussain Mullick said that almost all top Hurriyat leadership in IIOJK was behind the bars. She said that great Hurriyat leader Ali Geelani was martyred and his mortal remains were desecrated, Arshaf Serahi was poisoned inside the jail. She said Asia Andrabi and Shabir Shah were facing hardships in jails despite being ill. About her consort Yasin Malik, she said he has been kept in a death cell for the last four years. She said that Yasin Malik was given boiling water for ablution which burnt his arm. The Kashmiri leader said that the manner in which India has changed the demography of Occupied Kashmir, if attention was not paid, it will become mini-India in one year. She said that the most serious violations of human rights were taking place in IIOJK at the hands of Indian occupation forces.

Moreover, she said the international community has observed terrorist activities of RSS which had made

lives of minorities miserable in India. Mashaal Hussain Malik said that minorities are being victimised in India and a recent BBC report about Gujarat has exposed Modi.

About the media gag in IIOJK, she said that there were restrictions on journalists, cameramen, researchers, human rights activists and media houses but the international community was silent because of economic considerations.

She said that the voice of 220 million Pakistanis including all segments of society was with the Kashmiris and "we should not get tired, we should fulfill this duty honestly."

APHC leader Abdul Hameed Lone said that he was grateful to the government of Pakistan and the Ministry of Information, which has been exposing the ugly face of India. He said Pakistanis and Kashmiris were one nation and February 5 Solidarity Day was its manifestation. He said that Kashmir Solidarity Day has been celebrated with the same enthusiasm for several decades. He said that the people of Occupied Kashmir are suffering today, India had been trying to change its demography. Executive Director General DEMP Dr Tariq Mehmood told the participants about the 50 best paintings of a painting competition on Kashmir freedom struggle among students of various local universities were put on display. He said that two documentary films "Kashmir Blackout" and "Story of Kashmir" and a song titled "Kashmir Hamara Hai" produced by DEMP have been released in connection with Kashmir Solidarity Day.



ISLAMABAD: Children performing tableau during Kashmir Solidarity Day Ceremony, organized by Pakistan National Council of the Arts in collaboration with Ministry of Kashmir Affairs & Gilgit-Baltistan.

24 tankers rejected: ANSA

KABUL (Pajhwok): Twenty-four tankers loaded with fuel had been returned back to Iran due to its low quality, The Afghanistan National Standard Authority (ANSA) said on Friday. ANSA on its Twitter handle wrote after laboratory test when it was proven that the quality of loaded fuel did not meet the set standard then it was returned back to Iran. People in southwestern Nimroz province had complained against the low quality of fuel and said it usage created problems for them.

23 alleged criminals arrested

KABUL (Pajhwok): Security forces have arrested 23 people in connection to different crimes in Kabul and other provinces in the past 24 hours, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) said on Friday. Fourteen people have been arrested in connection to robbery in Kabul, Herat and Kunduz provinces, the MoI wrote on its twitter handle. In addition, some individuals were arrested in connection to forgery, bribe, posing threat and moral corruption.

Asia is comparable to a living body composed of soil and water. The heart that beats inside the body is Afghanistan. The destruction of Afghanistan would be the destruction of Asia. And in its progress and prosperity lies the well-being of Asia. - Allama Iqbal

Niklasson in Pakistan Discusses Afghan Female NGO Workers



KABUL (ToloNews): The EU special envoy Tomas Niklasson tweeted that he met the Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, Asad M. Khan, and Pakistan special envoy for Afghanistan, Mohammad Sadiq, and discussed consequences of Kabul's decision to "prevent millions of Afghans from accessing

humanitarian assistance by banning Afghan women from NGO work." "We also discussed the need for inclusive government and to protect human rights and freedoms," Niklasson said. "I welcomed clear OIC stance on women's right to education and work."

"While we do not wish to isolate Afghanistan, recognition of the Taliban regime is not on the table," he added. The Islamic Emirate said that the caretaker government is seeking good relations with the international community and that there should be steps towards recognition

of the Islamic Emirate. "The Islamic Emirate doesn't want Afghanistan to be isolated and it wants good relations with the world's countries including the European countries. But the EU should take practical steps for recognition," Islamic Emirate's spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid said. The political analysts urged direct negotiations between the officials from the EU and Islamic Emirate. "Europe needs to negotiate face to face with the Islamic Emirate," said Hatif Mukhtar, head of the Afghanistan Strategic Studies Center. "When the Taliban imposes restrictions on women's access to work at the NGOs, it has a direct impact on the society," said Ahmad Khan Andar, a political analyst. Earlier, many countries including Iran stressed the need for the formation of an inclusive government, but the Islamic Emirate has repeatedly stressed that its government is inclusive.

International pressure creates mistrust

KABUL (ToloNews): The leader of the Islamic Emirate, Mawlawi Hebatullah Akhundzada, said at a meeting with army corps commanders that pressure from the international community on the current government will not be beneficial, but will instead create mistrust. Mawlawi Hebatullah Akhundzada emphasized at this meeting that if they act against Sharia, the people will rise against the Islamic Emirate, according to a statement from the Islamic Emirate's spokesperson, Zabiullah Mujahid. "In this meeting, the security issues were discussed in order to be strengthened, as well as the issues of the nation, so that Afghanistan does not harm anyone and that we do not encounter harm from the outside," Mujahid said. In the statement, the leader of the Islamic Emirate visited the commanders and high-ranking officials of 207 Farooq, 203 Mansouri, 217 Omari and 201 Khaled bin Waleed corps. Some political analysts do not consider the



application of pressure to be beneficial for either side, and say that the problems should be resolved through dialogue and understanding. "The solution is to change stance and achieve understanding with the international community," said Shir Hassan Hassan, a political analyst. "We hope that the discussion and talks with the international community

and international organizations will continue on the basis of a shared definition of national interests that will close gaps between the government and the people," said Mohammad Zalmai Afghanyar, a political analyst. On Thursday, in response to the ban on women attending university and working for NGOs in Afghanistan, the US State

Department imposed new visa restrictions on a number of current and former officials of the Islamic Emirate. The US State Department in a press statement said that the Islamic Emirate cannot expect the respect and support of the international community until they respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Afghans, including women and girls.

West discusses Afghanistan with German officials

KABUL (ToloNews): The US special envoy for Afghanistan, Thomas West, on his visit to Germany met with the country's senior officials and discussed ways of bringing Afghan women back to work. Earlier, the US Department of State announced that West was set for travel to Pakistan, Germany and Switzerland. "Consulted with German allies in Berlin re how we

support Afghan ppl by getting women back to work delivering vital aid," West said. "No better partner. This is a tough juncture for Afghans in need and for all countries that want to see a more stable economy." West said that he also met Afghan women supporting "creative" maternal health and education programs in Afghanistan. "Must continue to

ground our thinking and programming in experience of Afghans who know their country," he said. The Islamic Emirate suggested that West's visits focus on the elimination of Afghanistan's problems. "When he is visiting the countries. Of course the internal issues of Afghanistan and the US are being discussed in the countries. This will not be effective. It is better to

understand the realities and engage in negotiations to resolve the issues," said Islamic Emirate's spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid. Political analysts said that the visits of the US envoy to Afghanistan have not brought significant results. "The visit of West will not have any impact on the decision of the Taliban and the situation in Afghanistan," said Noorullah Raghi, a political analyst. "Obviously, the Americans are not in a position of confrontation but are in a position of making excuses for engagement and this issue from the Westerner side and American side is understandable," said Nematullah Bizhan, a university instructor. Earlier, in Pakistan, West met with the country's Chief of Army Staff Syed Asim Munir, special envoy for Afghanistan Mohammad Sadiq and Foreign Minister Asad M. Khan.



IEA condemns US visa restriction on its leaders

KABUL (Pajhwok): The 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan' (IEA) has condemned recent US decision of imposing new visa restrictions on some of its leaders and urged the resolution of disputes through diplomatic channel, according to a statement on Friday. IEA asked US to remain committed to the Doha Agreement and through implementation demonstrate that legal documents and agreements signed with the US are trustworthy. The aing IEA government reaffirmed its readiness to discuss all outstanding issues with the US. The statement said that IEA as a responsible government was committed to all rights of its people which are necessitated by the holy religion of Islam accepted Afghan tradition and demanded by the time. Earlier, the Biden administration slapped fresh visa restrictions on current and former members of IEA and



others believed to be involved in curbing the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan. Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced on Wednesday the restrictions also applied to non-state security group

members and others involved in trampling on women's rights. In a statement from the State Department, Blinken noted: "The Taliban's most recent edicts ban women from universities and from working with

NGOs..." The decrees tightened the caretaker government's previous measures that closed secondary schools to girls and limited the ability of women and girls to participate in Afghan society and economy, he said.

SIGAR: US aid may 'confer legitimacy' onto Islamic Emirate

KABUL (ToloNews): The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) said in its newly released report said that the "Taliban" derives revenue from this aid in the form of "licenses," "taxes," and "administrative fees" imposed on NGOs and their employees as a condition for operating in Afghanistan. SIGAR also said that since the fall of the former government, the US has appropriated or otherwise made available over \$8 billion in assistance to Afghanistan and Afghan refugees. "This includes more than \$2 billion, primarily for

humanitarian and development aid in Afghanistan, and \$3.5 billion transferred to a newly created Afghan Fund to recapitalize the Afghan central bank and for related purposes. In addition, the United States obligated \$2.7 billion in FY 2022 for the Department of Defense (DOD) to transport, house, and feed Afghan evacuees," the report said. According to SIGAR, the US is also the largest donor to the United Nations humanitarian aid effort for Afghanistan. SIGAR said that most gains made by Afghan women and girls over the past 20 years have now been wholly lost.

"By Taliban edict, women are being systematically erased from public life," the report said. "They face severe restrictions on their movements outside their homes, requirements to be fully covered in public, limited opportunities for employment, and a ban on attending school past the sixth grade." SIGAR said that its judgment shows that the "Taliban regime's institutionalized abuse of women" raises the important question for policymakers of whether the United States can continue providing aid to Afghanistan without benefiting or "propping up the Taliban." Several realities have to

be taken into consideration, according to SIGAR: "First, the Taliban regime derives revenue from this aid in the form of "licenses," "taxes," and "administrative fees" imposed on NGOs and their employees as a condition for operating in Afghanistan. Second, U.S. aid to Afghanistan, whether humanitarian in nature or of some other kind, may inadvertently confer legitimacy onto the Taliban, both internationally and domestically. Third, the Taliban's erasure of women from public life has substantially hindered or prevented the provision of humanitarian aid. Fourth, a record two-thirds of the country, or some 28.3 million Afghans, are depending on international food assistance this winter, according to the UN." SIGAR said that there is no certainty how much of this aid will reach its intended recipients and that there is also no guarantee that either providing or stopping that aid will succeed in changing the Taliban's behavior. According to the US watchdog, the international effort to avert starvation in Afghanistan was imperiled this quarter by the "Taliban's decision" to ban women from working for humanitarian organizations in the country.

500KV Paron power station electricity not being consumed



PARON (Pajhwok): Due to the lack of supply system 500 kilovolt electricity produced by the power station in eastern Nuristan province could not be consumed and go wasted, an official said on Friday. Fazal Haq Haqqani,

electricity affairs in-charge, told Pajhwok Afghan News the Nuristan power station constructed on Paron River comprised of two turbines produced total 750 kilovolt electricity. He said 250 kilovolt

electricity was distributed to Paron City, markets, shops and restaurants while the remaining 500 kilovolt was wasted because there was no supply system to distribute it to the consumers. He said annually 15

million afis revenue was generated from the current electricity distribution and if all 750 kilovolt electricity was distributed the revenue would surge to 40 million afis. Saifuddin Laton, the governor spokesperson, said that the provincial government was exploring ways to distribute electricity to other parts of the province. He said Governor Hafiz Mohammad Agha during his recent trip to Kabul discussed the issue with the Energy and Water Minister. Laton said that last week a technical team arrived in the province from Kabul and conducted a survey in the Mandi, Madin and Pashki villages. He said the electricity supply process will kick start in March and this project will cost millions of Afghani.

Newly built slaughter house opened in Mazar-i-Sharif house

MAZAR-I-SHARIF (Pajhwok): A new slaughter house has been inaugurated in Mazar-i-Sharif, the capital of northern Balkh province, at the cost of six million dollar, an official said on Friday. Nasratullah Yousufzai, in charge of the slaughter house, said the facility was built and completed in 2017 but it was not inaugurated due to some issues. He added six million dollar

were provided by the Asian Development Bank for the project. Yousufzai said the facility was built on 12.5 acres of land where 3,500 small and 600 large animals could be slaughtered in 24 hours. In addition, Over 300 people had been provided direct work opportunity in the facility. Acting Agriculture Minister Mawlawi Attaullah Umari said after the inauguration of this facility

people will be able to get health meat. He said most animals in the country slaughtered in unprofessional manner due to which some diseases transferred from animals to humans and caused the loss of previous lives. Mazar-i-Sharif Mayor Naqibullah Tariq said the slaughter house had all the required facilities and met the required standard.



Tensions simmer among Palestinian prisoners

WEST BANK (Agencies): After Hamas's armed wing in the besieged Gaza Strip launched rockets towards Israel, it explained its reasons; chief among them was the treatment of what it termed a "red line": female Palestinian prisoners. The announcement touched on an issue that has gone under the radar in the past week, with the focus instead on the escalating violence in the occupied West Bank.

But Israeli prison authorities have also taken increasingly tough measures against Palestinian inmates in the past week, according to Palestinian prisoners' legal and rights groups. These include solitary confinement, increased searches of cells and bans on visits. The tensions inside the prisons have threatened to stir up the already-fragile situation on the ground in the occupied Palestinian territories.

"The situation is going from bad to worse inside the prisons," Qadri Abu Baker, head of the Palestinian Authority's (PA) Commission of Detainees Affairs, told Al Jazeera. "They [Israeli authorities] do what they want because there is no one to deter them or to hold them accountable." On Friday, Asra Media, affili-

ated with Hamas, the group that controls the Gaza Strip, reported that a resolution had been reached with Israel, and that "life will return to normal for the female prisoners by the coming Sunday". Prisoners' rights groups have also confirmed that some of the measures imposed by prison authorities in the past week have been lifted.

However, Amany Sarahneh, spokesperson for the Palestinian Prisoners' Society (PPS), said that the problems had not been fully resolved. "The situation at any moment can lead to a confrontation since there are issues that have not been looked into in a final manner," Sarahneh said. The developments over the past week have been mainly centred in the Naqab (Negev), Ofer, and Megiddo men's prisons, as well as the Damon women's prison, where Israeli authorities imposed collective punishment measures after some inmates were heard celebrating the attack in occupied East Jerusalem on the night of January 27 in which seven Israelis were killed.

The shooting in Jerusalem came one day after an Israeli military attack on the Jenin refugee camp, in which 10 people were killed. In several sec-

tions of the Naqab and Damon prisons, special prison forces carried out raids and thorough searches of rooms, confiscated all electrical devices, banned canteen access and family visits, and imposed collective and solitary isolation on more than 100 prisoners – measures that went on for a week. In Ofer and Megiddo, prisoners groups said that authorities raided rooms and beat prisoners, and that in Damon, female prisoners had been taken out by force from their rooms, including some who were dragged from their headscarves.

"The situation is not OK – it is tense. The prison administration is still carrying out provocative actions against the prisoners, there are tens of prisoners in solitary and collective isolation. There are men still in pain from being beaten during raids," Sarahneh told Al Jazeera. For their part, the Israeli prison service on Thursday said that "a state of heightened alert with reinforced staffing levels" had been imposed, adding that intelligence had been received that prisoners "were planning to harm prison staff", according to the Jerusalem Post. The spokesperson added that two women had been put in solitary

confinement after prisoners had been heard cheering the East Jerusalem attack. During the past week, prisoners in several sections decided to go on a days-long hunger strike and employed a strategy of non-cooperation with authorities as a form of protest. Several female prisoners in Damon also attempted to burn their rooms following the raids.

"Daily life inside the prisons was halted entirely as a form of protest against the procedures taken by the administration against the prisoners," said Sarahneh. "The issue that pushed it over the edge in the past week was a raid that happened inside the Damon female prison on Tuesday." While the issue of Palestinian prisoners has been in the spotlight since September 2021, when six inmates broke out of an Israeli prison, the matter has taken a more serious turn under the far-right national security minister, Itamar Ben-Gvir, who is in charge of police and prisoners in his role in Israel's new extreme-right government. Many Palestinians view detainees in Israeli prisons as political prisoners who are being held because of the Israeli occupation or their resistance to it.

There are at least 4,700 Palestinians in Israeli prisons including 150 minors, 34 women and 835 people held without trial or charge, according to the Ramallah-based Addameer prisoner rights group. Several days after Ben-Gvir took office at the end of last year, authorities moved 80 Palestinian prisoners between different prisons, including longtime political leader Marwan Barghouti, as part of a larger plan that preceded Ben-Gvir's rule but which he is quickly implementing. Several other transfer operations of dozens of Palestinian prisoners have taken place since then.

"Their forcible transfer was reported to be extremely harsh and degrading, with a complete strip search of each person and not allowing persons to take any of their belongings with them. Those prisoners who refused to transfer were punished by solitary confinement for a few days before being forcibly transferred," Addameer said in a report. The group noted that "such collective and retaliatory penalties violate the absolute prohibition in customary international law against the collective punishment of protected people in occupied territory, as enshrined in Article 33(1)

of the Fourth Geneva Convention". After a breakout of six prisoners from Gilboa prison in September 2021, a special Israeli follow-up committee was formed. The committee recommended that prisoners, particularly those sentenced to life, should not stay in the same room for more than six months, in the same section of the prison for more than a year, and in the same prison for more than three years.

By doing this, said Sarahneh, Israeli prison authorities "try to hit any type of stability in life that is formed inside the prison – or for the prisoner himself". On January 11, Ben-Gvir pushed through draft legislation intended to revoke Israeli citizenship or residency from Palestinian prisoners with Israeli passports or Jerusalem residency IDs who have carried out armed attacks against Israelis. The proposed legislation passed through a preliminary reading by the Israeli government but has yet to become law. Ben-Gvir has said that he is "obligated to prevent benefits and indulgences for terrorists imprisoned in Israel". He added that the "death penalty should be enacted for terrorists, but until then, they should be treated" as such.

Aseefa opens 12th Sartyoon Sang Crafts exhibition

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari on Friday inaugurated the three day 12th SRSO Sartyoon Sang Crafts exhibition at Ocean Mall Clifton, here on Friday. On the occasion Sindh Minister for Health, Dr. Azra Fazal Pechuho, Minister for Local Government, Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, owner of ocean Mall, Mr. Tariq Rafi, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) SRSO, Muhammad Dittal Kalhoro, Provincial Secretary, Minority Affairs Muhammad Abbas Bolach, Member BoD Aazar Ayaz, Member BoD Ghulam Sarwar Khoro, Rural Women Artisans and others were present.

The three-day exhibition is organized by the Sindh Rural Support Organization (SRSO) with collaboration of Sindh government and its partners displaying work of around thousands of women artisans of Sindh with an aim to provide market linkages to rural women and artisans, especially after the flood-disaster. Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari appreciated the endeavours of Sindh Rural Support Organizations for poor and destitute communities and voiced her expectation of the continuation of such support for rural communities of Sindh.

She met and purchased wares from artisan women who came from flood-disaster areas and appreciated their work and craftsmanship despite dealing with the calamitous situation. The first day of the exhibition received an overwhelming response from local and international visitors. Appreciating the exhibition, Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari said arranging such an activity to promote arti-



sans, handicrafts and Sindh's culture was a great effort being made by the SRSO.

The Craft Exhibition is being organized by SRSO for the last eleven years with the motive to support ethical fashion and to promote crafts of some of the most marginalised women in the province.

The event also attracted large numbers of women residents of Clifton and nearby areas. The exhibition showcases a wide array of Sindh's handicrafts made by rural women including home textiles, basketry, jewellery, dresses, dupattas and shawls, embellished with traditional embroidery and cutwork.

These events are aimed at boosting local and traditional crafts and processes, and have created a foundation and process for connecting Business Development Groups (BDGs) and artisans to the high end market of Karachi. This is purely an effort to develop market opportunities for rural women especially those from extremely remote villages of northern Sindh with the profit being

transferred to the artisans. Chief Executive Officer (CEO), SRSO, Muhammad Dittal Kalhoro told that the event's objective was to facilitate better incomes for flood affected women artisans of rural Sindh. "In this connection, SRSO trained more than 10,000 women from the most under developed regions including Jacobabad, Kandhkot, Kashmore, Shikarpur, Ghotki, Kambhar, Shahdadkot, Khairpur, Sukkur and other districts that to help these women gain maximum monetary benefit from their skills, they have incorporated urban trends into their work."

SRSO has organized the 12th Sartyoon Sang exhibition with the support of Sindh Government to showcase the work of rural artisans from flood-affected areas, with 95 Business Development Groups representing 1572 artisans of 12 districts, displaying and marketing their hand-made crafts including Plazo, Shalwar, Garara, Trouser, Shawl, Dupatta, Stoles, Wascitcoat, date Leaf, Wheat Straw, Khussa, Moora, Straw and Rillies, bed sheets and cushions.

State to adopt zero tolerance against terrorism: PM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Friday said the state would adopt zero tolerance against terrorism and not allow anti-terror gains to be reversed.

The prime minister, in a series of tweets, said, "At Apex Committee meeting on Friday, civil and military leadership expressed unflinching resolve to protect the people of Pakistan at any cost. Those who attacked innocent citizens will be brought to justice. We will not allow anti-terror gains to be reversed."

He said the meeting reviewed the security landscape and agreed to adopt a uniform policy between the federation and provinces. It considered proposals for revision of the National Action Plan and approved a slew of measures to improve investigation, forensic and working of the Counter Terrorism Department.

The prime minister said media, religious scholars and political leaders had a fundamental role in creating national consensus against terrorism. "The state will adopt zero tolerance policy against terrorism. The meeting agreed to institute implementation mechanism for the decisions," he added.

DROs for by-poll took oath of offices

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: District Returning Officers (DROs) for by-election on 8 constituencies of the National Assembly from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa scheduled on March 16, 2023 took oath of their offices as per electoral laws here on Friday.

The Provincial Election Commissioner (PEC), Shamshad Khan administered the oath to them. Those who took oath as DROs for by-election were included NA-4 Swat (Faridullah), NA-17 Haripur (Shaukat Hussain), NA-18 Swabi (Rahamzada), NA-25 & NA-26 Nowshera (Abdul Samad Khan), NA-32 Kohat (Anwar Iqbal), NA-38 D.I. Khan (Ijaz Ahmad) and NA-43 (Shahid Ali) respectively.

These DROs will administer oaths to their concerned Returning and Assistant Returning Officers, followed by administering oaths to Presiding Officers. According to the schedule announced by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for the by-election, DROs have issued public notice today (February 3, 2023) while nominations could be filed from February 6 to 8, 2023.

The list of all those who have filed nominations would be released on February 9, 2023 and scrutiny of nomination papers would be held till February 13, 2023. Appeals against the acceptance or rejection of nomination papers by the Returning Officers could be filed with the concerned Appellate Tribunal till February 16, 2023, which will decide them till February 20, 2023. The revised list of candidates would be issued on February 21, 2023 while nomination could be withdrawn till February 22, 2023 and final list would be issued on February 23, 2023, which would be followed by the allotment of electoral symbols to candidates. Polling would be held on March 16, 2023.



PESHAWAR: Family members of Police Lines mosque blast victims and social activists holding placards during a protest.

President directs FBR to reconsider appointment of rejected candidate

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Friday directed FBR to reconsider the appointment of a candidate from Ex-FATA who had been denied employment, despite securing first position in the written exam.

The FBR rejected the candidate on the ground that his degree was issued to him late by his university due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and he was not in possession of the degree on the cut-off date. The president observed that FBR had ignored the university's categorical statement on his degree stating that the complainant was eligible for admission in any university or job from June/July 2021 as his degree was issued late in June 2022 due to COVID-19 which was beyond human control, and it was not the fault of the student.

He gave this decision in a case where Hamza Wazir (the complainant) had applied for the post of Assistant (BS-15) in FBR in October 2021, secured first position in the written test, and subsequently, was also called for an interview. The FBR denied him the job opportunity by claiming that since the degree was issued to the complainant on June 02, 2022 after a lapse of more than eight months after the date of advertise-

ment published on September 19, 2021, therefore, he did not meet the relevant criteria for the post.

Feeling aggrieved, the complainant approached the Wafaqi Mohtasib (WM) who gave the order that the selection and appointment of a person against an advertised post was the sole prerogative of the Agency, and the case was referred to Chairman FBR for consideration.

The complainant, then, filed a review petition with WM which was rejected on the ground that on the cut-off date, the complainant had no proof of being a Bachelor's Degree holder, therefore, he was not eligible for the said post, and that no maladministration was established on the part of FBR. Subsequently, Hamza Wazir filed a representation to the president, he added.

The president accepted his representation, and held that FBR had not considered the case of the complainant objectively by not providing him the opportunity to explain the matter and deprived him of his due right; that special relaxation, incentives and enticements were given at large due to epidemic of COVID-19, which was beyond human control. He further stated that nowadays, there was tough competition for each and every post and a large number of can-

didates were coming forward, and the obligation to act fairly on the part of administrative authorities had been evolved to ensure the due process of law, prevent the failure of justice and avoid any unfair treatment.

The president noted that earlier on 24-05-2021, the complainant had filed a complaint before WM with the plea that he got admission in the Associate Degree Program at Islamabad Postgraduate College, affiliated with the Quaid-e-Azam University, in 2019 and it had not declared the result of 1st and 2nd semester despite a lapse of two years, which would delay the completion of his degree and also affect his career prospects.

The case had been disposed of on the assurance of the University's representative before the President's Secretariat that the student's bachelor's degree might be considered from June/July 2021. He added that the act of FBR ran counter to this decision of the president, therefore, maladministration had been established on the part of FBR. President Alvi, therefore, set aside the orders of the Mohtasib and directed FBR to reconsider the appointment of the complainant against the post of the Assistant against the quota of Ex-FATA.

Pakistani prisoner released from Guantanamo, sent to Belize

ISLAMABAD (INP): A Pakistani who was tortured by the CIA and held in the Guantanamo Bay prison for 16 years after admitting to helping Al-Qaeda was released to Belize, the US military announced. Majid Shoukat Khan, captured by US authorities in 2003 and interrogated by US intelligence for three years before being sent to Guantanamo, admitted in a 2012 plea deal to joining a plot to assassinate Pakistan's president and acting as a money courier for an Indonesia hotel bombing plot. But, as one of the US "high value" prisoners captured in the wake of the September 11, 2001 Al-Qaeda attacks on the United States, Khan, now 42, was sentenced only two years ago.

He was officially given 26 years in prison but was promised release in 2022 based on his original plea deal. In his sentencing hearing Khan became the first of the "high value" prisoners to testify to the US military court about being tortured. He told the court of being held for days partially suspended by chains without food or clothing, and of being repeatedly beaten and raped by CIA interrogators. Khan said he admitted early on to what he had done, but the abuse continued for years. "The more I cooperated and told them, the more I was tortured," he said. The Pentagon said Khan had honoured his coop-

eration agreement and was credited in a sentence reduction, and that Belize, a country in Central America, had agreed to accept him.

"I have been given a second chance in life and I intend to make the most of it," Khan said in a statement released by his attorneys. "I deeply regret the things that I did many years ago, and I have taken responsibility and tried to make up for them," he said.

He said that in Belize he hopes to open a restaurant or food truck. "I am a great cook and would love to introduce everyone in my new country to Pakistani food," he said. Wells Dixon, an attorney at the Center for Constitutional Rights who has represented Khan since 2006, said he was "thrilled" by the release.

"Majid's transfer is the culmination of decades-long litigation and advocacy by the Center for Constitutional Rights to challenge the worst abuses of the 'war on terror' and close the Guantanamo Bay prison," he said in a statement. Khan, who grew up in Pakistan and moved to the United States at the age of 16 when he attended high school in Baltimore, said his decision to help Al-Qaeda was poor judgment.

He was recruited to help Al-Qaeda by family members in Pakistan while he was there in 2002 to find a bride. Out of around 800

prisoners at its peak, the Guantanamo facility, on a US Navy base on the southeast coast of Cuba, now holds 34. Of them, 20 have been approved for release and the US government is seeking countries to accept them, whether their home countries or others. Three more are seeking to be ruled eligible for release.

Of the other 11, two have been convicted in military courts and another nine, including five men accused of helping plan the September 11 attacks, are still in pre-trial phase. The trials have bogged down on questions of rights and legal principles, including whether some of them were illegally tortured into confessing their crimes.

According to a Newspaper attorneys for the five 9/11 defendants, including mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, may be in talks to settle their cases by offering to plead guilty if they avoid the death penalty.

President Joe Biden pledged before his election to try and shut down Guantanamo, which was opened to keep the defendants from claiming rights under US law. "Guantanamo is a national shame," said Katya Jestin, another of Khan's attorneys. "Closing Guantanamo would go a long way toward reclaiming the values that our country was founded upon."