

Court exempts Imran
ISLAMABAD (INP): The district and sessions court of Islamabad Wednesday accepted the plea of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan for exemption from personal appearance in the case of hooliganism and interfering in the state affairs during the party's long march. The challan of the case was submitted against Imran Khan and other PTI leaders.

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LAHORE: Ms. Auneza Fatima, former member of Punjab Assembly called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Turkiye, Syria earthquake toll hits 12,000

ISTANBUL (Agencies: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Wednesday conceded "shortcomings" after criticism of his government's response to the massive earthquake that killed over 12,000 people in Türkiye and Syria. The sprawling scale of the disaster that flattened thousands of buildings, trapping an unknown number of people, has swamped relief operations already hampered by freezing weather.

Survivors have been left to scramble for food and shelter — and in some cases watch helplessly as their relatives called for rescue, and eventually went silent under the debris. "My nephew, my sister-in-law and my sister-in-law's sister are in the ruins. They are trapped under the ruins and there is no sign of life," said Semire Coban, a kindergarten teacher, in Türkiye's Hatay. "We can't reach them. We are trying to talk to them, but they are not responding ... We are waiting for help. It has been 48 hours now," she said.

Still, searchers kept pulling survivors from the debris three days after the 7.8 magnitude quake that is already one of the deadliest this century, even as the death toll continues to rise. As criticism mounted online, Erdogan visited one of the hardest-hit spots, quake epicentre Kahramanmaraş, and acknowledged problems in the response. "Of course, there are shortcomings. The conditions are clear to see. It's not possible to be ready for a disaster like this," he said.

Twitter was also not working on Turkish mobile networks, according to AFP journalists and NetBlocks web monitoring group. The window for rescuers to find survivors is narrowing as the effort nears the 72-hour mark that disaster experts consider the most likely period to save lives. Yet on Wednesday, rescuers pulled children from under a collapsed building in the hard-hit Turkish province of Hatay, where whole stretches of towns have been levelled. "All of a sudden we heard voices and thanks to the excavator ... immediately we heard the voices of three people at the same time," said rescuer Alperen Cetinkaya.

"We are expecting more of them ... the chances of getting people out of



here alive are very high," he added. Officials and medics said 9,057 people had died in Türkiye and 2,662 in Syria from Monday's 7.8-magnitude tremor, bringing the total to 11,719 — but that could yet double if the worst fears of experts are realised. The World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has warned that time was running out for the thousands injured and those still feared trapped. Due to the scale of the damage and the lack of help coming to certain areas, survivors said they felt alone in responding to the disaster.

"Even the buildings that haven't collapsed were severely damaged. There are now more people under the rubble than those above it," a resident named Hassan, who did not provide his full name, said in the rebel-held town of Jindayris. "There are around 400-500 people trapped under each collapsed building, with only 10 people trying to pull them out. And there is no machinery," he added. The White Helmets, leading efforts to rescue people buried under rubble in rebel-held areas of Syria, have appealed for international help in their "race against time".

They have been toiling since the quake to pull survivors out from under the debris of dozens of flattened buildings in northwestern areas of war-torn Syria that remain outside the government's control. "International rescue teams must come into our region," said

Mohammed Shibli, a spokesperson for the group known formally as the Syria Civil Defence. "People are dying every second; we are in a race against time," he told AFP from neighbouring Türkiye.

The issue of aid to Syria was a delicate one, and the sanctioned government in Damascus made an official plea to the EU for help, the bloc's commissioner for crisis management Janez Lenarcic said. A decade of civil war and Syrian-Russian aerial bombardment had already destroyed hospitals, collapsed the economy and prompted electricity, fuel and water shortages. The European Commission is "encouraging" EU member countries to respond to Syria's request for medical supplies and food, while monitoring to ensure that any aid "is not diverted" by President Bashar al-Assad's government, Lenarcic noted.

Dozens of nations, including the United States, China and the Gulf States have pledged to help, and search teams as well as relief supplies have already arrived. A winter storm has compounded the misery by rendering many roads — some of them damaged by the quake — almost impassable, resulting in traffic jams that stretch for kilometres in some regions. The European Union was swift to dispatch rescue teams to Türkiye after the massive earthquake struck the country on Monday close to the border with Syria.

PAF trainer aircraft makes crash

F.P. Report

MARDAN:Pakistan Air Force (PAF) trainer aircraft on Wednesday made a crash landing in Takht Bhai fields of Mardan district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

According to the PAF spokesperson, the plane made an emergency landing in the fields near Mardan and both the pilots on board survived the accident.

PM's cabinet swells to 83

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's cabinet has swelled to history high 83 as he appointed five new SAPMs on Wednesday. The newly appointed SAPMs included members of national assembly Rao Ajmal, Shaista Parvez, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, Muhammad Hamid Hameed and Malik Sohail Khan. A notification of their appointments was issued by the federal cabinet division. Earlier, PM appointed former Governor State Bank Tariq Bajwa as SAPM for finance. Tariq Bajwa's position would be equivalent to Minister of State.

PTI's propaganda harms national interests: Marriyum

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Wednesday debunked the propaganda launched by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on the ongoing negotiations of the government with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Talking to the media persons here at the Parliament House, the minister said the PTI which pushed the country on the brink of default, was now involved in spreading fake news on the talks with the IMF which harmed the national interest.

"Spreading fake news is in nobody's interest," she said, urging the media to abstain from publishing and airing fake news originating from unauthentic sources. She said the government was trying to renegotiate the agreement, signed by the PTI regime with the IMF, to provide maximum relief to the masses.

The minister said all the people should contribute towards the betterment of the country and the nation. The coalition government had made concerted efforts

to save the country from default. To a query, she said it was the responsibility of the Election Commission of Pakistan to hold the elections in the country. The PTI members had themselves tendered resignation from the National Assembly and ironically had now approached the court for relief, she added.

Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb also urged the nation to contribute to the blood donation drive launched by the Pakistan Sweet Homes for saving the lives of children suffering from thalassemia.

She said that at the blood donation camp set up by Pakistan Sweet Homes here at the Parliament House, the minister congratulated and lauded Zamurd Khan, Head of Pakistan Sweet Homes, for launching the drive from Islamabad to save the lives of children who needed a blood transfusion after a certain period of time.

So far 10,000 bags of blood had been collected under the drive which would be replicated across the country, she added. "I will appeal to all the people to take part in this drive as

this is the commitment and spirit which is required to deal with the diseases like thalassemia and hemophilia."

Marriyum said timely blood transfusions of the children suffering from such diseases not only helped them recover, but also save their lives. She said collecting blood donations to ensure free supply to the deserving patients was indeed a great deed and today the parliamentarians had manifested their love for the ailing humanity by taking part in the campaign in a large number.

"This shows that our Parliament is always on the forefront to render all kinds of sacrifices for the country and its people," she added. Azad Jammu & Kashmir Prime Minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas also visited the blood donation camp, while a number of parliamentarians, including Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Amir Muqam, and members of the National Assembly Tahira Aurangzeb, Khan Muhammad Jamali, Nadeem Abbas, Dr Shahnaz, Usama Qadri and others took part in the campaign.

Minister warns against hoarding petrol

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Petroleum Dr Musadik Malik asserted on Wednesday that Pakistan had sufficient fuel supplies as he warned those hoarding petrol and diesel stocks of "dire consequences".

Addressing a press conference on Wednesday in Islamabad, Malik warned hoarders and said: "Some people, like always, are hoarding ... I want to request those people to stop today and consider this request a warning ... you won't be able to hoard and rob the people's right. "This is our resolve and you will have to bear very strict consequences if you persist. We will cancel your licences. Your business will end as a result of your attempt to avail the benefits for four to five days."

The minister was of the view that a "few people" were involved in creating an artificial shortage with the aim of selling fuel in the future at exorbitant rates. He said the government would ensure the state's writ at any cost. "I request to those hoarding petroleum products to shun this practice and to not challenge the writ of the state."

Regarding current stocks of petroleum products, the minister said: "Sufficient useable stocks of petroleum products are available in the country to meet petrol needs for 20 days and diesel for 29 days. This excludes cargoes arriving and waiting in the sea for berthing." Malik said prices of petroleum products were revised by the government as per the scheduled time, international market and rupee-dollar parity, adding that at the moment "there is no plan to raise prices". Replying to a question, he said an agreement with Russia would hopefully be finalised, following which low-cost crude oil would start arriving in Pakistan.

12 terrorists killed at Lakki Marwat

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: As many as twelve terrorists belongs to Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) were killed during joint operation conducted by police and security forces at Chuharkhel area of Lakki Marwat district.

According to details, security forces and police jointly launched an intelligence-based operation in the rural area of the district. The terrorists were going to the neighboring Tank district to commit terror acts but their vehicle was intercepted by law enforcers, leading to a gun battle.

During operation twelve terrorists were killed in exchange of fire while security personnel remained unhurt. They said that the law enforcement personnel recovered weapons, ammunition and Afghan currency from the terrorists.

A statement issued by Inter-Security Public Relations that a very successful intelligence-based operation was conducted by security forces in Lakki Marwat area during which twelve terrorists from TTP were killed.

The terrorists' movements and activities were being watched by intelligence tentacles for the last one week", it said, adding that terrorists were lured in by providing a vehicle for escape that was intercepted and neutralized. The statement said weapons, ammunition and Afghan currency were also recovered from the terrorists during the operation, adding that the security forces are carrying out clearance operations in the area. The statement added that locals appreciated the operation and lauded the efforts of the Pakistan army in eliminating terrorism. Officials said that the bodies of the killed terrorists were shifted to the District Headquarters Hospital located at Tajazai and the process of identification was underway.

PM forms committee for revival of STZA

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday expressing dissatisfaction over the performance of the Special Technology Zones Authority (STZA), formed a committee to ensure revival of the body's operations.

The prime minister, chairing a high-level meeting on the STZA, said the committee would be headed by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar and comprise IT minister, law minister, Advisor Ahad Cheema, Senator Afnanullah and Chairman of the Capital Development Authority. He instructed the committee to present its recommendations within a week and also directed to immediately operationalise the STZA's board of governors which should consist of experts from the relevant field.

The prime minister said any wastage of public resources would not be tolerated. Pakistani skilled youths were earning livelihood at their own while the relevant authority was lying dysfunctional. He said instead of investing in real estate, the STZA's real objective was to promote technology. No delay in the reformation and operationalisation of the STZA would be acceptable, he commented.

Prime Minister Shehbaz said that in its tenure, the Pakistan Muslim League-N introduced skill education to the youth with a view to enhance IT exports. During the COVID pandemic, hundreds of thousands of youngsters earned livelihood by using laptops given by the government, he remarked. In the briefing, the meeting was told that 400 companies were registered with the STZA, out of 63% were from Pakistan and rest belonged to China, USA, Turkey and other countries. The participants of the meeting were also apprised of the issues regarding the Authority's board of governors. The prime minister directed the STZA to ensure effective implementation of the measures for promotion of country's IT exports. Federal ministers Ishaq Dar, Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Syed Aminul Haq, Advisor to PM Ahad Cheema, SAPM Jahanzeb Khan and other relevant officers attended the meeting.

Public welfare, national progress among govt's priorities: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif said public welfare and national progress were among

the priorities of the federal government and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz. The prime minister was talking to former members of the Provincial Assembly of Punjab, a PM Office Media Wing press release said.

Former MPAs, including Rana Mashhood, Aneez Fatima, Rahila Khadim Hussain and Ramesh Singh, separately called on the prime minister. During meetings, the overall national and provincial political situation was discussed.

Shehbaz for swift privatisation of recommended public sector enterprises: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed the authorities concerned to accelerate the privatisation process of public sector enterprises recommended by the Privatisation Board. The prime minister chairing a review meeting to discuss privatization said transparency must be the foremost priority in the privatisation process.

In his remarks at the meeting, the prime minister said that the government encouraged the privatisation of the PSEs. He directed to accomplish the privatization of the PSEs recommended by the Privatisation Board in a transparent manner and as per best international practices. The meeting was attended by federal ministers Ishaq Dar and Engineer Khuram Dastgir, Advisor Ahad Cheema, State Minister Musadik Malik, SAPM Jahanzeb Khan, and other relevant officers.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif also said the government was ensuring the timely provision of loans for the employment of youth. He said thousands of the country's capable youth were benefitting from the youth loan scheme recently launched by the government.

The prime minister was talking to the founder of Akhuwat Foundation Amjad Saqib, who called on him here. During the meeting, Amjad Saqib appreciated the prime minister for the provision of soft loans to the youth for employment. Besides, he also briefed the prime minister about the provision of interest-free loans by the Akhuwat Foundation to the flood affected people. The prime minister said the government valued the provision of interest-free loans by the Akhuwat Foundation.

‘Issue election schedule’, president tells ECP

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday asked the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to immediately issue the election schedule for the provincial assemblies of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa or else it would be held responsible for violation of the Constitution.

According to a press release issued by the President's Secretariat, President Alvi made the appeal in a letter he wrote to Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikander Sultan Raja. The president reminded the CEC that Article 224(2) stipulates that elections are to be held within 90 days if an assembly has been dissolved before time. He added that ECP's primary job was to conduct and hold elections. "Thus, it is ultimately the Commission, which if it fails to discharge its functions and duties, is to be held responsible and answerable for the violation of our Constitution," the president warned the ECP. Referring to his oath of preserving and defending the Constitution, President Alvi reminded

the CEC and the ECP members about their fundamental duty as per their oath under Article 214 and Third Schedule of the Constitution.

Dr Alvi reminded the ECP chief and members that they should announce the election date to avoid serious consequences of breach and violation of the Constitution and law. The president also highlighted that the "oldest democracies had never delayed elections even during wars". He highlighted the example of former United States presidents James Madison and Abraham Lincoln who went ahead with elections despite their country being at war.

"I am of the firm view that there are no such circumstances as may furnish any justification for delaying or postponing of elections, in fact if such postponements of constitutionally mandated elections are evaluated throughout the world in recent history, they have morphed into serious long term set-backs to democracy," said Dr Alvi. President Alvi lauded the ECP for announcing by-polls for the vacant

National Assembly seats and asked the body to immediately issue a election schedule to put an end to "dangerous speculative propaganda" for the upcoming and future general elections.

Interim setups in both Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have settled in after the former prime minister Imran Khan — in a gambit to force the government to hold snap polls — hit the two provincial assemblies like a wrecking ball — but uncertainty over it and when a vote will be held is far from over. Discussions largely concentrating on the possibility of a deferment of polls have already begun churning out fodder for debates regarding the future of Pakistan's politics. According to the Constitution of Pakistan, if an assembly is dissolved, polls need to be held for the said assembly in 90 days.

However, the governors of both provinces — Baligh Ur Rehman in Punjab and Haji Ghulam Ali in KP — are yet to approve a date for the elections, drawing severe criticism from the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf.

SC directs ERRA to submit details of quake relief funds

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) to submit details of funds collected for 2005 earthquake relief work.

A three-member SC bench comprising Justice Ijaz Ul Ahsan, Justice Munib Akhtar, and Justice Sayeed Mazahar Ali Akbar Naqvi heard the case filed by Professor Muhammad Ibrahim Khan against ERRA regarding funds received from the donor countries for the earthquake in 2005.

During the course of proceedings, the court summoned Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's chief secretary and secretary of relief work.

The court asked how much funds were collected for rehabilitation of the earthquake-affected areas and how much funds generated at the national and international levels were spent on the relief work. The bench further asked how much funds remained from the amount collected for the quake relief and which institution was keeping these funds. The court also directed

the KP's chief secretary to submit a separate reply in writing. Director ERRA said that Rs 205 billion were spent on the earthquake-affected persons of Balakot and Mansehra. Upon this, Justice Ijaz asked whether the spending of this Rs 205 billion amount was audited. He directed the ERRA to submit its report along with the report of the Auditor General. He said that the country was moving in a round for 18 years since the earthquake in 2005. Subsequently, the hearing was adjourned for four weeks.

Key Daesh commander held

KARACHI (INP): Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD), during an operation in Korangi Industrial area of Karachi, arrested a key commander of banned outfit Da'esh on Wednesday. The accused has been identified as Abdul Maalik son of Ibrahim. The accused has made many revelations during investigations. Abdul Maalik is a member of Abdul Mannan group. The accused is an Afghan national.



Media briefed on Maritime Exercise AMAN-23

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Media brief of multinational Maritime Exercise AMAN-23 was held at PNS JAUHAR, Commander Pakistan Fleet Vice Admiral Ovais

Ahmed Bilgrami briefed media regarding Exercise details.

Pakistan Navy has been conducting AMAN series of multinational maritime exercise every two years since its beginning in 2007. Eighth

edition of the exercise is scheduled to be held this year from 10-14 February, involving participation of over 50 countries with ships, aircrafts, Special Ops Forces/ EOD Marines teams and observers. The exercise is

divided into two phases: harbour and sea. Harbour phase involves activities such as seminars, operational discussions, professional demonstrations, international get togethers and pre-sail planning of evolutions at sea. The sea phase would include tactical maneuvers, exercises related to maritime security such as anti-piracy and counter terrorism, search and rescue, gunnery firings and air defence exercises. Highlight of the sea phase will be the International Fleet Review, which will be witnessed by national and foreign dignitaries.

As a maritime nation, Pakistan has substantial stakes in keeping our seas safe and secure. Our interests are based on three major factors. Firstly, our extraordinary dependence on the seas for trade; secondly, operationalization of CPEC project and thirdly, our strategic location astride the global energy highway. Cumulatively, these realities make maritime stability a vital national security interest. We realize the importance of maritime security not only for Pakistan but for all other countries whose prosperity and progress are tied to the seas.

While we talk of security and stability at sea, let us be mindful of the threats and challenges that we face in the maritime domain, ranging from piracy, terrorism, narco-arms trafficking to climate change. However, vastness of the seas makes it extremely difficult for any one nation to deal with these diverse challenges alone. This calls for collective effort to make sure the seas remain safe

and secure for all of us to use and benefit from. Pakistan Navy is therefore a firm believer in the concept of Collaborative Maritime Security and has been actively participating in Maritime Security .

Chinese consul general calls on Caretaker Punjab CM

LAHORE (APP): Consul General of China Zhao Shiren met Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi at the CM Office on Wednesday and discussed matters of mutual interest. The two sides discussed the methods of enhancing cooperation in various sectors, especially overcoming smog, along with the ongoing work on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects.

The caretaker CM said in the meeting that Pakistan-China friendship had always come up to expectations in every difficult times. Mohsin Naqvi appreciated that China had overcome smog with the help of the latest technology, adding that the Chinese air purified towers technology had proved to be beneficial with regard to controlling smog. Mohsin Naqvi outlined that "we want to benefit from the Chinese technology in order to overcome smog across Punjab especially in Lahore".

The caretaker CM said

that the Punjab government would welcome Chinese cooperation to cope with smog hazards.

Chinese Consul General Zhao Shiren said that China would continue cooperation with the Punjab government in various sectors, adding "we would give complete assistance to the provincial government to overcome smog problem". He



extended an invitation to the caretaker CM to visit China and added "we would be pleased if the caretaker CM visits China".

Mohsin Naqvi said that China was very close to his heart and, God willing, he would visit China at the earliest.

CM grieved over loss of lives in Karakoram accident: Caretaker Chief

Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi has expressed a deep sense of sorrow and grief over the loss of lives in the Karakoram Highway accident.

He extended heartfelt sympathies to the bereaved heirs and prayed for the early recovery of the injured. The provincial government stands in solidarity with the grieving families, he added.



WATER AND SANITATION SERVICES PESHAWAR
GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA
SCRAP AUCTION NOTICE AT WSSP Jurisdiction


Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar intends to dispose of the following unserviceable / Scrap items of WSSP on "AS IS" "WHERE IT IS" basis through open auction which will be held at respective zones / locations as per following schedule.


Lot #	Nature of Auction items	Open Auction date / Time	Address / Contact No.	Bid Security
1	Scrap items of Zone A (Parking Yard)	Tuesday 28th February 2023 at 11:30 am	Zone-A Parking Yard, Warsak Road Sewerage / treatment plant, Near Prime Hospital, Peshawar. Fleet officer Mr. Mustarif (03339293883)	150,000
2	Scrap items of Zone C (Parking Yard)	Wednesday 1st March 2023 at 11:30 am	Zone-C Parking Yard, Ring Road, Bahadar Kaley Road, (Few Meters ahead) Peshawar Model School for Boys. Fleet Office Mr. Adnan Faraz (0333-6492350)	200,000
3	Scrap items of Zone D (Parking Yard)	Thursday 2nd March 2023 at 11:30 am	Zone D Parking Yard, Warsak Road Sewerage / treatment plant, Near Prime Hospital, Peshawar. Fleet Office Mr. Qaisar Khan (03429138221)	100,000

- The applying / interested bidders (auctioneers) will be required to submit a call deposit separately for each lot as bid security in the name of Chief Executive WSSP in Bank Account # BOK: 3000-823995 on or before date of auction as mentioned in the above table, along with copy of CNIC, Contact details. The call deposit shall be refunded to unsuccessful bidder after completion of the auction process. The auction will be held on the date / time and address mentioned in the above table.
- The highest ranked bidder will be required to deposit one-fourth (1/4th) of the bid amount with WSSP on the same day in shape of Demand draft, CDR or Cash deposit directedly in WSSP Bok Bank Account (03000-823995), otherwise his bid shall be considered as cancelled and security amount shall stand forfeited in favor of WSSP.
- The highest bidder will have to deposit remaining bid amount along with all the govt: taxes (income tax / withholding tax etc.) within 7-days of approval of bid, otherwise the deposited (1/4th) and security amount shall stand forfeited.
- The successful bidder shall pay all applicable Govt. taxes / KPRA taxes as per prevailing rates.
- Scrap material / items can be inspected on any working day before the date and time of auction at above cited location, the name and number of the contact person is mentioned with each lot.
- The successful bidder (auctioneer) will be required to collect all the scrap material immediately after award of contract and if the site is not cleared by the successful bidder within 10-15 working days, the penalty will be imposed.
- All types of security and safety measures shall be the responsibility of the successful bidders & WSSP will not be responsible for any loss or damage sustained or caused to scrap material after auction.
- The competent authority reserves the right to accept or reject the bid or bids assigning cogent reason thereof.

General Manager HR/Admin/ Procurement
 Local Government Complex, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Plot # 33, Street No. 13, Sector E-8, Phase-VII, Hayatabad, Peshawar. Office Phone # 091- 5890560.



پاکستانی حکومت اور عوام
اس مشکل گھڑی میں
اپنے ترک بہن بھائیوں کے ساتھ ہے



وزیراعظم ریلیف فنڈ برائے متاثرین زلزلہ ترکیہ

G-12166



Account Title:
Prime Minister's Relief Fund for Türkiye Earthquake Victims

IBAN: PK18NBPA0001004182864740
Bank: National Bank of Pakistan

وزیر اعظم پاکستان کے قائم کردہ
ریلیف فنڈ برائے متاثرین زلزلہ ترکیہ میں دل کھول کر امداد کریں

بشکریہ
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نیوز پیپرز سوسائٹی

#PMReliefFundForTürkiye
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INVITATION TO E-BID
THROUGH SAP-ARIBA DISCOVERY

Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) is the largest Exploration & Production Company listed on Pakistan and London Stock Exchange. Details about the company can be obtained from website <http://www.ogdcl.com>. Bids are invited through **SAP-Ariba Discovery** for the service/material given below under competitive bidding procedure as per Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) rules:

SR #	TENDER NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	BID SUBMISSION DATE & TIME	BID OPENING DATE & TIME
1	OGDCL-SCM-SERVICES-CB-CSS-6000000058-203045160-2023	HIRING OF SERVICES FOR SUPPLY OF UTILITY WATER FOR CHANDA CAMP AND PLANT DISTRICT KOHAT, KPK PROVINCE	27.02.2023 AT 1030 Hrs	27.02.2023 AT 1100 Hrs
2	OGDCL-SCM-SERVICES-CB-CSS-6000000060-203051346-2023	HIRING OF SERVICES FOR SUPPLY OF UTILITY WATER FOR MELA CAMP AND PLANT DISTRICT KOHAT, KPK PROVINCE	27.02.2023 AT 1030 Hrs	27.02.2023 AT 1100 Hrs
3	OGDCL-SCM-SERVICES-CB-CSS-6000000061-203053651-2023	HIRING OF SERVICES FOR SUPPLY OF RAW / UTILITY WATER AT NASHPA PLANT, DISTRICT KARAK, KPK PROVINCE	27.02.2023 AT 1030 Hrs	27.02.2023 AT 1100 Hrs
4	OGDCL-SCM-SERVICES-CB-HR-6000000064-203132463-2023	HIRING OF SERVICES FOR SUPPLY OF MANPOWER	01.03.2023 AT 1030 Hrs	01.03.2023 AT 1100 Hrs
5	OGDCL-SCM-SERVICES-CB-HR-6000000062-203056605-2023	HIRING OF TOUR OPERATOR FOR UMRH SERVICES	01.03.2023 AT 1030 Hrs	01.03.2023 AT 1100 Hrs
6	OGDCL-SCM-FD-CB-WL-6000000059-2023	PROCUREMENT OF PERFORATING MATERIAL	14.03.2023 AT 1100 Hrs	14.03.2023 AT 1130 Hrs

- Vendors not having Ariba Network ID are requested to register themselves on SAP Ariba Portal by clicking on the link supplier.ariba.com to access and participate in OGDCL tenders.
- Complete Tender document(s) along with Scope of Work / TOR/ Clarifications can be viewed and downloaded from SAP-Ariba RFP by clicking on the link discovery.ariba.com/profile/ANO1562899621.
- Original Bid Bonds as per RFP/Tender Document shall be submitted at the reception of OGDCL House, Jinnah Avenue, Blue Area, Islamabad, Pakistan on or before bid submission date and time mentioned above.
- OGDCL reserves the right to accept or reject any bid and to annul the bidding process and reject all the bids as per Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) Rule-33".
- Bidders are requested to contact Manager Supply Chain Management (SCM) Foreign at Phone # +92-51-92002-3652 and In-Charge Supply Chain Management (SCM) Services at Phone # +92-51-92002-3750 for further queries / information.
- This Tender Notice is also available on PPRA website www.ppra.org.pk and OGDCL website www.ogdcl.com.

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SITUATION VACANT

Applications are invited from suitable candidates for appointment against the following posts on regular basis with qualification and experience:-

S.#	NAME OF POST	NO. OF POSTS	MINIMUM QUALIFICATION & EXPERIENCE REQUIRED	AGE LIMIT	DOMICILE
1.	General Manager (Admin & Accounts) ESG-5 (Equivalent to BS-20)	01	MBA/BBA (Hons)/MPA/LLM (16 years education) from recognized University with 17 years Post Master degree experience in BS-17 and above including 5 years experience in Scale-18 or equivalent in Govt/Semi-Government/Autonomous bodies/or an organization of repute in the field of Public Administration/ Establishment / Human Resource Management/Financial Management/Selection of Personnel.	50 Years	Merit-01
2.	Chemist (ESG-2) (Equivalent to BS-17)	01	M.Sc in Chemistry from a recognized university. 5 years post master experience in petroleum field.	35 Years	Merit-01
3.	Chemist (ESG-2) (Equivalent to BS-17)	01	M.Sc. in Chemistry from a recognized university. Experience Preferable	32 Years	Merit-01
4.	Assistant Scientific Officer (ESG-1) (Equivalent to BS-16)	02	M.Sc. 2 nd class in Chemistry or B.Sc. Chemistry with 3 years post B.Sc experience in relevant field.	28 Years	Merit-02
5.	M.Sc. 2 nd class in Chemistry or B.Sc. Chemistry with 3 years post B.Sc experience in relevant field.	01	Bachelors degree with Computer Science or Maths Stats / Physics / Economics. BCS/B.Sc. with 3 years experience in the field of data processing and / or supervisory experience in Data Control/Data Entry Operations.	28 Years	Punjab-01
6.	Scientific Assistant (SSG-5) (Equivalent to BS-15)	05	B.Sc. with Chemistry Experience preferable.	28 Years	Punjab-03 Merit-02
7.	Punjab-03 Merit-02	06	B.Sc. with Chemistry experience preferable or F.Sc in relevant field with 3 years post F.Sc experience.	28 Years	Punjab-03 Merit-03
8.	UDC (Admin) (SSG-4) (Equivalent to BS-11)	01	Intermediate with 2 nd Division. Selected candidates will have to complete 03 weeks Basic I.T. Training Course (including MS Office) conducted by NITB during probation period.	28 Years	Punjab-01
9.	Junior Laboratory Assistant (SSG-3) (Equivalent to BS-7)	02	Matric with Science in 2 nd division. Post Matric 2 years Certificate in relevant field from a technical Institute. Post Certificate 02 years relevant experience.	28 Years	Merit-01 Punjab-01
10.	LDC/Typist (SSG-3) (Equivalent to BS-9)	01	Matric with 2 nd division. Typing Speed 30 words per minute. Selected candidates will have to complete 03 weeks Basic I.T. Training Course (including MS Office) conducted by NITB during probation period. Experience preferable	28 Years	Punjab-01
11.	Driver/D.R. (SSG-2) (Equivalent to BS-5)	02	Middle with valid driving license LTV. Experience preferable.	28 Years	Merit-01 Punjab-01
12.	Driver/D.R. (SSG-2)	01	Primary. Experience preferable	28 Years	Punjab-01

TERMS AND CONDITION.

- The selected candidates will have to serve anywhere in Pakistan, as the competent authority may decide.
- No. TA/DA will be paid for appearing in test/interview.
- Only shortlisted candidates will be called for test/interview.
- Candidates shall present their original documents alongwith set of attested photocopies of relevant documents at the time of interview.
- This Institute reserves the right to increase or decrease number of posts and/or even drop at any stage.
- All degrees/diploma and certificates must be obtained from HEC recognized Universities/Institutions.
- Employees of Government, Semi Government/Autonomous Bodies/Corporations should forward their application through proper channel. No advance copy of application shall be considered.
- Age relaxation shall be allowed as per Government Rules.
- Women and minorities candidates are encouraged to apply.

HOW TO APPLY:

The interested candidates may apply online on the website of this Institute www.hdip.com.pk and also can apply through National Job Portal. Last date to apply is within 15 days from the date of publication of this advertisement.

(MUHAMMAD NAWAZ) Establishment Officer, 051-9265230

PID(I) 4905/22



Governor for judicious use of development fund due to overburdened economy

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali here Wednesday underlined the need of judicious use of development funds and said that economy of the country would be further overburdened by misuse of allocated amount.

He was chairing a meeting held in Governor House to discuss irrigational schemes of province including merged districts. The meeting was also attended by caretaker irrigation minister, Fazal Elahi, secretary irrigation, Mutahir Zaib and concerned officials.

On the occasion, meeting was briefed about irrigation related infrastructure and ongoing schemes being underway in province and merged districts under annual development program.

The meeting was informed that 40 schemes of irrigation were underway in merged districts and 132 schemes including water channels and solar energy are underway in settled areas.

Speaking on the occasion, governor said that country is under financial

constraint; however, federal authorities would be contacted for release of funds. He said that government is not oblivious to the problems of tribal people and added that steps would be taken to address their sense of deprivation.

He also directed irrigation department to devise a proper strategy to drain out rain water that comes from hilly areas of Swat, Madayan, Kalam, Manshera, Balakot, Naran and Kaghan. He said that it would also help saving public property during floods and reduce hardships

of travelers and tourists.

Later, KP Governor also chairs a meeting to review matters about land acquiring for University of Technology (UoT) Nowshera. The meeting decided to give land possession to deputy commissioner Nowshera for transferring to university. The meeting was attended by Vice Chancellor UoT Nowshera, Professor Dr. Zafar Muhammad, Commissioner Peshawar Division, Riaz Mehsud, Additional Deputy Commissioner Nowshera and concerned officials.



PESHAWAR: Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami Siraj ul Haq addressing to participants of peace march. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza

PHC grants bail to alleged kidnapper

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) has granted bail culprit allegedly involved in kidnapping and torturing transgender, on Wednesday.

According to prosecution, transgender Azan alias Payal has lodged complaint at Swabi police station 17th December 2022 stating that Haroon Rashid resident of Totalai area of Buner has kidnapped him from Shah Mansoor and kept at Jalibai while torturing the transgender.

The counsel for petitioner Syed Mubashir Shah Advocate informed that trial court has rejected bail petition of Haroon Rashid and PHC has approached to obtain relief.

The counsel argued that neither medical nor FSL report supporting prosecution and added that First Information Report was also registered after delay. The single bench of PHC comprised of Justice Rooh-ul-Amin has ordered to release petitioner on bail after conclusion of arguments.

Minister emphasizes on eradication of narcotics

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Labour, Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control, Haji Manzoor Khan Afridi, while appreciating the performance of the Excise Department, has clarified that the eradication of drugs, especially ice, from the province should be the topmost priority because it has endangered the future of our younger generation and also has put our society in jeopardy.

He issued these instructions while chairing an introductory meeting on performance of Excise Department at Directorate General Excise on Shami Road Peshawar. On this occasion, Secretary Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control Adeel Shah gave a detailed briefing to the caretaker minister on the department's administrative affairs, achievements and ongoing reforms in the department.

Manzoor Afridi clarified that the role of Excise and Narcotics Control Department in anti-narcotics is

highly commendable.

He said that it is the duty of the department to pay equal attention to ice drugs production, supply and use in all three sectors so that the complete elimination of this monster from the society is ensured and the future of the nation is secured.

Similarly, he said that the excise department has a key role in the revenue of the province. Hence he said special measures should be taken to improve the efficiency of excise in all districts, while all the officers should work honestly and diligently to achieve the revenue targets by June, he added.

Manzoor Afridi said that the process of reward and punishment of KP government will be strictly implemented. All resources will be used for supremacy of merit and elimination of corruption. He said that we as a team have to present the excise department as a model department. Maximum relief and all possible facilities have to be given to the people.

The Excise Minister reiterated his commitment to

eliminate the scourge of drugs from the society and issued instructions for comprehensive operations, especially against narcotic ice. He also clarified that excise officers should set goals for anti-narcotics as well as maximum tax revenue and work round the clock together with a team spirit to achieve them all.

Mansoor Arshad Director Admin, Salahuddin Director Revenue, Engineer Dr. Eidbadshah Director Narcotics Control, Javed Khalji Director Malakand Region, Imaduddin Director Registration, Fawad Iqbal Khan Director Mardan Region, Khaliq Dad Director Litigation, Muhammad Nauman Deputy Director Audit and Accounts, Shoaib Alam Deputy Director GIS, Aftabuddin ETO-III Property Tax, Dawood Shah ETO-Ist Motor Registering Authority Private Vehicle, Ajlal Qayyum Babar ETO-V Motor Registering Authority Commercial Vehicle, Muhammad Ayaz Programmer and other senior officers participated in the briefing.

Notorious street criminal held

PESHAWAR (APP): Capital City Police in a breakthrough against street-crimes arrested a notorious robber from the jurisdiction of Police Station Bahana Mari, said a press release issued on Wednesday.

The accused is the resident of Wakho Pul, Kohat Road and along with his gang was used to snatch motorcycles from the people at gunpoint and was active in various localities on Kohat Road including Kotla Mohsin Khan, Ghari Qamardin Bridge and surroundings.

During the initial investigation, the accused confessed to several robbery incidents. Police have also recovered three snatched motorcycles and weapons used in different criminal activities.

During the initial investigation, the accused has also revealed the names of other accomplices and police have constituted special teams for their arrest.

Operation against the accused was carried out over a complaint registered by a complainant Mohsin son of Yasin with Police Station Bahana Mari regarding the snatching of a motorcycle at gunpoint with the police station concerned.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister Haji Manzoor Khan Afridi chairing an introductory meeting on performance of Excise Department at DG Excise.

Heated tobacco products: Threat to public health

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Heated Tobacco Products (HTPs), also known as heat-not-burn products or heat sticks, are a newer type of tobacco product that uses high-temperature heating to release vapor that contains nicotine and other chemicals however; unlike other traditional tobacco products, HTPs produce an aerosol that is inhaled, rather than burning the tobacco itself. These products are marketed as a less harmful alternative to traditional cigarettes.

In 2020, according to a survey conducted by WHO, 22.3% of the global population used tobacco, 36.7% of all men, and 7.8% of the world's women. Each year tobacco kills more than 7 million of those deaths are the result of direct tobacco use while around 1.2 million are the result of non-smokers being exposed to second-hand smoke. The outbreak of heated tobacco products all over the globe particularly in Europe and Asia was due to the switching of consumers to HTPs since it is considered to reduce exposure to harmful chemicals. The confirmed date of HTPs consumers is yet not attained however; HTPs sales are a significant source of revenue

for the tobacco industry, with Philip Morris reporting over \$10 billion in HTP sales in 2020, which indirectly reveals the usage and the number of its users.

On the other side, Pakistan is a major tobacco-producing country, according to a report by the WHO, approximately 27% of the adult population in Pakistan uses tobacco products. Whereas, more than 160,000 of 220 million people die every year from tobacco-related illnesses, caused by both smoked and smokeless tobacco is used. In recent years, heated tobacco products such as IQOS and GLO have been introduced in Pakistan. A plethora of people has been observed to be switching to HTPs due to the associated conventions, which are providing them with a choice to switch to smoke-free products that are reportedly less harmful than cigarettes and can go a long way in restoring the health of smokers. Furthermore, the government of Pakistan has also regulated heated tobacco products, which are comparatively considered less harmful. The federal cabinet has recently in January 2023, approved a summary related to regulating alternative tobacco products which are ticking the

alarm of acceleration in the number of consumers in the forthcoming time.

Keeping in view the growing ratio of tobacco users and users of alternatives to traditional tobacco, the WHO and other public health organizations have raised concerns about the lack of long-term data on the health effects of heated tobacco products. They have also warned that these products may still pose significant health risks, including cancer and respiratory disease, and may be particularly dangerous for young people and non-smokers. Pakistan is a signatory of WHO FCTC since 2004 however; the government rather faces a plethora of challenges in implementing the rules, and laws or defying the devastating effects of tobacco. It is important for policymakers to approach the regulation of heated tobacco products with caution. While some argue that these products may be less harmful than traditional cigarettes, there is still a lack of long-term research on their health effects.

Potential regulatory steps that should be taken by the government of Pakistan like requiring warning labels on the products to inform consumers of the potential health risks as per the suggested article of FCTC, restricting the sale of HTPs and other SLTs products to minors, increasing taxes on the products to discourage their use, requiring manufacturers to submit their products for safety and efficacy testing, banning certain potentially harmful ingredients in the nicotine liquids used in these products and, a ban on tobacco advertisements to control the use and harmful effects on public health.

Minister directs completion of schemes

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Communication and Works, Muhammad Ali Shah chairing a meeting here Wednesday directed to complete ongoing schemes within stipulated time limit. He was chairing a meeting that was convened to discuss pace of work on ongoing projects of southern districts.

The minister was told that various schemes have been completed in Kurram, Kohat, Hungu, Parachinar and other districts.

Chairing the meeting, caretaker minister directed to focus resources for completion of ongoing schemes with a priority to bridges and flood affected roads.

He also directed authorities to follow approved procedures and ensure work quality in these projects.

CS calls on Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): Newly appointed Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Imdadullah Bosal on Wednesday called on Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali here at Governor's House.

At the meeting both discussed matters pertaining to administrative affairs of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and good governance.

The Governor felicitated Imdadullah Bosal on assuming charge of the Chief Secretary of the province and expressed well wishes for him, said a statement issued from the Governor's House.



PESHAWAR: CCPO Ijaz Khan presenting over an appreciation certificate to Station House In-charge Rescue Syed Tahir Shah. — F.P. photo

Filing nominations in first phase of by-election concludes

PESHAWAR (APP): The process of filing nomination papers in the first phase of by-election on 8 vacant National Assembly constituencies of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa concluded here on Wednesday.

In the first phase, a by-election would be held on 8 vacant National Assembly constituencies scheduled on March 16, 2023. The initial list of all candidates would be published on February 09, 2023 (tomorrow) and their scrutiny would continue till February 13, 2023.

Appeals against the acceptance or rejection of

nomination papers by the Returning Officers (ROs) could be filed with the concerned Appellate Tribunal till February 16, 2023, which would decide these appeals till February 23, 2023.

Revised list of candidates would be issued on February 21 and nomination papers could be returned till February 22, 2023.

The final list of candidates would be issued on February 23, 2023 and electoral symbols would be given to them while polling would be held on March 16, 2023.

ROs issues public notice for by-polls on 16 vacant NA seats

PESHAWAR (APP): Returning Officers (ROs) for 16 vacant seats of National Assembly from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have issued public notice for the by-election on March 19, 2023.

According to an official of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) ROs will receive nomination papers from February 10, to February 14, 2023 and their scrutiny will complete till February 18, 2023.

Appeals against the acceptance or rejection of nomination papers could be filed till February 22, 2023 while appellate Tribunals will dispose of them till February 27.

Revised list of the candidates would be released on February 28, 2023 and nomination papers could be returned till March 01, 2023, which would be followed by the issuance of final list of candidates on March 2, 2023 and on the same day the candidates would also be allotted electoral symbols.

Minister assures government's support in prison reforms

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa caretaker Minister for Housing and Prisons, Shafiullah Khan has directed the authorities concerned to ensure cleanliness in prisons of the province including in newly merged districts.

He said provision of basic facilities of life to the inmates must be ensured, adding that legal action should be initiated against prison officials for showing

negligence during duty hours. He was presiding over a meeting of prisons' authority here on Wednesday wherein Secretary Home and Tribal Affairs Khushal Khan, IG Prisons Saadat Hussain and officers concerned were present.

At the meeting the minister was briefed on the Prison Management Information System and told that under this system a digitized system has been intro-

duced in 14 prisons of 7 districts while work on adding other prisons in this system was underway.

The minister was told that work has been started to link 7 prisons of the province with anti-terrorism courts through video link. The meeting also discussed establishment of prisons in six newly merged districts.

The minister was further informed that short, mid

and long term strategy was being formulated for bringing reforms in the prisons sector.

The meeting was briefed on rules and regulations of the prisons and told that the inmates were being provided religious and skill education inside the prisons.

The minister assured that the government would provide all possible assistance to the authorities for introducing reforms in prisons.

KMU launches green Pakistan tree plantation campaign

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Green Youth Movement Club of Khyber Medical University (KMU) Peshawar, organized a green seminar at Dr. Hafeez Ullah Auditorium, where vice-chancellor Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq was the chief guest. The event was attended by Shafiq Gaggiani, the founder of Enlight Lab, as the guest speaker, while the focal person of KMU Green Youth Movement, Mujeebur Rehman, and a large number of faculty and students were also present at the occasion.

The event started with an open mic session in which students expressed their views and ideas on the two themes of the Green Youth Movement,

Eco-tourism and Agriculture. In the event, a debate competition was also held among the students on the importance of Green Pakistan. The focal person of KMU Green Youth Movement, Mujeebur Rehman informed the participants of the seminar about the objectives of the Green Youth Movement and the impact of climate change on Pakistan. Shafiq Gaggiani, the founder of Enlight Lab, informed the participants about his website Flood.pk and gave an in-depth analysis of last year's floods.

At the end of the ceremony, Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq while appreciating the performance and services of the Green Youth Movement expressed the hope that as a result of the

efforts of this movement, where there will be opportunities to deal with floods, it can also combat the damaging effects of climate change.

He said that KMU is not only focusing on the improvement of the quality of knowledge and research, but we also provide practical training in this regard along with creating awareness among our students to deal with the challenges faced in various fields of life.

He said that the pollution of the environment can be eliminated by large-scale planting on one side and on the other hand, we can also secure and improve the future of our new generations.

During the ceremony, under the auspices of the



KMU Green Youth Movement Club, a tree plantation campaign was also launched in the university in the name of My Tree, during this drive; every student enrolled in

the university will plant at least one tree. The ceremony ended with the planting of saplings by the vice-chancellor, faculty, and students on the university lawn.



In brief

One killed over land dispute F.P. Report

GHALANAI: One person killed while other was critically injured in firing incident happened over land dispute at Baizai tehsil, on Wednesday. According to details, the firing incident was occurred between Khan Muhammad and Adil over land dispute while Muhammad Amin was killed in the mishap and Muhammad Nabi was injured. Police has registered First Information Report (FIR) while four persons were arrested the offense. The arrested alleged culprits were identified as three brothers including Gul, Nazir along with his son Izzat Ullah and Imran. Meanwhile, five persons were injured in road mishap in collision among motor car and trawler. The injured persons were shifted to Peshawar for further treatment in critical condition.

One killed in firing at Wana F.P. Report

WANA: One killed while seven injured in two different incidents of firing at Kadikot and Ghowakhwa area of Wana district South Waziristan, on Wednesday. According to sources, the local people have reached for ceasefire against each other and the ceasefire was lifted on the spot. Expressing grief over the incident, the local people said that a land dispute was going on between the two parties. Now, as the land dispute intensified, it reached the point of firing. Police sources say that the incident is being investigated. It should be remembered that earlier many precious lives have been lost due to land disputes.

Ban on logging imposed at Swat Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: District administration Swat on Wednesday imposed ban on use of illegal logging and use of chainsaw and other cutting machines in protected areas within limits of the district. According to an official release, ban has been imposed under section 144 for a period of sixty days. It was said that unabated illegal logging has affected the ecosystem that resulted in natural calamities and hazardous environmental changes. Those found guilty of flouting the order would be dealt under section 188 of Pakistan Penal code, said that statement.

Preparation for by-election F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: District Election Commissioner and District Returning Officer (DRO) Dir Lower Muhammad Iqbal Tanuli said that preparations have been started for the by-elections for the two seats of the National Assembly of Lower Dir and no candidate has gone to the court in this regard. DRO said that the by-elections of Dir Lower will be according to their schedule. He said that from February 10 to February 14, on Wednesday. The candidates can submit their nomination papers at any time from the Election Commission Office Lower Dir. While talking to journalists in his office, District Election Commissioner and DRO Lower Dir Muhammad Iqbal Tanuli said that no decision has been taken by the court on the two seats of the National Assembly of Lower Dir and no candidate has gone to the court in this regard. DRO said that the by-elections of Dir Lower will be according to their schedule. He said that from February 10 to February 14, candidates can submit their nomination papers and polling will be held on March 19.



HYDERABAD: A man busy in making of clay items at his workplace in Kumarpura.

Certificates distributed among Law's graduates



Sagib Mushtaq

BAHAWALPUR: Islamia University of Bahawalpur organized the certificate distribution ceremony at Ghulam Muhammad Ghoti Hall, Abbasia Campus, among 43 students who completed their internship in Lahore High Court, Bahawalpur Bench, Bahawalpur.

Honorable Justice Anwar-ul-Haq Pannun Senior Judge Lahore High Court Bahawalpur Bench was the chief guest on this occasion. Justice Sadiq Mahmood Khurram, Justice

Safdar Saleem Shahid, Justice Amjad Rafiq, Engr. Prof. Dr. Athar Mahboob Vice Chancellor, Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan District and Sessions Judge Bahawalpur, Muhammad Naveed Iqbal Senior Additional Registrar, Shahid Hussain Additional Registrar, Siftullah Sr. Civil Judge Bahawalpur, Rao Muhammad Anas Senior Civil Judge, Dr. Muhammad Mumtaz Civil Judge and Research Officer and Hasnain Ahmad Anwar Civil Judge and Research Officer participated. Vice-Chancellor Engr.

Prof. Dr. Athar Mahboob praised the commencement of internship for law students and thanked Justice Anwar-ul-Haq Pannun and other distinguished judges. On this occasion, Prof. Dr. Aftab Hussain Gillani, Dean Faculty of Law and Prof. Dr. Rao Imran Habib, Chairman of the Department of Law, the Islamia University of Bahawalpur, teachers and students were also present. It is worth mentioning that these students completed their internship in the research cell of Lahore High Court Bahawalpur Bench.

Service delivery to masses top priority: Addl IGP

F.P. Report

MULTAN: Additional Inspector General of Police (AIGP) South Punjab Maqsood ul Hassan said that efficient service delivery to public and the welfare of the police personnel was his top priority.

The AIGP expressed these views while hearing appeals against the departmental punishments of the police employees from DG Khan region. He issued orders and instructed the employees to perform their duties with diligence, honesty and zeal for the welfare of the public and the protection of their lives and property. He also listened to the problems of the employees and said that any police officer and employee could appear at any time regarding their departmental or personal issues.

He added the official staff must prepare the record and documentation of employees for hearing within time and spend all the efforts on solutions of citizens' and police employees' problems so that justice could be delivered.

Meanwhile, a control room has been established in the South Punjab Police Office to monitor the secu-

urity arrangements of PSL matches under the supervision of AIGP Operations, so that all security related matters could be monitored and the situation reported to the senior officers in a timely manner. The AIGP reviewed the security measures and appointed AIGP Investigation, Rab Nawaz Tullah for duty in PSL matches. He added that three routes were selected for the teams.

Fertilizers dealer burdened with Rs 100,000 fine: Deputy director agriculture extension Khanewal Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Khan imposed a Rs 100,000 fine on a fertilizers dealer in Kabirwala on charge of selling Urea bags at a higher price.

The official, in response to farmers' complaints, inspected dealers in Nawan Sheher area of tahsil Kabirwala, and imposed a Rs 102,000 fine on a dealer.

Accompanying assistant director Kabirwala Dr. Manzoor Ahmad Gill and agriculture officer Shehroz Javed, the deputy director also ensured the sale of remaining Urea at control price on the spot. He ordered officials to check Urea stock with dealers regularly. He asked the farmers to point out elements involved in hoarding

and profiteering to invite prompt action under the zero tolerance policy of the government against such people.

107 WASA connections disconnected: Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) has disconnected connections of 107 defaulters during crackdown launched here on Wednesday. In line with special directives of Managing Director WASA Chuadhary Muhammad Danish, the recovery teams under the supervision of Director Recovery Mansoor Ahmed launched crackdown against defaulters especially commercial consumers.

The teams disconnected connections of defaulters at all 15 circles of the district. The MD WASA directed to all recovery officers to launch impressive campaign against defaulters especially commercial defaulters in order to get rid the department from financial crisis, under the directions of Secretary Housing South Punjab Muhammad Asif Chaudhary. He ordered to ensure 100 percent recovery from defaulters. The defaulters were given deadline to submit their WASA dues and get their connections regularized to avert from any inconvenience.

This was claimed by Deputy Commissioner and Commandant Malakand Levies Shahid Khan while addressing media personnel at his office. DC directed administrative officers, levies force's commanders as well as personnel.

DC added that criminal and outlawed citizens should be dealt with iron hands to ensure sustainable peace in the premises. He claimed that Malakand should be clear every kind of drugs and will be drug-free district soon.

Drive against encroachments in Swari bazaar F.P. Report

BUNER: Anti-encroachment operation held at Swari bazaar, business center of Buner district while infrastructure on road sides and footpaths were removed indiscriminately, on Wednesday.

The anti-encroachment operation was supervised by Assistant Commissioner (AC) Sher Ali Khan Additional AC Sher Wali Khan and Tehsil Municipal Officer (TMO) Gagra tehsil. The joint team removed encroachments from footpaths and removed hand carts Rikshaw Motorcycle and cars with a clear warning of taking direction against them if again violated. The joint team also removed encroachments from footpaths and materials from some of addicted vendors taken by TMA staff in Tractor Trolley.

The AC told media persons there were issues because of ongoing construction works in the bazaar. He shared a meeting would be convened with Bazaar union leaders traffic police local police local elders and viable options would be discussed to find permanent solution. He added that no vehicle and hand cart would be allowed to occupy roads and no vendor and shop-keeper to occupy footpaths in this main business hub for whole Buner district. AC shared that parking areas for the vehicles of visiting customers would be provided by the TMA Gagra and the traffic police would make sure no parking at road sides to let commuters and pedestrian move smoothly.

Criminals to be dealt with iron hands F.P. Report

MALAKAND: The protection of lives and property as well as living with dignity is constitutional obligation of district administration and law enforcement agencies and it should be prioritized to ensure perception of security and dignity of people.

This was claimed by Deputy Commissioner and Commandant Malakand Levies Shahid Khan while addressing media personnel at his office. DC directed administrative officers, levies force's commanders as well as personnel.

DC added that criminal and outlawed citizens should be dealt with iron hands to ensure sustainable peace in the premises. He claimed that Malakand should be clear every kind of drugs and will be drug-free district soon.

One killed in firing F.P. Report

KHAR: Uncle of former minister was killed and another injured in a firing incident occurred in Tehsil Khar, Bajaur tribal district.

According to details, firing started in a house situated in village Nawe Kale of Tehsil Khar that killed Khalil Khan who was uncle of former provincial minister, Anwar Zaib Khan. Firing also injured, Ejaz, grandson of Khalil Khan.

Dualization, upgradation of old Bannu Road continues

BANNU (APP): The dualization and up-gradation project of 83-kilometer Old Bannu Road divided in three packages in the Bannu district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is being carried out by National Highway Authority (NHA).

The first package of the project, the 40-kilometer Domail-Khurram portion was awarded to the Frontier Works Organization (FWO) at the bid price of Rs 7.132 billion. Its work started in May 2018 and so far nearly 61 percent of physical progress has been achieved, an official of NHA told APP on Wednesday.

He said its second package the 35 km Khurram-Krapa portion costing Rs 5.927 billion was awarded to the FWO. Its work started in February 2018 and so far over 58 percent of phys-

ical progress has been achieved. The third package of Old Bannu Road, 8-kilometer Gaandi Chowk-Sarai Naurang section was awarded to M/s NCC-IKAN-HRPL joint venture at the bid price of Rs 0.718 billion. Work on the package also started in May 2018 and 100 percent progress on the project has already been accomplished. He further said that the existing road was a single-carriageway that was being dualized and improved.

He said the project would provide the heavy traffic movement on Indus Highway (N-55) with an alternate route thus sharing the traffic burden with Indus Highway. The NHA official said that infrastructure development in the less developed areas would contribute to their economic uplift through accelerat-

ed trade activities. He said that all three packages of the project were supposed to be finished by end of October 2021 but due to lack of availability of funds they were lingering on. To a question about delay in completion of the project, the official said that lack of funds was the main reason.

Indus Highway is 1,264 km long that runs along the Indus River connecting the port city of Karachi with Kohat and Peshawar via D. G. Khan and D.I.Khan. The highway is the second largest road connection after Grand Trunk Road and provides an alternate north-south link while traversing 491 km in Sindh, 360 km in Punjab, and 396 km in KPK, and connecting Rajanpur, D.G.Khan, D.I. Khan, Bannu, Kohat, and Peshawar.

Sikandar pays tribute to Hayat Khan Sherpao

F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: Quami Watan Party (QWP) provincial Chairman Sikandar Hayat Khan Sherpao on Wednesday paid glowing tributes to former Governor Hayat Mohammad Khan Sherpao Shaheed on his 48th death anniversary.

He said he was the first politician from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa who laid down his life while striving to help the people from the downtrodden segments of

the society to get their due rights. He made these remarks while talking to reporters in Sherpao village in Charsadda district. On this occasion, Quran Khwani was held for the departed soul.

A floral wreath was also placed at the grave of the Shaheed leader. Sikandar Sherpao said that as usual the death anniversary of the Shaheed leader would be marked by holding a gathering at Sherpao village on February 13th where trib-

utes would also be paid to the cops, who embraced martyrdom in the police lines bombing in Peshawar. He said the gathering would also be dedicated to those who were martyred in acts of subversion in the province. He said that his party would continue raising voice against the rising acts of terrorism. He said the law and order situation was worsening day by day, asking the government to take steps to bring the situation under control.

No renewal of lease agreements in Quetta

QUETTA (APP): The Quetta Metropolitan Corporation (QMC) has failed to renew parking and other lease agreements of properties owned by the authority despite the passage of four years to the expiry of the agreement.

President All Balochistan Municipal Workers Association, Quetta Muhammad Rahim Baloch said despite the completion of parking plaza at circular road by spending billion of rupees last year, not a single penny is earned by the department from the plaza. Similarly, the main sources of income including Liaquat and other parks have been bunged for the last four years due to incompetency and corrup-

tion.

Apart from that, bicycle and motorcycle stands in the city have not been auctioned for last four years which was a huge loss for the national exchequer, he added. Baloch said the employees of Local Government Department Balochistan were deprived of salaries for the past three months due to a persistent decrease in revenue generation and rampant corruption.

He told media persons that the main reason behind the nonpayment of salaries and shortfall in the revenue generation is a misuse of resources and corrupt practices. The wastage of revenue of the local department has accentuated financial problems for the province and if the corrup-

tion was not eliminated and money was not collected immediately, the government would be unable to pay salaries to its employees.

All their assets should be rented out for generating money and paying salaries to the employees. He urged the authorities concerned to investigate the corruption in the department fix the responsibility of embezzlement of billion of rupees. He demanded revenue generation from the resources of local government assets and said that the cleanliness drives were being stopped due to no availability of funds and equipment as the Corporation had been facing an acute financial crisis.

Health Card services not ceased: Minister

F.P. Report

MULTAN: Interim Health Minister Punjab, Dr Javed Akram, on Wednesday has refuted the reports about closure of health card services in the province. Speaking at a news conference at Nishtar Medical University (NMU), he informed that the cabinet in its meeting sanctioned Rs 2.5 billions for health and of it Rs 350 have been allocated for Nishtar Hospital.

NMU VC, Dr Rana Altaf Ahmad, Nishtar

Hospital MS, Dr Rao Amjad, NID principal, Dr Amjad Bari and others were present. The minister maintained that the govt was making public hospitals self-sufficient adding that modern machinery was provided. He announced to provide medicines to all public hospitals on large scale, adding that govt was ensuring provision free of charge medicines in the hospital.

Replying a question, the minister noted that a parking plaza would be built to

solve the issue of parking in Nishtar Hospital. To another question, he disclosed that number of quacks had gone to 90,000 from 40,000 in the province and the government took initiatives to discourage them. Answering another question, the minister said that difficult access to doctors compelled people to contact quacks. Responding yet to another question the minister informed that the mandate of interim government was to hold free and transparent elections.

Two killed, two injured in firecracker factory blast

OKARA (INP): Two people including a woman were killed and two others were injured in an explosion in a firecrackers-producing factory in Okara, Punjab. According to police, an explosion occurred in a firecrackers-producing factory near Shabir Walakho in Okara. Four people including three women sustained injuries, following the explosion on Tuesday evening.

The injured were rushed to the hospital, where two including a woman, succumbed to their burnt wounds at THQ Hospital Okara. Meanwhile, two other injured namely, Muhammad Ahmed and Fouzia have been rushed to Lahore. Meanwhile, DPO Mansoor Aman has ordered to arrest the culprits behind the incident.

Separately, two people were injured in an explo-

sion at a firecracker factory in Punjab's Hafizabad. According to rescue and police officials, the injured were shifted to a nearby hospital for medical attention. The factory's roof and walls also caved in due to the powerful blast. Upon getting information, police and rescue teams reached the site and cordoned it off. The blast was so loud that it was heard far and wide causing panic in the area.

Police conduct search operation in Kahuta

KAHUTA (APP): Police on Wednesday conducted a search operation in Kahuta and its surrounding areas. According to a police spokesman, heavy police contingent, Elite Force, Special Branch personnel and ladies police

along with officials conducted the search operation.

A total of 25 houses, 10 shops and 45 suspects were questioned during the operation. SP Saddar Bilal Mahmood Sulhari said that the purpose of the

search operation was to identify the criminal elements. Search operations under the National Action Plan will be continued, he added. He made it clear that it is prime duty of police to protect the life and property of people.



Aid to quake-hit Syria slowed by curbs, war's divisions

BEIRUT (AP): Even before devastating earthquake, getting aid to all parts of war-battered Syria was fraught with daunting political and logistical challenges. Those hurdles have only multiplied in the wake of the disaster that has killed thousands in Turkey and Syria and brought down thousands of buildings.

Damage to roads and other infrastructure in southern Turkey has stalled aid from reaching northern Syria, an area already devastated by 12 years of conflict. Meanwhile, the government of Bashar Assad in Damascus is still a pariah in much of the international community, sanctioned by the US and European countries, which are reluctant to route aid directly through the government. American and EU officials have made clear the quake won't change that.

Emergency workers say delays could cost lives, as local rescue crews struggle to pull families and children from the rubble and find housing for survivors amid brutal winter weather. A key issue complicating the dispersal of aid is "the war and the way the aid response is split between rebel areas and Damascus," said Aron Lund, a fellow with New York-based think tank Century International who researches Syria. While the majority of Syria is under the control of the government in Damascus, most of the north is controlled by different - and sometimes conflicting - groups. The northwest is divided between land de facto controlled by Turkey and by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, a rebel group with ties to al-Qaida. Syria's northeast is mostly held by US-backed Kurdish-led groups.

Foreign aid for years has been brought into northwestern Idlib province by way of Turkey, because of the difficulty of going by way of Damascus. But the area of southern Turkey traditionally used as a staging area has itself been heavily damaged by the earthquake. Aid delivery into northwestern Syria was "temporarily disrupted", a United Nations spokesperson told The Associated Press, due to infrastructure damage and difficulty with road access. In particular, damage to the Hatay airport and the road to the border crossing used for aid, Bab al-Hawa, was delaying shipments, said Emma Beals, a nonresident fellow at the Washington-based Middle East Institute.

"There is also the fact that there are enormous needs in Turkey itself," she said. One cause for hold-ups is that the UN mandate for delivering aid to the territory only allows it to enter through Bab al-Hawa crossing, Beals said. Also, international search teams may be reluctant to enter earthquake-affected areas controlled by HTS, which is designated as a terrorist organization by the US. The group's "presence limits the kinds of aid many donors are prepared to supply to the area," she said.

The government in Damascus and its allies in Russia have seized the moment to renew their push for aid to



the north to be routed through Damascus. Countries opposed to Assad do not trust the Syrian authorities to effectively deliver aid to opposition areas and worry it would be diverted to benefit people and institutions linked to the government. Natasha Hall, a senior fellow at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies, said sending aid via Damascus to the north is not viable in practice, especially at a time of urgent need.

"It is extremely logistically and administratively difficult to get the approvals (from Damascus)," she said. Coordination of aid is also hampered "because the government of Syria doesn't recognize the non-governmental organizations working in northwest Syria." At a press conference in Damascus, Syrian Arab Red Crescent head Khaled Hboubati said his group is "ready to deliver relief aid to all regions of Syria, including areas not under government control." He called for the European Union to lift its sanctions on Syria in light of the massive destruction caused by the earthquake. Aid convoys and rescuers from several countries, notably key ally Russia, as well as the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Iran, and Algeria, have landed in airports in government-held Syria. Still, the sanctions exacerbate the "difficult humanitarian situation," Hboubati said. "There is no fuel even to send (aid and rescue) convoys, and this is because of the blockade and sanctions," he said.

So far, the US and its allies have resisted attempts at creating a political opening by way of the disaster response. US State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters that it would be "ironic, if not even counterproductive, for us to reach out to a government that has brutalized its people over the course of a dozen years now." Price said the US would continue to provide aid through "humanitarian partners on the ground." Similarly, a spokesperson for the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office said the "sanctions regime was put in place in response to human

rights violations and other abuses by the regime and their cronies."

A US State Department spokesperson said humanitarian assistance in government-held areas go through partner organizations instead of the government. "Our partners in regime-controlled areas directly deliver assistance to beneficiaries without control or direction from the Assad regime," they told AP. "This is to ensure that our assistance is not diverted by malign actors or the Assad regime and reaches the intended beneficiaries." One of the main groups supported by the United States and Britain is a civil defense organization in opposition-held areas known as the White Helmets; USAID Administrator Samantha Power spoke with the group's head and "discussed how USAID can provide the most urgently needed assistance in response to the earthquake," her office said in a statement.

The European Union has provided aid in all parts of Syria through UN and NGO partners and is trying to increase funding for humanitarian support, said European Commission spokesperson Balazs Ujvari. He said the Syrian government has not yet formally requested Europe send rescue and medical workers. In theory, aid operations in government areas should not be blocked by sanctions, since both the US and EU have exemptions for humanitarian aid. But the reality on the ground is sometimes different. For example, Lund said, banks might block transfers to pay suppliers or local workers for aid organizations for fear of running afoul of sanctions, despite the exemptions.

Also, US sanctions and to some extent EU ones try to prevent rebuilding of damaged infrastructure and property in government-held areas in the absence of a political solution, which could hamper post-earthquake recovery, Lund said. Meanwhile, in both parts of Syria, local emergency workers say only limited aid is reaching them. "There are promises that aid will get to us but nothing has gotten here yet," said the White Helmets' head Raed Saleh.

to Nguyen Thi Thanh, with interest, South Korea's official Yonhap News Agency reported. "It is acknowledged that the plaintiff's family members died at the site and she sustained serious wounds ... from the shooting by marine troops," the Seoul Central District Court said, calling the killings "a clearly illegal act", Yonhap reported. Ruling in favour of the plaintiff, the court dismissed the state's argument that it could not be held liable owing to agreements signed at the time of the war between South Korea, the then-South Vietnamese government, and the United States. The state had also argued that the involvement of the 2nd Marine Brigade

of the Republic of Korea Marines had not been clearly proven, or that the killings were a "justifiable act given the peculiar characteristics of the Vietnam War", Yonhap reported.

According to The Korea Herald, in her testimony filed in court in 2020, Nguyen Thi Thanh said that she was just eight years old when the massacre took place and that she was shot in the stomach by a South Korean soldier requiring her to spend almost a year in hospital. Nguyen Thi Thanh, now 63, in a video call from Vietnam arranged by her lawyer after the ruling, welcomed the decision and said it would be a "comfort for the souls who fell vic-

tim to the incident", Reuters news agency reported. More than 320,000 South Korean military personnel served in Vietnam between 1964 and 1973, deployed to the conflict by South Korea's then-military ruler Park Chung-hee in support of US forces and the so-called fight against Communists, the Korea Herald reported. South Korea had the second-largest troop presence in Vietnam after the US. Seoul has never officially acknowledged that its forces committed massacres against Vietnamese civilians nor has it formally investigated reports of mass killings in several locations during the war, according to the Herald.

New Zealand recovers three tonnes of cocaine

WELLINGTON (Agencies): New Zealand authorities have recovered 3.2 tonnes of cocaine, worth more than \$300 million, found floating in the Pacific Ocean and believed to be bound for Australia. Police said the haul of 81 bales, which was drifting hundreds of kilometres northwest of New Zealand, was recovered in a joint operation with the New Zealand Customs Service and Defence Force acting on intelligence from the Five Eyes alliance, which also includes Australia, the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom.

"This is the largest find of illicit drugs by New Zealand's agencies by some margin," said Commissioner of New Zealand Police Andrew Coster. Officials believe the drugs were dropped at a "floating transit point" in the Pacific Ocean where they would have been picked up and taken to Australia. "We believe it was destined for Australia, where it would have been enough to service the market for one year," Coster said. "It is more than New Zealand would use in 30 years." A police photo showed the massive haul was bound by netting and covered in yellow floats. Some of the bales had a Batman symbol on them, with the packages of cocaine inside labelled with what appeared to be a print of a four-leaf clover. Coster described the bust as a "huge result" for police in both New Zealand and Australia. "There is no doubt this discovery lands a major financial blow right from the South American producers through to the distributors of this product," he added. Officials said it was too early to say where the drugs came from.

'Super bloom' swarms force California city to say no more

LOS ANGELES (AP): A small California city that was overrun by visitors four years ago when heavy winter rains produced a "super bloom" of wild poppies has a message for the public after this year's deluge: Do not come. You could be arrested. The poppies are beginning to bloom but so far on a small scale - and the canyon where they grow and parking areas are now completely off-limits, Lake Elsinore Mayor Natasha Johnson told a press conference where she recounted the chaos of 2019.

"The flowers were beautiful; the scene was a nightmare," Johnson said. Poppies are found throughout California in spring and summer, but usually not as extensively as the blankets of gold that in 2019 covered slopes near Lake Elsinore, a city of 71,000 in Riverside County about 60 miles (96 kilometers) southeast of Los Angeles. The focus of the excessive attention was Walker Canyon, a natural area with a hiking trail located just off heavily traveled Interstate 15. "Back in 2019 numerous safety incidents occurred on the trail and on our roadways," Johnson said. "Tens of thousands of people, as many as 100,000 in a weekend - Disneyland-sized crowds - seeking to experience nature trampled the very habitat that they placed so high in regard and sought to enjoy."

People illegally parked their cars along the freeway and neighborhoods were so gridlocked that parts of the city were essentially severed, affecting emergency services and the ability of residents to go to stores and work, Johnson said. People waited for hours in queues to see the canyon and many were unprepared for the hike, resulting in injuries. California Highway Patrol Lt. Craig Palmer said the agency has already begun saturation patrols of the area, and that freeway shoulders are only for use in emergency situations.

Riverside County Sheriff Chad Bianco warned that there will be zero tolerance for parking violations and the result could be a citation, a vehicle being towed or worse. "It is a misdemeanor infraction, and you're subject to arrest and booking into jail," Bianco said.

N Korea hackers stole record virtual assets: UN experts

UNITED NATIONS (AP): North Korean hackers working for the government stole record-breaking virtual assets last year estimated to be worth between \$630 million and more than \$1 billion, UN experts said in a new report. The panel of experts said in the wide-ranging report seen by The Associated Press that the hackers used increasingly sophisticated techniques to gain access to digital networks involved in cyberfinance, and to steal information that could be useful in North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs from governments, individuals and companies.

With growing tensions on the Korean Peninsula, the report said North Korea continued to violate UN sanctions, producing weapons-grade nuclear material, and improving its ballistic missile program, which "continued to accelerate dramatically." In 2022, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea - the North's official name - launched at least 73 ballistic missiles and missiles combining ballistic and guidance technologies including eight intercontinental ballistic missiles, the panel said. And 42 launches, including the test of a reportedly new type of ICBM and a new solid-fueled ICBM engine, were conducted in the last four months of the year. North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un ordered an "exponential increase of the country's nuclear arsenal" in January, and the panel said "a new law discussed an increased

focus on tactical nuclear capability, a new first-use doctrine, and the 'irreversible nature' of the DPRK's nuclear status." "The ability to carry out an unexpected nuclear strike on any regional or international target, described in DPRK's new law on nuclear doctrine and progressively in public statements since 2021, is consistent with the observed production, testing, and deployment of its tactical and strategic delivery systems," the experts said in the report to the UN Security Council.

The panel said that South Korean authorities quoted in media reports "estimated that state sponsored DPRK cyber threat actors had stolen virtual assets worth around \$1.2 billion globally since 2017, including about \$630 million in 2022 alone." The experts monitoring sanctions against North Korea said an unnamed cybersecurity firm "assessed that in 2022, DPRK cybercrime yielded cyber currencies worth over \$1 billion at the time of the threat, which is more than double the total proceeds in 2021." The variation in the US dollar value of cryptocurrency in recent months is likely to have affected these estimates, the panel said, "but both show that 2022 was a record-breaking year for DPRK virtual asset theft." The panel said three groups that are part of the Reconnaissance General Bureau, North Korea's primary foreign intelligence organization, "continued illicitly to target victims to

generate revenue and solicit information of value to the DPRK including its weapons programs" - Kimsuky, Lazarus Group and Andariel. Between February and July 2022, the panel said, the Lazarus Group "reportedly targeted energy providers in multiple member states using a vulnerability" to install malware and gain long-term access. It said this "aligns with historical Lazarus intrusions targeting critical infrastructure and energy companies ... to siphon off proprietary intellectual property."

Lazarus Group's primary focus is on specific types of industry, aerospace and defense and conventional finance and cryptocurrencies, with the objective of accessing the internal knowledge bases of the compromised companies, the experts said. They quoted the cybersecurity section of an internet technology company as saying Lazarus has been targeting engineers and technical support employees "using malicious versions of open source applications." In December 2022, the panel said, South Korea's national police agency announced that Kimsuky had targeted 892 foreign policy related experts "in an effort to steal personal data and email lists." The police reported that the hackers didn't manage to steal sensitive information, but they "laundered IP addresses of the victims and employed 326 detour servers and 26 member states to make tracing difficult," the experts said.

Burkina Faso gunmen kill 15 Nigerian pilgrims

BURKINA FASO (Agencies): At least 15 Nigerian Muslim pilgrims on their way to Senegal were killed when gunmen in Burkina Faso attacked the buses transporting them, Nigeria's presidency said. President Muhammadu Buhari has urged the tragic news of the murder, the State House said in a statement, without providing further details on the attack. A Nigerian presidency spokesperson told Reuters via WhatsApp that the death toll stood at 15 "so far".

According to a Senegalese religious order, unidentified assailants attacked the convoy of buses on Wednesday and killed 18 passengers. The pilgrims were on their way to a religious ceremony in

Senegal from Niger and Nigeria, a trip that involves crossing conflict hotspots in northern Burkina Faso and central Mali. "Eighteen passengers lost their lives during these attacks, and most of the survivors were robbed," the Medina Baye Mosque in Kaolack, the Senegalese town where the victims were headed, said in a statement. Nigeria's presidency said in the statement that it was in touch with Burkinabe authorities and awaiting the outcome of their investigation into the incident. Burkina Faso's foreign affairs minister Olivia Rouamba met with Nigeria's ambassador to the country to discuss the killings.

"For the time being there is no concrete information or element picked up on the field that proves

the veracity of these facts," Rouamba said in a statement after the meeting. She added that authorities had strongly discouraged travel through the north due to "huge risks" of attacks. Burkina Faso is battling armed groups with links to al-Qaeda and ISIL (ISIS) that spilled over from neighbouring Mali in 2015. Rebel fighters have spread over the tri-border area between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger and encroached on coastal West African states despite costly international efforts to stop them. Regular attacks on towns and villages, army posts and United Nations peacekeepers have caused thousands of deaths, displaced more than two million people across the Sahel and aggravated food insecurity.

NATO role in Ukraine threatens 'unpredictable' escalation: Russia

MOSCOW (Agencies): Western weapons supplies to Ukraine are dragging NATO directly into the conflict and could lead to an "unpredictable" escalation, Russia's defence minister says. "The US and its allies are trying to prolong the conflict as much as possible," Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu said in a conference call with military officials.

"To do this, they have started supplying heavy offensive weapons, openly urging Ukraine to seize our territories. In fact, such steps are dragging NATO countries into the conflict and could lead to an unpredictable level of escalation." His allusion to "our territories" appeared to be a reference to four regions in eastern and southern Ukraine - Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson - that Russia claims to have annexed following referendums last September that were condemned by Kyiv and its Western allies as illegitimate. Much of the territory in the Russian-claimed regions is currently in Ukrainian hands.

Moscow has repeatedly accused the NATO alliance of playing a direct role in the war by supplying arms to Kyiv. Ukraine says the weapons are urgently needed to stave off Russian attacks and boost its firepower for a spring offensive against Moscow's forces.

Ukrainian officials say Moscow is accumulating arms and reserves for a renewed assault in the coming weeks. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres expressed concern about the war's recent direction. Peace prospects "keep diminishing" and "the chances of further escalation and bloodshed keep growing", he said in a speech. "I fear the world is not sleepingwalking into a wider war - I fear it is doing so with its eyes wide open."

The United States has sent more than \$20bn worth of military aid to Ukraine since Russia's invasion last February, and is set to provide Kyiv with longer-range rockets as part of a new \$2bn package of weapons announced last week. Since the beginning of the year, Western countries have pledged hundreds of tanks and armoured vehicles to Ukraine to give it the firepower and mobility to push through Russian lines and recapture occupied territory later this year. The new US package of weapons was expected to include longer-range rockets, which would give Ukraine the ability to hit Russian supply lines in all of the territory it occupied in Ukraine's mainland and parts of the Crimea Peninsula.

But it will take months for the new arms to arrive. Meanwhile, Ukraine faces a Russian force with its man-

power replenished by Moscow's call-up of hundreds of thousands of reservists. Russia continues to throw waves of troops at cities and towns in the eastern Donbas region. Fighting has focused for months around the Ukrainian-held city of Bakhmut in eastern Donetsk province, which Russia has been trying to encircle. Moscow has also launched an assault further south against Vuhledar, a Ukrainian-held bastion at the strategic intersection between the eastern and southern front lines. "Military operations are at the moment progressing with success in the areas around Vuhledar and Artemovsk," said Shoigu, using the previous name for the besieged town of Bakhmut.

Shoigu listed seven settlements that Russia has recently "liberated", including the salt-mining town of Soledar that came under Russian control in January. Some military analysts have been sceptical, however, about Russia's ability to mount a large new offensive in the coming weeks. Ukraine and Russia are both still training their new troops and amassing weapons. The United Kingdom's defence ministry said in an assessment that Russia is "requiring undermanned, inexperienced units to achieve unrealistic objectives due to political and professional pressure".

Chile heatwave threatens to worsen wildfires, authorities warn

RIO CLARO (Agencies): A heatwave is threatening further wildfires in Chile's south-central region, authorities have warned, as more than two dozen people have been killed due to the devastating blazes. High temperatures are expected until Friday and could rise above 35 degrees Celsius (95 degrees Fahrenheit) in the central Maule and Nuble regions, "creating a very complex situation in terms of weather," the deputy interior minister, Manuel Monsalve, said.

"A very complex climate situation can arise," said Monsalve, urging teams to be "prepared for any eventuality". Fires have ravaged more than 290,000 hectares (716,606 acres) across the South American nation so far, killing at least 26 people and destroying more

than 1,000 houses, leaving thousands homeless. Approximately 5,600 firefighters, mostly volunteers, are actively battling 81 priority blazes countrywide out of 301 still burning, the AFP news agency reported, citing Chilean authorities. Air quality in the affected areas also has deteriorated significantly because of the smoke from the fires, said health minister Ximena Aguilera.

Nearly 2,000 people have been injured in a week of blazes in the regions of Biobio, La Araucania and Nuble, where a state of emergency has been in place. Monsalve, the deputy interior minister, said that fire brigades from Colombia and Mexico were arriving to help. He added that 15 people had been arrested for possible links to starting the fires over

activities including welding and burning animal wool. Meanwhile, Colombian President Gustavo Petro said on Twitter that his country was sending a fire-fighting brigade and cargo plane with two Bambi Buckets - used to help extinguish blazes from the air - to Chile. Spain, Mexico and other countries in Latin America also have said they would send firefighters and experts to help combat the fires. One of the local volunteers, Macarena Fernandez, a 31-year-old physical education teacher, described the situation in Chile's Santa Juana region late last week as "intense".

"We did what we humanly could, what was within our means," she told AFP. "The most difficult is to see the situation of people left without homes, without their fami-

ly, without their animals and completely destitute." But a week into the emergency, the government said some employers were calling on volunteers to return to their normal jobs. "The more days [of fire], the more we need the volunteers, the more tired they are and the more in need of help," said interior minister Carolina Toha. Earlier this week, Chile's President Gabriel Boric called for unity and resolve in response to the destruction left by the fires.

"Unity to face the tragedy, unity to rebuild ourselves. That has been and will always be the path in the face of adversity in our Chile," he wrote on Twitter. Officials in Chile have previously suggested that climate change was to blame for the rising temperatures and subsequent fires.

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Global conflicts and the UN’s impotence

THE UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has warned the world about its continuous slides towards a wider war as the risk of further escalation in the Russia-Ukraine conflict rises every other day. While addressing the 193-member UN General Assembly, Guterres echoed his concerns regarding the drastic effects of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which inflicted untold suffering on the Ukrainian people with profound global implications. According to the UN Chief, the world was walking into a wider conflict with wide-open eyes instead of somnambulism.

Global peace and tranquility have significantly declined during the past decade due to a renewed escalation in the international rivalry between the major powers. Realistically, the forced annexure of Creamia by the Russian Federation was the beginning point of the current US-Russia tussle. At the same time, American rapprochement toward Taiwan and the four nations' Quad Security Dialogue were other reasons for contention between China and the western bloc. Besides these two newest warzones, all times war theaters and persistent unresolved global issues including Palestine, Jammu and Kashmir, Afghanistan, Haiti, Syrian, Yemeni, and Lybian crises, North Korea Nuclear dispute, and unending communal and terror insurgencies in the Sahel region remained centers of violence and regional conflict along with continuous battlegrounds for major contenders including the US and NATO, Russia and China.

At the time, the nearly year-long conflict in Ukraine has been intensifying in recent weeks with fierce battles between the Ukrainian military and Russian forces for control of important strategic locations in eastern Ukraine. Russia has deployed its heavily armed fresh troops into the war. The western allies also accelerated their provision of modern weapons including main battle tanks and air crafts to support Ukraine's war efforts against Moscow. Over the past year, the Ukrainian conflict remained inconclusive and both sides suffered significant human and economic losses, while every other day increases the chances of a wider war and nuclear conflict between the challengers. Similarly, the situation in the Indo-Pacific region, the Taiwan Strait, and Korean Peninsula are seriously fragile and any misstep of belligerent nations can bring disaster to the region.

Meanwhile, Indian hegemonism and unimaginable atrocities and human rights violations in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) had brought South Asia to the brink of a nuclear conflict because New Delhi persistently denied Kashmiris' right to self-determination over the past decades. Whereas the unresolved Palestine dispute and Israel intensified settlers' colonialism in Gaza and West Bank is all time risk to peace and stability in the Middle East region.

The UN Chief has precisely described the risks to global peace and stability, however, he did not apprise the world about the helplessness and impotence of his forum which fell prey to the selfishness of major powers. Realistically, the United Nations and its executive arm, the UN Security Council failed to implement their decisions on their member nations since the very existence of the New York-based world organization. Ironically, the mechanism that was formed to prevent war had been used by the powerful nations to wage war against opponents, while weak nations could not get their basic rights due to injustice and bias. In fact, the evaluation of issues is not sufficient, the UN Chief must work toward cessation of membership of those nations who did not cooperate and disrespected UN decisions in the past, so every arrogant gets penalized and others start respecting the UN charter. This is the sole idea for maintaining peace and ensuring law in the universe, otherwise, the UN would earn a disgrace every other day.

Educational depreciation in Sindh

CHIEF Minister Sindh, Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that education was the backbone of the socioeconomic development of any country and without tangible development and requisite advancements in this sector, a nation could not survive or thrive in the world. According to Chief Minister, his government was very much determined in bringing palpable improvement in the Education Sector which was evident from interventions by provincial authorities in this particular sector.

Realistically, education is the most important element for national development and plays a crucial role in the socio-economic uplift of any nation in the modern world. Pakistan, being a developing nation had always faced a lack of resources in the education sector, while the cumulative expenditures at both provincial and federal levels remained below 2 percent of the GDP throughout history. Although successive governments introduced multiple educational reforms, including the issuance of scholarships for talented and poor students, and the provision of free textbooks, teachers' training, etc, however, those measures could neither produce the desired results in the past. In fact, the promotion of education is a collective responsibility of the government as well as society. The government needs to provide education facilities while parents need to send their wards to Schools and society must discourage child labor, so no children remain out of school.

Historically, Rural Sindh has a very low literacy rate while public sector educational institutions have very poor educational standards in the province. There are no or a little number of government schools in Rural areas, whereas, Education Department faces an acute shortage of trained educators and schools. Meanwhile, thousands of ghost schools and fake teachers had been reported across Sindh in the past, while a majority of them still exist, and their salaries are regularly being disbursed from the provincial kitty.

Recently, the Sindh government has recruited thousands of highly educated teachers, upgraded their pay scales, and offered better incentives to them to promote education in the region. However, concerted efforts and massive investment is needed in the education sector to provide better education facilities besides enforcement of discipline, continuous monitoring, along with stern accountability of teachers and higher executives, so, this most important national activity can flourish in the future.

ON February 6, massive earthquakes struck southern Turkey and northern Syria, inflicting ghastly damage across a geographic region that has already borne a great deal of earthly devastation in recent decades. The ongoing war in Syria has produced millions of refugees, many of whom have now found themselves victims of seismic activity in the Turkish south.

The death toll from Monday's quakes quickly jumped into the thousands and will no doubt soar to far more macabre heights. An untold number of people remain buried beneath the rubble. Traumatized survivors contend with frigid temperatures and aftershocks; refugees contend with the loss of any semblance of refuge. The natural disaster has served to underscore what should hardly be earth-shattering news: that life for the global poor is extremely precarious and plagued by multiple, simultaneous crises from which recovery is often futile.

To be sure, the dwellings inhabited by the have-nots of the earth can be structurally less reliable and potentially more vulnerable to tectonic tumult - as was seen, for example, in the Peruvian earthquake of 2007, when homes collapsed across poor neighborhoods in the province of Ica. But in a world structured upon capitalist foundations, precarity goes much deeper than shoddy construction materials or disregard for building codes. For starters, capitalism's insistence on acute

inequality and the tyranny of an elite minority means there are major global fault lines between rich and poor - ones that are becoming ever more pronounced in the era of climate change and attendant ecological calamity. And while aid pledges inevitably come pouring in after high-profile disasters, they often only exacerbate the divide by lining the pockets of the aid industry rather than benefiting the disaster-stricken themselves.

For starters, capitalism’s insistence on acute inequality and the tyranny of an elite minority means there are major global fault lines between rich and poor - ones that are becoming ever more pronounced in the era of climate change and attendant ecological calamity. And while aid pledges inevitably come pouring in after high-profile disasters, they often only exacerbate the divide by lining the pockets of the aid industry rather than benefitting the disaster-stricken themselves. There is also the reality that, for much of the world's precarious population, life constitutes a more or less continuous disaster, but one that generates no attention.

There is also the reality that, for much of the world's precarious population, life constitutes a more or less continuous disaster, but one that generates no attention. In June, The New Humanitarian news agency noted gross disparities in disaster relief, with almost half of all emergency funding for 2022 "going to only five protracted - and largely conflict-driven - crises". Citing a recent United Nations estimate that the number of annual disasters will increase to some 560 by the year 2030, the agency described how victims of under-the-radar dis-

asters are often forced to remain in unsafe locations - thereby setting the stage for new crises. Take the case of Afghanistan, where an ongoing dependence on aid has done nothing to make the country safe. In August, floods killed more than 180 people, just two months after an earthquake had killed more than 1,000. In May, the NGO Save the Children reported that the country was suffering its

"worst hunger crisis on record", with nearly 50 percent of the population going hungry on account of a raging drought and continuing economic breakdown.

Such are the toxic legacies of two decades of a United States-led "war on terror" that devastated the lives, livelihoods and futures of millions of Afghans and sucked in billions of dollars of "recovery funds". For another illustration of how politics, greed and mismanagement overlap with and compound environmental catastrophe, we need look no further

than the Caribbean nation of Haiti, where in 2021 a devastating 7.2 magnitude earthquake was followed by a deadly storm and landslides. More than 2,200 people were killed and 130,000 homes destroyed, in addition to a number of schools and hospitals.

This came just over a decade after a 2010 earthquake killed some 220,000 people and rendered 1.5 million homeless. Only a

As for me, my own personal experience with earthquakes includes a tremor in southwestern Turkey in 2010 and the magnitude 7.4 earthquake that rocked Mexico's Oaxacan coast in June 2020. I can safely say that the latter episode was akin to feeling my world combust - but only momentarily, as it entailed no lasting damage to my house or person. In other words, it was a far and privileged cry from the experience of the latest

earthquake victims in Turkey and Syria, many of whom - displaced by war - had undoubtedly already felt their respective worlds combust even prior to the quake. Following the news of Monday's cataclysm, I spoke here in Oaxaca with a working-class Mexican man who, in September 1985, assisted in extracting bodies from the rubble of the Mexico City earthquake that officially resulted in the deaths of 10,000 people but probably killed many more. Shaking his head, he professed to still think regularly of three bodies in particular: a humble mother

hunched in vain over her two children, dressed in school uniforms.

And as if the poor needed any more reminders as to the negligible value assigned to their lives, the perennial tremors of the earth in Mexico mean that earthquake-related psychological trauma is easily revived. As for things not easily revived, in September 1986, one year after the Mexico City quake, the Washington Post reported that no fewer than 80,000 people remained homeless. Indeed, the city never quite fully recovered from either the physical damage or the disaster mismanagement. Precarity is nothing new.

And yet things are getting more precarious by the minute, as capitalism breaks new ground in the field of obliterating any and all aspirations toward a common humanity or planetary wellbeing - and the "disaster relief" industry concerns itself with maintaining its own viability while poor communities lurch from one disaster to the next. While the rich insulate themselves from the fallout, the poor bear the brunt of military conflict, economic upheaval, climate-related havoc, and the coronavirus pandemic - which has left the earth's have-nots on even shakier ground. As with all other present earthly afflictions, Monday's quakes in Turkey and Syria will hit the poor the hardest. And the only way out of a world where profit for the few means precarity for the many would be a total seismic shift.

Aljazeera

After Brexit, Britain’s competitors are running rings around us. Sunak’s not even at the races

Rafael Behr

BRITAIN’S future will be shaped by a summit of European leaders this week, but Rishi Sunak, as prime minister of a very sovereign nation, will be absent. It is one of the more subtle degradations of life outside the European Union. Heads of government gather in Brussels to decide things that affect British voters, who are represented by an empty chair.

The mechanism is slow and poorly understood. That is why Eurosceptics got away with claiming for decades that "Europe" was something done to Britain by foreigners, when all along it was something that Britain negotiated for itself in partnership with its neighbours. Brexit is a self-fulfilling prophecy. It turns Brussels into the creature its paranoid antagonists imagined - an engine of decisions that Britain can neither ignore nor change. This week's agenda has an item of particular concern for a country in economic torpor, unsure how to make a living for itself in the 21st century. The question is couched in the arid argot of Brussels summits: "In face of the new geopolitical reality, EU leaders will discuss long-term competitiveness" and "how to harness the full potential of the single market". That means waking up to US moves to corner the market in low-carbon technology. It

means cultivating European green businesses and dissuading them from flying to California in pursuit of tax breaks worth hundreds of billions of dollars.

It means drafting an answer to Joe Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, an era-defining law signalling the death of ultraliberal globalisation and covering its grave with subsidised solar panels and wind-farms, made in America. This is "the new geopolitical reality" that EU leaders are pondering. The act is Biden's answer to interlocking threats: the climate crisis; Russia as a rogue state; a new cold war with China. Europe faces the same three challenges. Unilateral US protectionism adds a fourth. There is consensus in the EU that the existing state aid regime - the rules to stop member states skewing the internal market with favours for their national champions - needs changing. The system has already been bent out of shape to work around the pandemic and the need to quit an addiction to Russian gas.

There are differences over how far to go down the road of continent-wide industrial management. The European Council has to balance the views of big and small countries; net budget contributors and recipients; statist France and the pro-market Dutch. The outcome is always complex and incomplete - a

fudge in perpetual progress. When Britain was in the EU, those deals only registered in Westminster as demands for money that a prime minister must refuse, laying down "red lines", brandishing a veto. Post-Brexit, they don't register at all. They should. The UK has skin in this game. We, too, have clocked how vulnerable global supply chains are to disruption by pestilence and war. We, too, would like to be a hub for high-skill, high-wage green jobs. If everyone is going to be driving electric vehicles and heating their homes from renewable sources, Britain wants to be in the business of batteries and turbines, or innovating alternatives.

What Britain doesn't want to be is a nation of consumers importing stuff that has been invented and manufactured in China, the US or Europe, because those are the big players who got their act together, and we are a medium-sized laggard that didn't. Sunak knows this is the task. He doesn't have a plan, but he has a plan for making a plan, beginning with a reorganisation of Whitehall. New portfolios have been created by mashing up and re-slicing the old departments for business, international trade, digital, culture, media and sport. There is now a secretary of state for energy security and net

zero (Grant Shapps), one for science, innovation and technology (Michelle Donelan) and one for business and trade (Kemi Badenoch). If progress on climate policy, energy and industrial strategy is measured by volume of relevant cabinet job titles, Britain's commitment has been dialled from two to three - a 50% increase. But that isn't how it works.

The prime minister moves people around to create the illusion of action. He appoints Greg Hands, a former cabinet minister with professional credentials, as party chair. Then, as Hands's deputy, he installs Lee Anderson, an aggressive culture warrior qualified only for crass provocation.

That is not the choice of a leader who is serious about making the Tories fit for government. It is a classic symptom of intellectual paralysis in a tired administration. Sunak is fiddling with the laces on shoes Britain has yet to put on for a race that our competitors are already running. There are two separate but related reasons why Sunak cannot catch up. A large part of the Conservative party is allergic to government meddling in the economy on the scale required for a dash to green tech. The impulse for radical economic reinvention has already been spent on a different revolution,

Brexit, whose keenest Tory advocates believe the best thing the state can do for enterprise is get out of its way.

There is an interventionist school of Brexit that would use regulatory autonomy for industrial activism. (Boris Johnson counts himself a disciple.) But the dominant strain is a libertarian cult whose fantasy economic policy was one that Liz Truss tried, with disastrous effect, and would happily try again in the belief that its only flaw was poor communication. That leads to the second problem. Truss's fiscal misadventures, on top of Johnson's bombast and general Brexit turbulence, cost Britain its market premium as a serious, reliable country when bidding for foreign investment. The effort to restore that status leads to a trap. Caution in all things, especially austere budgets, signals a necessary commitment to stability, but at the expense of bold decisions that might get the economy moving again.

Fear of spooking markets compels the chancellor, Jeremy Hunt (and his Labour shadow, Rachel Reeves), to prove their financial sobriety by pledging to do no more than tinker at the margins of a stagnant status quo. That is a chill factor felt by a lone-rider economy, exposed on the doorstep of a much bigger, better-insu-

lated continental bloc. The supposed compensation is the sovereignty to act quickly and make our own rules. In theory, that permits agility in fields where there are no established standards or dominant players. But exploiting those industries of the future requires political leadership blessed with strategic foresight, high-quality governing institutions at local and national level, plus the fiscal headroom to place some risky bets.

None of those conditions pertains in Britain. Even if they did, the sheer size of the single European market would exert a gravitational pull. Anyone investing in Britain will want to sell to the continent. Bespoke rules can be written in Whitehall to give indigenous companies a head start, but they'll end up aligned with whatever Brussels does to avoid putting a burden on businesses that trade in both jurisdictions.

The drivers of Brexit can keep revving the rhetorical engines of sovereignty in celebration of their imaginary escape from Europe. That won't get Britain out of its economic and strategic dead end. Then, eventually, when the passengers are sick of the pointless din, the choking fumes and going nowhere, the gears can be put into reverse.

The Guardian

Liz Truss set out her grand plan to me - and it’s horrified parts of the Tory party

‘You’ve set the cat among the pigeons,’ messaged a Tory MP after my interview with Liz Truss dropped on Monday night. The former prime minister’s first spoken intervention since leaving office saw Truss offer little in the way of a mea culpa, and instead set out her plans to carve out a place for herself on the backbenches as a committed tax-cutter. “Obviously I’ve got more time available now to think about these things and make the argument and that’s what I want to do,” she said of her post-prime ministerial plans.

Given Rishi Sunak and Jeremy Hunt are trying to lower expectations ahead of the spring budget (and the budget after that), it’s exactly the type of intervention the government would rather avoid. The chancellor has repeatedly suggest-

ed now is not the time for tax cuts - instead they will only come “when the time is right”. Sunak has frequently said bringing down inflation must come first. He said the public were “not idiots” and understood this. The implication? Some in his party are. There are plenty within the Tory party who would be inclined to agree. Since Truss broke her silence - just over three months after leaving Downing Street - with a 4,000-word essay in the Sunday Telegraph and now her interview with the Spectator, several of her parliamentary colleagues have been publicly critical. Caroline Nokes said “a period of silence would be helpful”, while the cabinet minister Grant Shapps has said Truss’s tax cuts were clearly the wrong approach. A former aide to Truss is similarly disobliging: “I don’t think now is the right

time to speak. In the past, former prime ministers have found a charitable cause rather than diving straight back in.”

However, Truss appears unperturbed by the criticism. Given her place in history as the shortest-serving prime minister, she was markedly upbeat during the 50-minute sit down. Perhaps though the difficulty of that seven-week premiership explains why one of the questions she was the quickest to respond to was: would she like to be prime minister again? The answer was a polite but firm no. While Truss’s critics will no doubt find relief in those comments, the bigger concern among her opponents within her party is the effect she could soon have on the ideological debate. Her return presents Sunak with trouble on several counts.

Katy Balls

First, there are senior Tories and ministers who worry that any intervention by Truss, regardless of whether it’s separate to or even critical of Sunak, will simply remind the public of a short-lived leadership they would like voters to forget. It makes it much harder for Sunak to turn the page with the public if his predecessors are still hanging around. But more than that, Truss still holds some sway in parts of the Tory party. Notably, her interventions so far have been more focused on a Conservative-minded audience than the public at large.

Truss believes one of the reasons her premiership failed was a failure by people who hold her views - small-state, low-tax, free market - to make the argument. “Was I trying to fatten the pig on market day,

maybe ... there’s a long history of failing to make the case and that’s what I’m thinking now,” she said. On this point, there are plenty of Tory MPs who agree. There is a sense not just on the right of the party that, after more a decade in government, the party has lost touch with its core principles.

It’s one of the main reasons she won the leadership contest in the summer. Although some MPs backed the then foreign secretary in the hope of a plum job from the bookies’ favourite, plenty more did so because they preferred her brand of true-blue radicalism on tax cuts to Sunak’s more modest managerialism. It means that a push by Truss or the new 40-strong Conservative Growth Group - led by two MPs who served as cabinet ministers in her government - has the potential to make life difficult for Sunak.

Many of the MPs worried about such a push are more concerned not about the next 18 months, but about what may come after. As the Tories continue to trail Labour heavily in the polls, lots of MPs are more inclined to discuss the likely scale of defeat come the election rather than whether they can turn things around and win a fifth term. The scale of the defeat would be a big factor in the type of debate the Tories have in the event of a loss - and the candidate who succeeds as leader of the opposition. In the event of a big loss, expect figures such as Truss and former ministers like Jacob Rees-Mogg to argue of the need to return to a more purist low-tax agenda. It’s here that Truss’s interventions - of which there will be more in the coming weeks and months - could have the biggest impact.

How earthquakes test our souls and our governments

IN every life there are a few indelible dates: the birth of a child, the death of a parent, a national tragedy such as 9/11. An indelible date for me is Sept. 19, 1985. I was an 11-year-old boy living in Mexico City, in a car on my way to school, a few minutes after 7 a.m. Suddenly the road began to sway; the car swerved from one side of the road to the other. It felt as if we were flying. This went on for nearly three minutes. At school a rumor had spread that the downtown had been flattened. My father liked to get to his office there around 7. I spent the morning in a panic.

The earthquake had a magnitude of 8.0. It killed at least 5,000 people, though the real death toll was probably much higher. A terrifying after-shock the next day measured 7.5. For comparison, the 1994 Los Angeles earthquake was a 6.7 and lasted less than 20 seconds. The quake that shook Turkey and Syria on Monday was a 7.8 and didn't stop for about two minutes. The scenes emerging from Idlib, Aleppo, Hatay, Iskenderun and other devastated cities are awful. They're especially emotional for those with their own memories of major quakes. Twenty years after the Mexico City earthquake, I went to Pakistan to report on the American relief effort for the 2005 Kashmir earthquake, in which an estimated 86,000 people were killed.

On my first night in Islamabad a minor quake that lasted a few seconds jolted me awake in the middle of the night, and I jammed myself under the bed. As I lay there, in a sweat, memories of Mexico flooded back. The next morning, I got a ride in a Pakistani helicopter to what had once been a small city

Bret Stephens

After the quake, it became impossible to ignore that privately built office towers and homes stood unscathed while government-built and operated hospitals, ministries and schools lay in ruins. The quake exposed the rot, structural and moral, at the heart of Mexico's quasi-dictatorial development-oriented regime. It also didn't help that the Mexican government refused foreign aid in the critical early hours after the disaster.

Earthquakes are always said to be "natural" disasters. It's a misleading term. The real disaster is almost always man-made, often in the form of poorly constructed homes and buildings with insufficient rebar and other structural support, followed by incompetent crisis management in the aftermath of the catastrophe.

In Pakistan, the shoddy construction was mainly a function of poverty. In wealthier Mexico, which on paper had stringent building codes dating back to the aftermath of previous quakes, the reason tended to be government corruption. After the quake, it became impossible to ignore that

privately built office towers and homes stood unscathed while government-built and operated hospitals, ministries and schools lay in ruins. The quake exposed the rot, structural and moral, at the heart of Mexico's quasi-dictatorial development-oriented regime. It also didn't

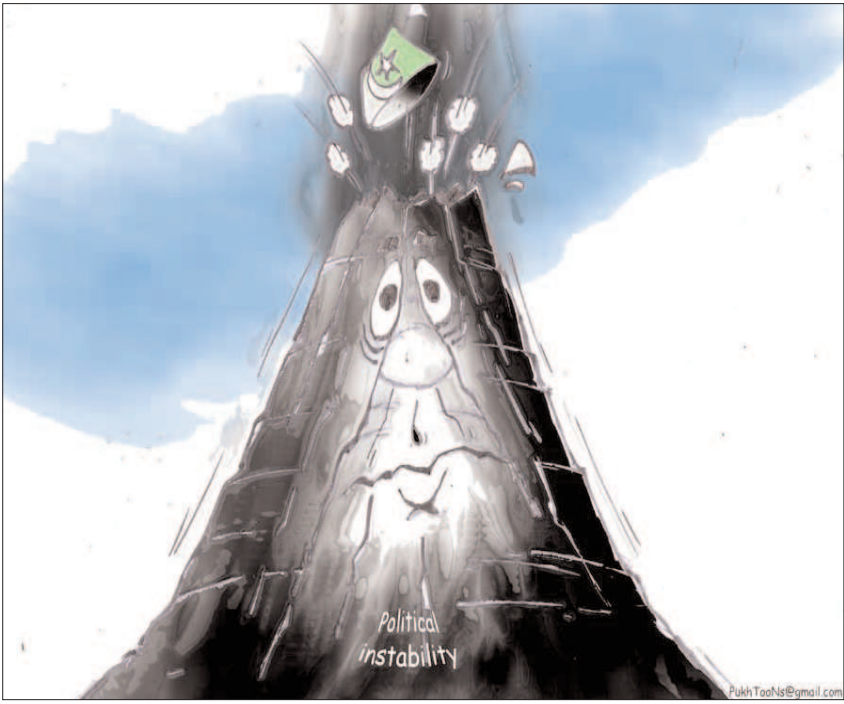
help that the Mexican government refused foreign aid in the critical early hours after the disaster. Nationalism and false pride have no place in a disaster. The government's incompetence enraged many Mexicans previously resigned to keeping their distance from politics. That rage led to the creation of civil-protest movements, and campaigns for better governance. It isn't simple to place the origins of Mexico's transformation into a true democracy, but Sept. 19, 1985, may well be the right date. Good things can emerge from the most tragic circumstances.

Maybe that will be true for

Turkey as well, particularly if President Recep Tayyip Erdogan responds to the emergency with his usual ham-fistedness and paranoia. He faces crucial elections in the spring, and was already presiding over a country facing a nearly 60 percent inflation rate. It won't be surprising if he uses the three-month state of emergency he declared to bully his way to yet another term. If the Turkish government's response is not efficient and effective, if Erdogan seems out of touch, the quake could be his downfall, too. I have even fewer hopes for Syria, where there's no limit to the cruelty that Bashar al-Assad is prepared to inflict to keep himself in power. Syria's ambassador to the United Nations said all aid must be funneled through the government, which should be a nonstarter given Assad's reputation for corruption. Other means will be needed to help devastated Syrians. A final earthquake memory: In Balakot, I had a chance to listen to some of the school kids who had survived the quake but lost their families. It was hard to hold back tears in the face of their composure. Now I think of the children who this week lost their parents - or, just as heartbreakingly, parents who lost their kids.

Even in the age of Ukraine and other disasters, can we still muster a sustained sense of charity and compassion to help, intelligently, in the long recovery that lies ahead? Around noon on that September day in 1985, my mother came to my school and took me home to my dad's embrace. To this day I think about how very lucky we were, and ache for so many who were not.

The New York Times



The Ukraine war and a loss of nuance

Ronald Suny

IN every city in Russia and Ukraine there are monuments to past wars and the millions who were sacrificed to the ambitions of leaders who chose to realize their objectives with guns, bombs, and bayonets. With brutal battles raging now in Russian President Vladimir Putin's meaningless war against Ukraine, many of those monuments in Russian towns and cities have borne silent witness to opposition to the war and its attendant atrocities.

In a country where open defiance of the government has become dangerous, people protest with flowers placed stealthily at the feet of Taras Shevchenko or Nikolai Gogol. The so-called "flower protests" are testimony that there exists, and has always existed, another Russia in opposition to official Russia. I am a historian of

the Ottoman genocide of the Armenians. Trying to explain such horrors, not as resulting from the permanent character of a people, but as phenomena growing out of particular historical conjunctions and contexts, has brought down the wrath of critics.

In Soviet times, after publishing my first book, "The Baku Commune," a history of the revolution of 1917-1918 in the oil capital of the Russian Empire, I was accused of being a "bourgeois falsifier of the history of Azerbaijan." Georgians said that, as an Armenian, I was "incompetent" to write "The Making of the Georgian Nation," another book of mine. And my compatriot Armenians were suspicious when I tried to explain that the Young Turks carried out the mass deportation and murder of hundreds of thou-

public to justify the unjustifiable; tropes that resonate in popular understandings of Russia's past vulnerabilities and the country's great triumph over fascism.

Amid the daily destruction of Ukrainian cities, it is almost impossible to put together a sober analysis of how Putin and many Russians came to feel that they were in an existential struggle with an aggressive West determined to reduce their country to a minor player on the world stage.

It is difficult nowadays to remember the reiterated warnings by successive Russian governments beginning with Yeltsin (and US officials, including the current head of the CIA) that NATO expansion was a dangerous red line. Pundits and journalists consistently misread how the Kremlin understood its national security interests. For example, it's commonly stated that Russia invaded

Putin's expressed fantasies about Nazis ruling in Kyiv, the illegitimacy of the Ukrainian state and the absence of a Ukrainian nation yearning to be free of Russia could have been part of the emotional environment in which he made his disastrous decision to invade. But it is more likely, in my view, that these delusions are primarily propaganda directed at the public to justify the unjustifiable; tropes that resonate in popular understandings of Russia's past vulnerabilities and the country's great triumph over fascism.

Russia, the Soviet Union, and most particularly of the non-Russian peoples of those imperial states. Born in the United States, the descendant of Armenian immigrants from the tsarist and Ottoman empires, I have spent six decades as a scholar teaching and writing about the fraught past of the rulers and colonized subjects of Moscow, St. Petersburg, Istanbul and Ankara. Researching and writing within the standards of good scholarship, I have lived and worked in Armenia, Georgia, Russia and Turkey and consistently sought to demonstrate to whomever listened to my lectures or read my writing the complexities and contradictions of history.

Without attempting to justify or rationalize the horrific repression repeatedly deployed by tsars, sultans, communists, and successive authoritarians such as Putin or Recep Tayyip Erdogan, I have noted the aspirations of ordinary people for greater freedom, well-being and security. In these countries, despite the dangers of openly protesting, people have repeatedly taken to the streets to demand their rights - in 1905, 1917 and 1989-1991 in Russia, 1908 in the Ottoman lands and repeatedly in the Turkish Republic - only to be beaten down by political elites dedicated to their narrow, self-serving interests. History has not been kind to those living in those empires and their successor states.

As a person on the political Left who is opposed to essentialist readings of Russian and Turkish history - the barbaric Russian, the terrible Turk or the godless Communist - I have taken my share of criticism when trying to nuance the explanations of why these states have committed unpardonable crimes, like Stalin's Great Terror, the Holodomor in Ukraine or

sands of Armenians and Assyrians during World War I as the culmination of a long process of demonization. More recently, one of my latest books, "Stalin: Passage to Revolution," a biography of the young Bolshevik from his birth to coming to power in October 1917, was criticized by historians who took issue with my attempt to analyze the many sides of this enigmatic figure. One reviewer even said it was like "reading a sympathetic biography of Hitler."

The bruises to an historian's ego are easily healed. Far more harmful is the fallout from the war in Ukraine, which has heightened the familiar tropes demonizing Russians and rendered impossible multifaceted analysis of the motives and actions of the Russian government and population.

There is, in my view, no excuse for Putin's invasion of Russia and the terrorist war being carried out against people defending their homeland. He must label himself by now understand what a senseless blunder it was to attempt to decapitate the Ukrainian government and subdue a nation of more than 40 million people. But in trying to understand why such a colossal war crime could be contemplated by Russia's leaders, it's unnecessary to immediately jump to concepts such as fascism or Russia's apparently ingrained tendency to expand and subdue its neighbors.

Putin's expressed fantasies about Nazis ruling in Kyiv, the illegitimacy of the Ukrainian state and the absence of a Ukrainian nation yearning to be free of Russia could have been part of the emotional environment in which he made his disastrous decision to invade. But it is more likely, in my view, that these delusions are primarily propaganda directed at the

Georgia in 2008 without noting it was the Georgian president that began the war by shelling South Ossetia (Putin at the time was in Beijing watching the Olympics). This narrative feeds into the popular view that Russia is and has always been an expansive, imperialist state, even though a look at the map would show that Russia/USSR has shrunk on two occasions in the 20th century - after World War I and in 1991 after the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

For Putin, who dreams of regional hegemony over the former Soviet space, Washington's insistence on unencumbered global hegemony is the unacceptable threat that his war in Ukraine was designed to thwart. The problem is that Moscow, like Washington, has been unable to recognize fully that the post-World War II international security system cannot be changed or maintained on the battlefields of Ukraine. Both the US and Russia are guilty of what has been labeled "imperial overreach," trying to dominate other countries or regions beyond their capacity to do so.

Someday, somehow the war in Ukraine will end - not by the defeat of one or another of the combatants but by hard negotiations and compromise. Perhaps then we can get back to more temperate, thoughtful, less heated descriptions and analyses of those states and leaders that stand opposed to our preferred views of the world.

If we demonize and essentialize our opponents, we limit fatally the possible choices for reconstructing the rules of the international game. How is it possible to negotiate with an inherently fascist state or an inevitably imperialist one? The costs of the old thinking are truly unthinkable.

The Moscow Times

Risks of Russia's growing dependence on the Yuan

Alexandra Prokopenko

ONE of the biggest problems Russia is currently facing is managing its foreign trade transactions. The country's main banks have been cut off from SWIFT; the number of transborder transaction channels has decreased drastically; and it has become much harder to conduct transactions in dollars and euros. The government is being forced to look for new ways to arrange payment for Russian imports and exports.

The authorities and businesses have tried switching to national currency transactions, barter deals, cash payments, and other schemes, but were unable to find a comprehensive solution in 2022. Efforts have now clearly shifted to cryptocurrencies and yuan payments, which means the Russian economy will grow increasingly dependent on the Chinese currency, with all the risks such a shift entails.

Even before the war, Russia's central bank aimed to reduce the country's dependence on Western currencies, particularly the US dollar. The invasion and subsequent sanctions have forced Russian financial officials to accelerate those efforts: in the third quarter of 2022, the proportion of foreign currency in the Russian banking system fell to an all-time low of 15%. In nine months, the share of dollar and euro transactions on the Russian market declined from 52% to 34% and from 35% to 19% respectively. They have been replaced by ruble and yuan payments, which have seen respective increases of 12.3% to 32.4% and 0.4% to 14%. The yuan's share in stock market trading has also skyrocketed: from 3% to 33%.

From Jan. 13 to Feb. 6, the Finance Ministry plans to sell foreign currency worth 54.5 billion

rubles by tapping into its 3.1-trillion-ruble reserves of yuan liquid assets, which make up over 40% of distributable liquid assets in the National Wealth Fund. It's still an insignificant sum, which amounts to less than 3% of Russia's yuan circulation in the last three months. Nevertheless, it will mean reduced volatility for the ruble.

The Finance Ministry also revised the structure of the National Wealth Fund currency component at the end of 2022, doubling its yuan share to 60%. Any surplus oil and gas revenues in 2023 will be accumulated in yuan. The de-dollarization of the economy, which the Russian authorities are so proud of, essentially translates into "yuanization." Russia is drifting toward a yuan currency zone, swapping its dollar dependence for reliance on the yuan.

This is hardly a reliable substitution: now Russian reserves and payments will be influenced by the policies of the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Bank of China. Should relations between the two countries deteriorate, Russia may face reserve losses and payment disruptions.

It's believed that the yuan can't become a full-fledged reserve currency because of the current restrictions on capital transactions in China. It constitutes just 3% of global currency reserves, overshadowed by the dollar (60%) and the euro (20%). But Russia's growing dependence on the yuan is helping the Chinese authorities to make it into an international reserve currency. Last October, Russia became the fourth largest offshore trading center for yuan, though back in April it wasn't even in the top fifteen for off-

shore yuan users.

Russian politicians often mistakenly claim that the yuan's international expansion foreshadows the dollar's collapse. In fact, higher yuan internationalization means that the Chinese government needs more dollar reserves. The Chinese authorities need the US currency to support the yuan's stability on offshore markets, primarily in Hong Kong. Accordingly, the yuan's strength as a reserve currency doesn't weaken the dollar; rather, the two currencies complement each other. This means that Beijing can't really help Moscow in its crusade against the dollar.

Russian-Chinese cooperation on cryptocurrencies will also intensify. Right now, Russia is just testing cryptocurrency payments for foreign trade transactions, but the central bank plans to develop a model for transborder payments using the digital ruble (a central bank digital currency, or CBDC) this year. There are two options on the table: bilateral agreements on integrating CBDC platforms, or connecting the country to a unified integrated platform.

The first option has a more specific focus, on using the digital ruble to make transborder payments. In this case, international agreements could impose limitations on the payments' purpose and amount. Under the second option, the platform would have common standards and communications protocols, and that's what less CBDC-advanced states will adhere to. This second option is quite risky, as foreign fiat currency-pegged CBDC may attract countries with unstable inflation and currency exchange rates.

Whichever option Russia chooses, China is the only possible part-

ner. The country's digital transactions through the Alipay and WeChat Pay platforms reached 166.1 trillion yuan (\$23.8 trillion) in 2019. In addition, China has been testing the CBDC E-CNY prototype as the third form of money to be used inside the country. As of the fall of 2022, about 140 million Chinese people had E-CNY digital wallets, and their transactions exceeded 62 billion yuan (\$9 billion). As the more technologically advanced party, Beijing is likely to establish its own rules for the platform, relegating Moscow to a less important position.

Russian leaders like to emphasize the unprecedented strategic cooperation between the two countries. Yet in reality, this cooperation makes Moscow increasingly dependent on Beijing. Russia offers a fairly liquid market for Chinese goods, and Western sanctions have made Beijing Russia's main trade partner. Chinese companies are joining parallel import programs, trying to replace the Western companies that have left the Russian market. Of the 14 brands on the Russian automobile market, 11 are Chinese, for example. Chinese products accounted for 40% of Russian imports of goods at the end of 2020, and only North Korea is more dependent on Chinese imports now than Russia. In addition, the Chinese UnionPay system is the only way Russians can use bank cards overseas. Contrary to Moscow's expectations, China has failed to help Russia circumvent sanctions. While not joining the sanctions, Beijing has complied with them. In the future, Russia's economic dependence on China will only grow, meaning the Kremlin will be forced to reckon with China's geo-economic interests, often to its own detriment.

Why US policy of 'blocking China technologically' will backfire

Sun Xihui

WITH China's sustained development, the country's comprehensive national strength and international influence continue to ramp up, while Washington's sense of strategic anxiety has also waxed. Overall, the Joe Biden administration has continued its predecessor's negative perception and strategy toward China, identifying China as "America's most consequential geopolitical challenge" and suppressing China mainly in the fields of security, economy and technology.

The Biden administration's technology policy toward China is similar to that of Trump's team, but with different specific tactics. Biden's team focuses more on semiconductors and chips, abiding by the idea of a "small yard, high fence" to promote "technological decoupling" from China and intensify internal and external linkages. By spreading anxiety and piling on political and security pressure, Washington is forcing allies and partners to remain the same stance with the US, restricting the export of high-end chips to China through technology export controls and long-arm jurisdiction.

In this vein, the Biden administration signed a range of bills and executive orders related to semiconductors and chips, and established the Semiconductors in America Coalition, a cross-sector alliance of companies that make

and use semiconductors, as well as the Chip 4 Alliance and try to further expand its membership, and prohibit the US and its allies and partners from providing high-end chips to Chinese companies.

However, the US technological blockade against China has not produced the desired effect. Chinese high-tech companies such as Huawei have not gone bankrupt. Instead, China's high-end chip research and development has constantly made breakthroughs, and technological progress in various fields has rapidly advanced.

US "technical decoupling" from China essentially aims to work as a preventive blockade or sanction. In theory, at least three conditions must be met for such policies to be successful. One is that the country trying to block another has absolute technological superiority and capabilities. Another is that the country targeted by the blockade lacks the ability to independently develop such technologies. Furthermore, the country being targeted by the embargo cannot obtain such technical resources from other countries. In reality, Washington has not fully met these three conditions.

First, the US has solid semiconductor and chip technology strength, but it is not an "all-round champion" or has absolute technological advantages. In this context,

the US cannot blockade China on its own in the field of technology.

Second, China has an enormous talent pool, considerable investment in research and development, as well as a strong capacity for independent innovation. That is to say that China has the capability and conditions to realize independent scientific and technological innovation in any field. Third, there are interest differences between the US and its allies as well as its partners, and their science and technology policies toward China are contradictory and counterproductive.

In terms of science and technology policies toward China, Washington hopes to solidify its allies and partners to try to limit China's technological progress and strength growth through the "chip embargo." Most of the US' allies and partners tend to follow suit at the instigation and pressure of the Washington, but do not want to harm the economic interests of their own companies, and are reluctant to completely deteriorate their relations with China. Since China is an important consumer and importer of high-end chips, restricting the export of high-end chips to China will impair the interests of the companies from the US, as well as its allies and partners.

Furthermore, in order to secure

its own superiority in the semiconductor sector, the US requires the chip companies of its allies and partners to invest and produce in the United States. For example, Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company in 2020 committed at least \$12 billion to build its first facility in Arizona, and in November 2022, the chip giant said it planned to bring its most advanced technology in Arizona.

The "oppressive" cooperation of the US with its allies and partners has led to the accumulation of dissatisfaction among the latter. The US government restricts the export of high-end chips to China on the grounds of national security, which not only damages the interests of the US' domestic companies, but also strengthens China's determination to take the path of independent innovation.

In short, although the US policy of restricting the export of high-end chips to China has triggered Chinese companies to face losses and difficulties for a certain period of time, it cannot stop China's technological progress. As related companies of the US and its allies and partners have suffered huge losses as a result, Washington cannot form a consistent policy toward China with these countries. The US' capability to restrict technology and its influence on China will also be further weakened.

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PSX stays bullish, gains 200 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Wednesday, gaining 200.56 points, a positive change of 0.48 percent, closing at 41,723.32 points against 41,522.76 points the previous day.

A total of 297,773,210 shares were traded during the day as compared to 296,595,844 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 12.072 billion against Rs 12,519 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 346 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 185 of them recorded gains and 132 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 29 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 64,461,125

shares at Rs 1.31 per share. Oil and Gas Development with 22,259,031 shares at Rs 99.78 per share, and Pak Petroleum with 15,889,192 shares at Rs 80.05 per share.

Bhanero Tex witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 76.51 per share price, closing at Rs 1,096.61, whereas the runner-up was Lucky Core Ind.XD with a Rs 34.74 rise in its per share price to Rs 560.74.

Sapphire Fiber witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 41.67 per share closing at Rs 1,100.00, followed by Sapphire Tex with Rs 38.27 decline to close at Rs 986.73.

Rupee gains Rs2.96 against US dollar: The exchange rate of the Pakistani rupee strengthened by Rs 2.96 against the US dollar in the interbank trading on Wednesday and closed at Rs 273.32 against

the previous day's closing of Rs 276.28.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs. 277 and Rs. 280 respectively.

The price of the euro depreciated by Rs 2.50 and closed at Rs 293.92 against the previous day's closing of Rs 296.42, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese yen lost one paisa to close at Rs 2.08, whereas a decrease of Rs 1.52 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British pound, which was traded at Rs 330.61 as compared to its last closing of Rs 332.13.

The exchange rates of the Emirates dirham and Saudi riyal decreased by 80 paisa and 78 paisa to close at Rs 74.41 and Rs 72.85 respectively.

Gold prices decrease by Rs2,000 to 198,000 per tola: The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs.2,000 on Wednesday and was traded at Rs.198,000 against sale at Rs 200,000 the last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs.1,715 to Rs.169,753 against Rs.171,468, whereas that of 10 grams of 22 karat declined to Rs.155,607 from Rs.157,179, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of one tola silver decreased by Rs.60 to Rs.2170 whereas that of ten-gram silver declined by Rs51.44 to Rs.1,860.42.

The price of gold in the international market increased by US\$11 to US\$ 1880 as compared to its sale at US\$1,969 on the last trading day, the association reported.



PESHAWAR: People buying government rate flour.

Nikkei index ends lower as yen strengthens

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo's key Nikkei index ended lower Wednesday with share prices weighed down by a stronger yen and lacklustre earnings reports from some corporate giants.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index slipped 0.29 percent, or 79.01 points, to close at 27,606.46, while the broader Topix index added 0.03 percent, or 0.57 points, at 1,983.97.

The dollar fetched 131.04 yen, against 131.19 in New York and 132.03 yen in Tokyo late Tuesday.

The Japanese market was "dragged down by the yen's appreciation against the dollar and disappointing earnings results from SoftBank Group and Nintendo", Iwai Cosmo Securities said.

On Tuesday, SoftBank Group reported a surprise \$5.9 billion net loss in the third quarter, as a slump in the tech sector continued to hit the investment behemoth's earnings.

The loss compared with the firm's net profit of \$219 million in the same three-month period last year.

Nintendo trimmed its full-year net profit estimate to 370 billion yen on Tuesday, from an earlier projection of 400 billion yen.

The Kyoto-based gaming giant blamed the global chip shortage for a 21-percent year-on-year decline in Switch hardware sales in the April-December period.

SoftBank Group on Wednesday saw its shares plummet 5.11 percent to 5,948 yen and Nintendo nosedive 7.52 percent to 5,201 yen.

Among other major shares, Sony Group lost 0.83 percent to 11,955 yen and Uniqlo operator Fast Retailing gave up 1.30 percent to 81,490 yen.

Toyota, which will announce its earnings on Thursday, edged up 0.02 percent to 1,897.5 yen.

Pak-Afghan trade: CC apprised about hindrances

PESHAWAR (APP): The newly appointed Collector Customs Appraisement, Ashfaq Ahmad was apprised about hindrances faced by businessmen dealing in Pak-Afghan trade.

The briefing was given by a delegation of businessmen which called on him at his office on Wednesday under the leadership of Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi, President Frontier Customs Agents Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Senior Vice President PAJCCI, Khalid Shehzad and office bearers of Frontier Customs Agents Association including Vice President Imtiaz Ahmad Ali, General Secretary, Mian Waheed Shah Bacha and Executive Member,

Haji Muhammad Azeem accompanied, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi.

The delegation members welcomed Ashfaq Ahmad over assuming the charge and expressed the hope that he will work with mutual coordination of stakeholders of Pak-Afghan commerce and trade.

Speaking on the occasion, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi informed Collector Customs about the problems being faced by businessmen at different Custom Stations at Torkhem, Ghulam Khan, Kharlachi, Angoor Ada, Aza Khel, Peshawar Dry and Airport.

Zia gave a detailed briefing about issues causing hindrances in trade at these custom stations and dry

ports. He said Pakistan Railways is not made operational at Aza Khel dry port for the last 15 years as a result of which export from Peshawar through railway is completely stopped.

Talking to the delegation members, Collector Customs held out assurance of resolution of problems being faced by business community on priority basis.

He also informed that a letter has also been sent to Divisional Commercial Officer (DCO) about issues pertained to businessmen at Azhakhel Dry port.

He thanked the delegation members and reiterated his assurance of giving due consideration to resolution of problems causing impediments in Pak-Afghan trade.

Digitalising, revolutionising small industries must be new SME policy

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan-China Joint Chambers of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI)

President Moazzam Ali Ghurki suggested on Wednesday that digitalising and revolutionising small industries should be the new SME [small and medium enterprises] policy of Pakistan.

Sharing his views at a think-tank session, held here at the PCJCCI offices, he added that all sorts of innovation and entrepreneurship takes place at domestic markets and in small industries, which later move out and lead to higher exports and foreign exchange earnings. Ghurki said, "The small shopkeeper, the 'rerhi wallas', the unskilled labourers possess the largest number of small and medium enterprises and if we make this sector progress, we will have a more egalitarian development."

He also suggested that trade policy should not only be for promoting exports but for promoting all trades both at home and abroad. "We have to redesign our trade policy centered to

encourage competition, create opportunities and provide an enabling environment for domestic markets to flourish in an innovative and exciting new approach," he added.

Ghurki said that the domestic markets and small industries in Pakistan primarily included retail and wholesale traders, restaurants and hotels, construction, transport storage and communication, financial and real estate and personal services. These were the sectors where the poor and middle-class were hidden, he said adding, "We do not need to reinvent the wheel, it is only through competition with foreign markets and services that our domestic markets will improve and benefit through knowledge spillovers, learning by doing and exposure to new technologies and management systems."

PCJCCI Vice President Hamza Khalid said that the public and private sector should follow a vibrant vision of transforming Pakistani cities into a dynamic commercial hub

of the region- a tourist destination, a shopping centre, regional headquarters for multinational corporation, etc.

"We in Pakistan must encourage fresh thinking and allow technical people into government to make good things happen. When we look at the success stories of international brands and innovative individuals behind them, we see that many have started off from humble beginnings."

He added that in several East Asian countries including Malaysia, Thailand, Hong Kong, Singapore and China, spaces were allocated for temporary stalls to be set up resulting in the now famous night markets, and these vibrant markets were one of the biggest tourist attractions in their cities.

According to him, entrepreneurs and innovators needed neighborhood markets to perfect their products, brands and recipes, which they would then export.

While, Moazzam Ghurki highlighted that before policy making, it should be

investigated that why locally successful brands had been unable to become well-recognised brands globally.

He appreciated Afridi's idea of more small markets and bazaars for local vendors and traders and said that bazaars not only provide new opportunities and space to set up business for entrepreneurs but also promote local arts and crafts and attract tourists, which generates valuable foreign exchange for the economy.

PCJCCI Secretary General Salahuddin Hanif agreed that the proposed strategy should be focused on improving the quality and quantity of wholesale and retail outlets, ultimately linked to urban management and land use.

These policies would definitely transform the current scenario of domestic market with special focus on promoting successful business through encouraging trade, entrepreneurship and innovation and providing fair and efficient markets for the welfare of all Pakistan.

19 illegal fuel storages identified

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority on Wednesday identified 19 illegal storage facilities in different areas of Punjab which could allegedly be used for hoarding petroleum products, causing fuel shortages across the country.

The Authority in a letter written to the Punjab chief secretary pointed out the illegal storages which "might be in use to dump/store petroleum products for inventory gains and contribute to the existing shortage in different cities of Punjab, being an illegal act," OGRA Spokesman Imran Ghaznavi said in a press statement.

He said OGRA had directed the chief secretary to take strict action against the illegal hoarders, sharing a list of illegal petrol/diesel storages, identified through market intelligence. "It is aimed at avoiding deliberate shortage of petroleum products in the province."

MOU sign between ICMA and QCCI



F.P. Report

QUETTA: The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signing ceremony between ICMA and Quetta Chamber of Commerce and Industry (QCCI) was held at QCCI office in Quetta.

The MOU was signed

by Zia ul Mustafa, Chairman Strategic Board ICMA and Haji Abdullah Achakzai, President QCCI.

ICMA will arrange Corporate Trainings and Technical. Seminars for the members of QCCI in order to keep them updated about the new developments in corporate governance.

The ceremony was attended by Aamir Ijaz ED ICMA, Ms. Munaza Elahi Director MARCOM, senior members of ICMA and EC members of Quetta Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

ments in corporate governance.

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MCB Bank posted highest ever PBT of Rs71.4b (+37%) for year 2022

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Board of Directors of MCB Bank Limited (MCB) in its meeting under the Chairmanship of Mian Mohammad Mansha, on February 08, 2023, reviewed the performance of the Bank and approved the financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2022. The Board of Directors has declared final cash dividend of Rs. 6.0 per share i.e. 60%, in addition to 140% already paid, bringing the total cash dividend for the year 2022 to 200%.

With strong build up in core earnings, MCB's Profit Before Tax (PBT) for the year ended December 31, 2022, posted an impressive growth of 37.3% to reach a historic high of Rs. 71.4 billion. Retrospective application of tax amendments along with higher tax

rates for the current year enacted through Finance Act, 2022 resulted into a 54% average tax rate for the year compared to an average tax rate of 41% for last year. Profit After Tax (PAT) registered a growth of 6.3% and increased from Rs. 30.8 billion to Rs. 32.7 billion; translating into Earning Per Share (EPS) of Rs. 27.63 as compared to EPS of Rs. 26.00 reported in the last year.

On the back of strong volumetric growth in current account and favourable yield curve movements, net interest income for the year ended December 31, 2022 increased by 36% over last year. Average current deposits of the Bank registered a highest ever growth of Rs. 96.8 billion (+18%) in 2022, on the back of strategically focused drive.

Non-markup income registered a growth of 23%

and reported a base of Rs. 24.6 billion against Rs. 20.1 billion in the last year. Improved transactional volumes, diversification of revenue streams through continuous enrichment of Bank's product suite, investments towards digital transformation and an unrelenting focus on upholding the high service standards supplemented a growth of 14% in fee income. The contribution from foreign exchange line, debit cards, trade business and home remittances remained strong during the year.

The Bank continues to manage an efficient operating expense base and manage costs prudently. Despite exceptionally high inflation, impact of currency devaluation and continued investments in human resources, branch network and technological upgradation, operating expenses of

the Bank were recorded at Rs. 41.8 billion, growing by 17% over the last year, while the cost to income ratio significantly improved to 37.4% from 42.4% reported in the last year.

Proactive monitoring and recovery efforts led to a net provision reversal of Rs. 2.8 billion in specific provision maintained against non-performing loans (NPLs).

Persistent focus on maintaining a robust risk management framework encompassing structured assessment models, effective pre-disbursement evaluation tools and an array of post disbursement monitoring systems has enabled MCB to effectively manage its credit risk.

The Non-performing loan (NPL) base of the Bank was reported at Rs. 51.3 billion. The Bank has not taken FSV benefit in

calculation of specific provision against its NPLs. The coverage and inflation ratios of the Bank were reported at 86.17% and 6.43%, respectively.

On the financial position side, the total asset base of the Bank, on an unconsolidated basis, was reported at Rs. 2.1 trillion (+6%). The gross advances of the Bank registered a historic growth of Rs. 162 billion (+25%), above the industry average, to close the year at Rs. 798 billion; improving ADR of the Bank to 58%.

The corporate lending book grew by Rs. 161 billion (+36%) whereas the consumer loan portfolio increased by Rs. 4.5 billion (+12%).

On the liabilities side, the deposit base registered a complete transformation with current account growth gaining momentum quarter on quarter. The con-

centration level of current account improved to 49% on the back of strategic drive.

Non-remunerative deposits grew by 21% to close at Rs. 680 billion as at December 31, 2022. CASA mix was reported at 95.9% whereas the total deposits of the Bank were reported at Rs. 1.37 trillion.

MCB attracted home remittance inflows of USD 3,434 million, during the year with market share improving to 11.6% as an active participant in SBP's cause for improving flow of remittances into the country through banking channels.

In 2022, while successfully completing the 75 years of the banking services to the nation, the Bank, has transformed into a dynamic and innovative organization; overcoming a multitude of challenges along the way with resolve

and fortitude. Recognition by the globally coveted Asia Money awards as 'Pakistan's Best Corporate Bank of the Year' in 2022 is a testament to its legacy of posting consistent and exceptional performance for its stakeholders.

While complying with the regulatory capital requirements, the Bank's total Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) is 18.84% against the requirement of 11.5% (including capital conservation buffer of 1.50% as reduced under the BPRD Circular Letter No. 12 of 2020). Quality of the capital is evident from Bank's Common Equity Tier-1 (CET1) to total risk weighted assets ratio which comes to 16.32% against the requirement of 6%. Bank's capitalization also resulted in a Leverage Ratio of 6.12% which is well above the regulatory

limit of 3.0%. The Bank reported Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) of 204.16% and Net Stable Funding Ratio (NSFR) of 138.10% against requirement of 100%.

Return on Assets and Return on Equity reported at 1.61% and 19.78% respectively, whereas the book value per share was reported at Rs. 144.17.

Pakistan Credit Rating Agency re-affirmed credit ratings of MCB at "AAA / A1+" for long term and short term, respectively, through its notification dated June 23, 2022.

The Bank on consolidated basis is operating the 2nd largest network of more than 1,600 branches in Pakistan and remains one of the prime stocks traded in the Pakistani equity market, with 2nd highest market capitalization in the industry.



In brief

Badminton Asia Mixed Team C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): A four-member Pakistan team will feature in the Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championship, scheduled to be held at the Dubai Exhibition Centre, UAE from February 14. According to details, the four Pakistani players to compete in the extravaganza include two male and as many female athletes. The male players include Murad Ali and Irfan Bhatti while the female athletes are Mahoor Shahzad and Ghazalla Siddiqui. Pakistan was placed alongside Japan, Chinese Taipei, and Hong Kong badminton in Group D of the Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championship. Pakistan would face Japan in their opener of the Mixed Team Championship to conclude on February 19. Pakistan would play its second and third matches against Chinese Taipei and Hong Kong, respectively. Teams have been divided into four groups for the championship. Group A includes China, South Korea, Singapore and Uzbekistan while Group B has Malaysia, India, Kazakhstan and UAE. Whereas, Group C consists of Indonesia, Thailand, Bahrain, Syria, and Lebanon and Group D comprises Pakistan, Japan, Chinese Taipei and Hong Kong.

Turkish goalkeeper dies

ANKARA (Agencies): Turkish goalkeeper Ahmet Eyup Turkaslan has died following Monday's earthquake in his home country, his club Yeni Malatyaspor has confirmed. More than 5,000 people have lost their lives in Turkey and Syria following the earthquake. "Our goalkeeper, Ahmet Eyup Turkaslan, lost his life after being under the collapse of the earthquake. Rest in peace," the club said on Twitter. "We will not forget you, beautiful person," it added. Turkaslan, 28, played six times for Turkish second division club Yeni Malatyaspor after joining in 2021. Former Crystal Palace and Everton winger Yannick Bolasie, who currently plays for Turkish second tier side Caykur Rizespor, said on Twitter: "RIP brother Eyup Ahmet Turkaslan. One moment you can see someone in the dugout, the next moment they're gone." Bolasie added: "My condolences to all his family and team-mates at Yeni Malatyaspor. Devastating to hear and wish we can all continue to help everyone in need."

Jabeur pulls out of Doha

DUBAI (Agencies): World number three Ons Jabeur has pulled out of WTA tournaments in Doha and Dubai later this month after opting to have minor surgery, the 28-year-old said on Wednesday. "In order to take care of my health situation. My medical team have decided that I need to get a minor surgery in order to be able to be back on the courts and perform well," Jabeur, last year's Wimbledon and US Open runner-up, said on Instagram. She did not give any detail about the operation or why it was required. "I will have to retire from Doha and Dubai and this is breaking my heart. I would like to say sorry to all the fans out there in the Middle East that waited for this reunion. I promise I will come back to you stronger and healthy." The Qatar Open was scheduled to be held from Feb. 13-18 with the Dubai Duty Free Championships taking place the next week.

Top seed Zohra to clash Manahil in Kashmir Day U19 Girls Squash final

PESHAWAR (APP): Top seed Zohra Abdullah to face second seed Manahil Aqeel of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the final of the ongoing Kashmir Day Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Girls U19 Squash Championship being played here at Qamar Zaman Squash Complex on Wednesday.

Zohra and Manahil Aqeel earlier recorded victories against their respective rivals in the hotly con-

tested semi-finals. In the first semi-final Zohra Abdullah defeated Iqra Shah of Abbottabad in a well contested match stretched to fourth sets, the score was 11-9, 10-12, 12-10 and 13-11. Both Zohra and Iqra Shah played well against each other.

After losing the first set at 11-9, Iqra Shah made a comeback by winning the second set 10-12 before leveling it at 5-5, 6-6, 7-7, 9-9

and 10-all. It was the third set when Zohra Abdullah played an attacking game and marched into victory in the set. Iqra tried hard to level on four occasions at 6-6, 8-8, 9-9 and 10-10.

Both Zohra and Iqra played superb games against each other when they were stretched to 13-11, the set was won by Zohra but it was tied at 5-5, 6-6, 7-7, 9-9, 10-10 and 11-all.

In the second semi-final

Manahil Aqeel recorded victory against Naheed Faiz in another thrilling match, the score was 11-9, 11-7 and 12-10. Manahil Aqeel faced some resistance at the hands of Naheed Faiz but overall she dominated the proceedings and did not give much time to her rival to strike back.

In the U17 semi-final, Rania Qazi and Hifsa Yousaf reached the final after registering victories against their respective rivals. Rania Qazi of Abbottabad defeated Mashal Khan by 3-0, in straight sets, the score was 11-9, 11-7 and 11-9 while Hifsa Yousaf defeated Wajeeshah Altaf by 3-0 in another one-sided match, the score was 11-6, 11-7 and 11-6. Now Rania Qazi will face Hifsa Yousaf in the U17 final.

In the U13 Maliha Shah and Nimra Rehman would clash in the final after defeating their respective rivals in the semi-finals. In the first semi-final Maliha Shah defeated Ayesha Qasim by 11-0, 11-1 and 11-1 while Nimra Rehman of Abbottabad beat Omama of Abbottabad by 3-0, the score was 11-4, 11-4 and 11-7. The finals of U19, U17 and U13 will be played on Thursday at 3.00 p.m.

Pakistan outplay Kuwait, SL in Asian Jr Squash Team C'ship

ISLAMABAD, Feb 08 (APP): Pakistan downed Kuwait and Sri Lanka in the pool matches of the 21st Asian Junior Squash Team Championship in Chennai, India.

The championship which commenced on Wednesday would conclude on February 12.

A total of 10 teams have been divided into two pools in the championship. Pakistan have been placed in Pool A along with Hong Kong, Korea, Sri Lanka,

and Kuwait whereas India, Malaysia, Japan, Singapore, and Taipei are in Pool B.

Pakistan squash team includes Noor Zaman, Hamza Khan, Ashab Irfan, and Anas Ali Shah.

On the 1st day of Pool Matches, the Pakistan team defeated Kuwait in the morning session by 3-0.

Noor Zaman (Pak) beat Abdul Rahman Al Hashim (Kuwait) 11-6, 11-7, 8-11, 8-11, 11-6 in 32 min, Hamza Khan (Pak) defeated Abdul Rahman Al Maghrabi

(Kuwait) 11-8, 11-5, 11-5 in 15 min and Ashab Irfan (Pak) beat Abdullah Ali (Kuwait) 11-6, 11-7 and 11-4 in 13 min. In the 2nd Pool match, Pakistan defeated Sri Lanka by 3-0.

Noor Zaman beat Thinura Randina 11-6, 11-5, 11-5 in 20 Min; Hamza Khan beat Seniya Jayathilata 11-1, 11-8, 11-6 in 15 Min; and Anas Ali Shah Bukhari beat Sehat Perera 11-6, 11-4, 11-2 in 18 Min. Pakistan would face Korea and Hong Kong on Thursday.

BN Polo, FG Polo and Newage Cables/MP score wins in Century 99 Punjab Polo Cup

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): BN Polo, FG Polo and Newage Cables/Master Paints registered victories on the second day of the Century 99 Punjab Polo Cup Tournament 2023 here at the historic Lahore Polo Club on Wednesday.

Juan Maria Ruiz Guinazu played a hero's role in the BN Polo's convincing 10-7 triumph over HN Polo in the first match of the day. Hero Juan Maria Ruiz did the magic with mallet and pony and contributed with splendid six goals while sensational Raja Mikael Sami slammed in three goals, Roberto Iturriz Arias struck one goal. For Team HN Polo, which had two goals handicap advantage, veteran Raja Samiullah and Haider Naseem banged in a brace each while Ibrahim Khalil converted one goal.

BN Polo dominated the match right from the beginning and fired in four fabulous goals in the first chukker to gain a 4-0 lead. BN Polo maintained their dominance in the second chukker as they added five more goals in their tally against one by HN Polo to stretch their lead to 9-1. The only goal of the third chukker was converted by HN Polo to reduce the margin to 9-2. The fourth and last chukker saw

HN Polo hammering a hat-trick of goals against one by BN Polo, who won the match by 10-7, as HN Polo had two goals handicap advantage.

Phenomenal Raul Laplacette steered FG Polo to an imposing 7-3½ victory over Remounts in the second match of the day. Raul Laplacette emerged as hero of the day for FG Polo as he fired in four fabulous goals while Mian Abbas Mukhtar thrashed in two goals and Saqib Khan Khakwani scored one goal. Jota Chavanne converted all the three goals for Team Remounts while they had a handicap advantage of a half goal.

FG Polo thrashed in two field goals to earn a 2-0 lead in the first chukker. They played more aggressively in the second chukker and fired in four more goals to enhance their lead to 6-0. They added one more goal in their tally to make it 7-0 while Remounts hammered a hat-trick of goals to reduce the margin to 3-7. No more goals were scored in the third chukker, thus FG Polo winning the match by 7-3½ as Remounts had a half goal handicap advantage.

Simon Prada's heroics helped Newage Cables/Master Paints to an emphatic 7-3 win over DS Polo Team

in the third and final match of the day. Simon Prada was in sublime form and exhibited excellent mallet and pony work while smashing in superb six goals while Juan Cruz Greguol converted one goal for Newage Cables/Master Paints. Bautista Garcia thrashed in two goals while Javier Guerrero struck one goal for DS Polo.

DS Polo began the match with a field goal to take a 1-0 lead but Newage/Master Paints bounced back by banging in a brace to have a 2-1 lead by the end of the first chukker. The second chukker was identical to the first one as DS Polo converted one but Newage/Master Paints replied strongly and banged in another brace to gain a 4-2 lead and they further stretched it to 6-2 with another brace in the third chukker. The fourth and last chukker saw both the sides scoring one goal each, thus Newage/Master Paints winning the match by 7-3½ as DS Polo had a half goal handicap advantage.

John Fisher and Chris Hyde supervised all the three matches as field umpires. The only match will be played between three teams under the American system on Thursday (February 9).

LeBron James breaks Kareem's NBA all-time points-scoring record

LOS ANGELES: LeBron James finally eclipsed Kareem Abdul-Jabbar as the most prolific scorer in NBA history on Tuesday, breaking a 39-year record that many throughout basketball believed would never be beaten.

The Los Angeles Lakers star, playing in his 20th season in the NBA, passed Abdul-Jabbar's longstanding total of 38,387 points after nailing a 21-foot shot late in the third quarter against the Oklahoma City Thunder.

James flung his arms aloft in relief as the Crypto.com Arena erupted in wild celebration at his new record of 38,388 points. Abdul-Jabbar, sitting courtside, was among the first to congratulate James as play was interrupted to salute an iconic moment in NBA history.

"To be able to be in the presence of a legend and great as Kareem it means so much to me," James told the crowd before thanking family, friends and fans. "Everybody that's ever been part of this run with me these last 20 years, I just want to say I thank you so much because I wouldn't be me without all your help, all your passion and all your sacrifices to help me get to this point."

James also paid tribute to NBA commissioner Adam Silver and his predecessor, the late David Stern. "Thank you guys so much for allowing me to be a part of something I've



always dreamed about, and I would never ever in a million years have dreamt this even better than what it is tonight," James added before signing off with an F-bomb.

After a dazzling season that has seen him average 30 points per game in a struggling Lakers outfit, James went into Tuesday's clash with Oklahoma City needing just 36 points to surpass Abdul-Jabbar.

The 38-year-old took his time before surging toward his magic number, missing his first two attempts before finally nailing a three-pointer midway through the first quarter to get off the mark.

The four-time NBA champion would go on to score eight points in the opening quarter, leaving him 28 short as the second quarter got under way.

James upped the pace in the second quarter with 12 quick points before being subbed off with 5:34 left in the half, 16 points away from the

record by half-time.

A pair of back-to-back three pointers midway through the third quarter left him just eight points away from the record, with 28 on the night, before a driving layup put him within six. Two more layups left him two points away before he duly converted his long-range effort to seal the record.

James has been at pains to dampen anticipation surrounding his record chase this season, insisting that his priority remains helping the Lakers become a competitive outfit once more.

However, in recent days he has been more expansive when discussing the record, saying last week that beating Abdul-Jabbar's mark was comparable to breaking baseball's all-time home run record.

"I think it's one of the greatest records in sports in general," James said.

"I think it's up there with the home run record in baseball. It's one of those records that you just don't

ever see or think that would be broken."

Many in the NBA agreed, believing that Abdul-Jabbar's record was untouchable in the modern era.

"I think most of us back then thought that record would never be broken," Golden State coach Steve Kerr said of Abdul-Jabbar's record last weekend.

"So to see LeBron do it over 20 years is pretty remarkable and a testament to not only his ability but his durability."

"He's just a machine. He's healthy and a physical force night after night."

Miami Heat coach Erik Spoelstra, who coached James to two of his four NBA championships in 2012 and 2013, said he had always assumed Abdul-Jabbar's record would never be beaten.

"I thought that would be untouchable," Spoelstra told NBA.com before James's record-breaking performance on Tuesday. Tyronn Lue, James's former coach at the Cleveland Cavaliers, believes the scoring record is the crowning achievement of his glittering career.

"This has to be No. 1, seeing how long Kareem has held this record (since 1984). I know LeBron has his championships and MVPs. But to be the all-time leading scorer in NBA history, considering all the great players that have come through this game? That's a big-time accomplishment," Lue told NBA.com.



PAARL: Ayesha Naseem of Pakistan plays a shot during a warm-up match between Pakistan and South Africa prior to the ICC Women's T20 World Cup.

Pakistan Sports Festival formally started in Dir district



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Sports Festival 2023 officially started in Dir district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Many team of cricket, football and volleyball are participating in Pakistan Sports Festival from all tehsils of Dir district.

In this regard, the inauguration ceremony was held in Dir district with

great enthusiasm.

The opening ceremony was attended by sports persons, officials of the district administration and security forces and a large number of youths of the area and other guests belonging to different walks of life.

In the opening ceremony, the teams participating in the sports festival marched past. At the occasion, matches of cricket,

football and volleyball were also played.

The spectators on this occasion thanked the district administration & Frontier Corps North and said that they are grateful for organizing such a healthy festival.

The Pakistan Sports Festival will be jointly held in the tribal districts of Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber and Dir till March 23.

Taimoor eyeing to fight Ex-World Boxing Champion Mahmoud Charr

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani boxer and Asian Boxing Federation Heavyweight Champion Taimoor Khan is planning to go in a bout with former World Boxing champion Mahmoud Charr next month in Dubai.

It may be mentioned that Taimoor Khan retained his Asian Boxing Federation Heavyweight Championship title after defeating his Thai counterpart, Aekkaphob Auraiwan, in a highly-anticipated bout in Bangkok last month.

Taimoor knocked out his opponent in the second

round to defend his title and extended his overall fight record to seven wins, which now include six knockouts.

"Charr has called to fight me. But I'm not sure at the moment to go for it or not but, hopefully, it will be finalized in the coming days," he told APP.

He was of the view that he would decide about the fight after discussing it with his team. "We will look for the sponsor and days left for the fight then will take the final call," he said.

Taimoor said if he goes for it then, he would "fully prepare for the fight" but if

the results don't go in his favour then it won't be disappointing. "It won't matter if I lose the fight because I will be risking fighting a world champion which is an honour," he added.

Speaking about his last Asian Boxing Federation Heavyweight Championship fight, he said he was going through a tough phase prior to the fight as his mother wasn't well. "But thank God my mother is recovering now. My Thai opponent was also undefeated (2-0) prior to the fight but I outplayed him," he said.

Shiffrin bags silver to write herself into record books

MERIBEL (Agencies): US star Mikaela Shiffrin wrote another chapter in her storied alpine skiing career in Meribel on Wednesday by winning world super-G silver to tie the modern record for individual world medals.

Shiffrin held on for second place behind Italy's Marta Bassino for her 12th medal in just 15 starts at world championships. Of those 12, six are gold, three silver and three bronze.

The 27-year-old now sits atop the post-WWII record books alongside Norway's Kjetil Andre Aamodt, who was active between 1991-2003 and won his 12 medals from 27 starts.

Officially, Germany's Christl Cranz holds the record for most world medals, having claimed 12 gold and three silver racing between 1934-39, an era wholly different from today's competition.

Shiffrin described her super-G as "totally wild! This day has been crazy". "Ski racing is a sport with so many different variables," the American

said, arguing that it had more variables than any other sport.

"It's as simple as the weather can change during the day. The place where the shadows come from the trees changes throughout the race run... Everything is constantly changing."



"It makes it so hard to be on point and perfect every race, every run."

Shiffrin added: "So when you get to have a run like I did today or Marta did today you have to be so proud of it because the odds and the variables are always stacked against you. "You have to appreciate the good moments because it's so hard to get those."

Shiffrin admitted that she had been badgered in

the run-up to the worlds by questions about her disastrous experience at last year's Beijing Olympics when she failed to finish the slalom, giant slalom and alpine combined -- three events in which she had been a keen favourite.

She also failed to get close to the podium in either the super-G or downhill.

- Expectation vs reality - That stumbling form has not continued on the World Cup circuit this season, however, with the 27-year-old American winning 11 races (including five slaloms) to come within one of Ingemar Stenmark's overall World Cup record for victories (86). "I survived the Olympics, so I'm not afraid that it's going to kill me if I don't get a medal at this world championships," she said.

"When you get asked time and time again, it's so hard to keep the balance in your mind to answer this question... and still feel I can do this, I can ski my best, I can make it to the finish."



In brief

IRSA releases 68,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 68,800 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 55,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1487.94 feet, 89.94 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow in the dam was recorded as 17,300 cusecs while the outflow as 32,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1129.75 feet, which was 79.75 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded at 16,400 cusecs and 15,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 38,700, 39,100, 30,900 and 9,900 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 12,000 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and zero cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

Japanese work goes on display

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Japan Foundation and the Embassy of Japan in Pakistan, in collaboration with the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA), held an exhibition titled "Photographic Images and Matter: Japanese Prints of the 1970s" at the National Art Gallery on Wednesday. Wada Mitsuhiro, the Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, inaugurated the exhibition in presence of guests including artists and art students. The Japan Foundation's newly organised travelling exhibition, which is curated by curator Kyoji Takizawa, focuses on print expressions from the 1970s as seen in the work of 14 artists who helped develop the print movement in the world of Japanese contemporary art. Divided into two sections, the exhibition showcases "The Age of Photographic Images", which focuses on the use of photographic images in the print medium, and "Images of Autonomous Matter", which focuses on works that were shaped by the intentions of matter. The exhibition aims to give a deeper understanding of contemporary art trends of the 1970s which were triggered by the print medium. The artworks of 14 eminent Japanese artists were displayed in the exhibition.

Power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Wednesday issued a power suspension programme for Thursday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM. Islamabad Circle, Angori, Shahpur, Shahdara, Mangyal, Desto, T&T, Treat, Bhara Kahu 2, Gulf City, Bhara Kahu, NIH, Hathal, Bari Imam, Q u a i d - e - A z a m University, Khayaban Iqbal, NCP, Mandla, Abbpara, Mahfooz Shaheed, Kohsar Market, Wahidabad, Service Road East, Chatta Bakhtawar, Karor, New Aziz Chowk, G-9 Express, MJ Steel, Fazal Rubber Mill, I-10 /2, G-13/2, D-12/4, Company Bagh, Gharial, MCM, Patriata, Upper Topa, Angori feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Parkview, Morgah, RBISE, Fuji Foundation Hospital, Hyder Road, Sir Syed.



ISLAMABAD: Turkish Ambassador H.E. Mehmet Paçaci calls on Chairman NDMA Lt Gen Inam Haider Malik in his office

9 million families to be provided financial assistance under BISP by June: Shazia Marri

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Shazia Marri has said that around 8.9 million families being provided financial assistance under the BISP would be increased up to 9 million by June 2023 and up to 10 million by 2024.

She said financial assistance was provided directly to the women as family heads, which clearly reflected the priorities of the BISP program towards women empowerment.

The minister was speaking with a delegation of USAID, headed by Michael Schiffer, Assistant Administrator of the Bureau for Asia who called on the former at the Embassy of Pakistan Washington D.C., said a message received here.

The meeting discussed in detail various interventions being made under the umbrella of the Benazir Income Support Program, to provide relief to the vulnerable sections of the society. The minister said that BISP over the last 14 years has evolved into a successful model and it was serving the poorest of the poor without any discrimination. She highlighted that the National Social Economic Registry

had enabled the government of Pakistan with a scientific database to reach out to the most deserving and marginalized strata of society in Pakistan. The conditional cash transfers in the education and health sector were aimed at the socio-economic uplift of poor families with education, better health, and skill development. She informed the delegation that 364 Benazir Nashonuma Facilitation Centers were operating across Pakistan to address the nutritional issues of the women and children.

The federal minister briefed the USAID delegation about the devastations caused by catastrophic floods of 2022, which inundated one-third of the country, and affected 33 million people including 04 million children, and hundreds of thousands of pregnant women. She also updated on the latest status of recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts and how BISP was helping in this effort.

On provision of relief in the aftermath of floods, the delegation was informed that an amount of Rs. 70 billion was disbursed to 2.5 million affected families through BISP.

The federal minister appreciated

the continued support of World Bank, ADB, and GIZ towards social safety and poverty alleviation. She mentioned the Pakistan Crisis-Resilient Social Protection (CRISP) Program of the World Bank to help establish adaptive social protection. The minister informed that through the National Poverty Graduation Program (NPGP), BISP beneficiaries were being provided assets and training in order to graduate them out of poverty. The federal minister acknowledged the contributions of USAID and said that Pakistan looked forward to scaling up its partnership with the agency in expanding the outreach of the program.

Mr. Michael Schiffer lauded the role of BISP in the social protection sector especially in providing swift relief to the calamity-affected population. He underscored that USAID and the US Administration looked forward to strengthening their friendship and partnership with Pakistan. Mr. Michael Schiffer stated that USAID would like to balance its portfolio via allocation of sectoral assistance in social protection, poverty alleviation, nutrition, and education.

‘IPC to help address collective challenges, conflict resolution among member countries’

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani on Wednesday said International Parliamentarians Congress (IPC) has the potential to make concrete contributions to achieve peace, conflict resolutions and addressing growing collective challenges among the member countries.

Addressing a two-day First International Conference on Road Safety for Parliamentarians, organized in collaboration with the Mustehkam Parlmaan, an EU-funded project, implemented by GIZ and Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services (PIPS), in Islamabad, he said the important aspect of IPU's mission was to achieve common challenges of the member countries.

International Parliamentarians Congress (IPC) is persistently working tirelessly in pursuit of its mission. IPC provides a platform for world leaders to share their unique opinions and insights on important issues being confronted

by member countries.

He congratulated the IPC team and members of the forum for believing in the vision and mission of IPC. He said this conference was the first step in reorganizing road safety endeavors. He stressed improving road safety laws and ensuring strict implementation of the laws.

He emphasized making efforts to educate stakeholders and citizens about road safety laws, besides strengthening emergency health services, saying strict rules have to be laid down for safety features in the manufacturing of vehicles.

He said road safety rules should also be set according to the best international standards. He stressed making official and non-official level efforts and increasing awareness about road safety and reducing the number of deaths and injuries in road accidents and utilize such forums for enhancing awareness about road safety measures.

Senate Chairman also introduced

a first-of-its-kind "Parly Talk" service of IPC in collaboration with Truth International. Parly Talk aims to achieve short-term and long-term goals by developing important topics for discussion by parliamentarians under the thematic areas of the IPC. "I express my gratitude to the current Vice Presidents of the IPC, Ms. Sahiba Ghafarova, Chair of the National Assembly of Azerbaijan, and Mohamed Ali Houmed, President of the National Assembly of Djibouti for their cooperation and support," he said.

He specially congratulated IPC Secretary General Senator Sitara Ayaz, especially GIZ International Services, and Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services, (PIPS) for successfully organizing the event.

He expressed his deepest regrets and sorrow over the losses of life and property caused by the devastating earthquake in Syria and Türkiye.

He sympathized with bereaved families and prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured.

Turkish Ambassador calls on Chairman NDMA

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Turkish Ambassador Mehmet Paçaci called on Chairman NDMA Lt Gen Inam Haider Malik here on Wednesday. They discussed the modalities for jointly working on collection of aid that people and various organizations within Pakistan desire to send off to Quake-Hit Türkiye.

While acknowledging the prompt response of Pakistan for aiding Türkiye during these hard times, the Ambassador requested to designate NDMA warehouses as collection points, "People are desperate to help but we need assistance of NDMA to manage it", he told.

Turkish Ambassador also briefed

Chairman about further immediate requirements which include search & rescue teams, medical equipment, dry ration and winterised beddings etc.

Chairman NDMA apprised the Ambassador of the relief & rescue assistance so far sent to the affected country including the 30 bedded hospital and assured of all possible support. To smoothly manage the donation collection process NDMA and Turkish embassy will work in collaboration for further sending the packaged cargo thru Air and Road means.

Meanwhile, Pakistan requested Türkiye to facilitate transportation of relief consignment through Türkiye-Syria border to which the Ambassador responded affirmatively.

Federal Board joins hands with Global Institute for skills development of youth

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE) along with Greenwich Global Institute Karachi has taken an important step towards skills development of the youth for their bright future. The FBISE has signed a memorandum of understanding to expand the educational scope of Greenwich Global Institute/University Karachi. Greenwich Global Institute Karachi also provides students with investment skills so that they can turn themselves into the most suitable multifaceted career in life.

Programmes offered by Greenwich Global Institute

include Business Management, Fashion/Textiles, Digital Design, Fine Art etc.

On this occasion, Seema Mughal, Patron-in-Chief of Greenwich Global Institute said, "All our programmes will play an important role in making students a useful member of the society in practical life." "Our aim is to make a person learn knowledge in life and become a productive person for the society" she added.

She further said that this memorandum of understanding was a revolutionary step in the field of education. The efforts of the Federal Board to create new opportunities for students and teachers were commendable, she

added. On this occasion, Chairman Federal Board Qaiser Alam said that the importance of skills along with education among students at the global level was increasing rapidly.

"Being the fifth largest country in the world in terms of population, Pakistan can play a huge role in the field of global manpower," he said.

"For this", he said, "providing professional skills to the students from the time of studentship is one of the top priorities of the Federal Board, so that tomorrow this young generation can play an important role in the development and prosperity of this country."

Railways all set to launch ‘RABTA’ to ensure hassle-free services

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways is all set to launch the Railway Automated Booking and Travel Assistance (RABTA) in collaboration with Chinese companies, which will help passengers to plan their journey. "The application will help the passengers to manage their tickets, seats, booking, food, hotel and taxi-related matters during their travel from home to respective destinations and vice versa," an official of Ministry of Railways told APP.

He said that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) had already been signed between Pakistan Railways and two Chinese companies – M/s Easyway and M/s Norinco International Cooperation to launch RABTA.

"The RABTA, IT-based solution will not only facilitate the passengers but also help the organization [PR] to generate more revenue and maintain its record through the booking of tickets," he added.

Through this application, the official

said that parcel booking and tracking facility would also be available while the passengers would also be able to have access to trains' operational management system.

He said that the step was based on revenue sharing with the companies which would also modernize train operations across the country.

To facilitate passengers, he said the Pakistan Railways had introduced a mobile application "Pakrail Live" for real-time tracking of trains.

The official said the high capacity/high-speed hopper trucks had been inducted in the current fleet for swift movement and unloading of coal. "New high capacity high speed rolling stock coaches and wagons are being procured." He said the railways had also introduced services like online E-Ticketing through Jazz Cash, UBL Omni and credit cards to facilitate passengers at their doorstep and attract more passengers through outsourcing of non-core activity.

Art exhibition highlights Indian brutality: Mushaal

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Chairperson of the Peace and Culture Organisation Mushaal Hussein Mullick on Wednesday said that art is a good source to exhibit the barbarism of Indian forces in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

She was addressing at an Art Exhibition which was organized by National

College of the Arts (NCA), the exhibition was to highlight the violations of human rights in IIOJK and Modi-led regime turned the Kashmir valley into a prison of the world. Mushaal said that the terrorist Indian State had been committing genocide of Kashmiri people in the disputed valley for over seven decades.

She said that India was

the biggest terrorist State, involved in the brutal killing and torture of innocent and unarmed Kashmiri people for raising the voice against the unlawful subjugation by Indian authorities for last 75 years. The chairperson vowed that the courage of the brave people of the occupied valley could not be dampened by the brutal and inhuman tactics.

HEC conducts Idea Camps under PM's National Innovation Award

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan is conducting Idea Pitching Boot Camps for the candidates for round-I of the Prime Minister's National Innovation Award (PMNIA). Around 256 candidates are participating in the five-day idea-pitching boot camp that started on February 6 and will continue till February 10, simultaneously, at five higher education institutions (HEIs), including Institute of Business Administration, (Karachi), University of Engineering and Technology, (Lahore), Institute of Management Sciences, (Peshawar), Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences, (Quetta), National University of Sciences and Technology, Islamabad.

The objective of the boot camps is to train the students for persuasive pitching in the upcoming final pitching competition. Relevant industry experts are mentoring the students. The candidates were shortlisted from around 13,000 applications received through the online portal

www.pmyp.gov.pk. The applications for round-I of PMNIA were received from students between 15 to 30 years of age in October and November 2022 from youth aged between 15 to 30 years.

The applications were received for all kinds of innovative ideas including but not limited to information technology, sustainable energy, food security, water management, etc. The final selection of awards will be made through an open, rigorous, transparent, competitive, and merit-based process. In this process, 50 ideas will be finalised for the award, and the maximum funding provided to a single startup will be Rs. 2 million that is divided into two portions. Initially, an amount of up to Rs. 1 million will be provided to the top 10 selected ideas, while the rest of the 40 ideas will be provided up to Rs. 0.5 million. In the corresponding phase, all 50 winners may also request supplementary funds of up to Rs. 1 million in addition to the award money as per their requirements through Business Incubation Centers and will be linked to startup deliverables.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Turkmenistan/ Dean of Diplomatic Corps to Pakistan Atadjan Movlamov called on Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf at Parliament House.

Aid distributed by ARCS

KABUL (Agencies): Afghan Red Crescent Society has assisted 500 needy families with food and non-food items in Kalakan district of capital Kabul of Afghanistan. The ARCS in a statement on Wednesday said that they distributed food and non-food items to 500 needy families in the Kalakan district of Kabul. The source said that each family received flour, pasta, carpet, prayer mats, blanket and washing powder.

Dozens of police graduated

BALKH (Agencies): Local police officials of Balkh said that some 32 policemen graduated from a Training Center after completing one month of trainings. A ceremony held on the occasion, Mawlawi Fazl ur Rahman Nusrat Commander police Education of Balkh, congratulating the graduates said that the trainings of the educational centers continues based on different educational plans, that in the past year, thousands of security guards from short term courses have been graduated.

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

Security threats:

Turkey, UAE to minimize diplomatic activities in Kabul

KABUL (Khaama Press): Following Saudi Arabia's decision to evacuate its diplomats to Islamabad, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates have decided to move out their staff and reduce diplomatic activities in Afghanistan due to security threats.

The Embassy of Turkey plans to minimize its diplomatic activities in Kabul due to various security threats, according to anonymous sources. Meanwhile, it is also reported that the UAE wants to reduce its diplomatic mission to a relatively small office before complete closure.

The governments of Turkey and the United Arab

Emirates have not yet officially commented in this regard.

This is a wake-up call for Afghanistan's de facto authorities as foreign embassies have already started closing their diplomatic missions in Kabul. The Taliban-run administration is still struggling to gain internal legitimacy and international recognition. Due to major security threats and the tough policies regarding women's freedom to get an education, work, and appear in public places, the ruling regime has come under massive criticism from the international community, donors, and partners.

This comes as Saudi Arabia transferred its diplomats to Islamabad earlier in the week. On the contrary, the Russian mission in Kabul announced that Moscow has no intentions to close its diplomatic mission in Kabul.

Since the overthrow of the previous government in August 2021, most countries closed their embassies in Kabul. As of now, only 12 embassies are operational in Kabul, including Turkey, India, UAE, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Russia, Iran, Pakistan, Qatar, and China.

Over the past couple of months, ISIS and other mil-

itant groups have launched terror attacks on the embassy of Russia and Pakistan, as well as a Chinese-run hotel in the heart of Kabul.

On top of other issues, security remains a critical challenge for the Islamic Emirate government of Kabul. The security situation in Kabul and other major cities of Afghanistan has deteriorated with each passing day.

IEA limits cash, gold transfer to Abroad

KABUL (Agencies): The Office of the Prime Minister (Arg) said that transfer and smuggling of high amount of currencies, gold and precious stones outside the country is considered as a crime.

The Arg in a statement requested all citizens, money changers and traders of the country to observe new rules regarding transfer of cash, gold and other precious stones outside or inside the country.

The statement said that the following rules should be strictly observed:

1- All citizens of the country should use the national currency, the Afghani, on every transactions.

2- No one can carry more than 5,000 US dollars through airports, and more than 500 dollars through land (borders).

3- The violator transferring a million dollars cash would be sentenced to one year in jail. The person who transfers less than a million dollars, would be awarded imprisonment of one month for each 100,000 US dollars and a person carrying less than 100,000 US dollars would be jailed to 10 days.

The money and gold seized from the violators will be confiscated in Da Afghanistan Bank until the Prime Minister's decision, the statement said, adding that brining the currencies of the countries of the region to Afghanistan is prohibited.

Railway team off to Uzbekistan

KABUL (Agencies): The country's railway delegation, traveled to Uzbekistan to talked over taking over the responsibilities of railway from the country.

The aim of their visits said to be the finalization of the process of transferring the responsibilities of the Hairatan-Mazar-i-Sharif railway to the Afghan side.

Afghan delegation will hold a detailed discussions on the transfer of the responsibilities of the Hairatan-Mazar-i-Sharif railway line to the Afghanistan Railway Authority and the finalization of the transfer agreement with that country.

Frank Remus, UNHCR Senior Liaison Officer.

The winter assistance for Afghanistan includes sleeping mats, tarpaulins, heavy-duty buckets, blankets, stainless steel kitchen sets, jerry cans, and portable solar LED lamps, read the statement.

Last year, several parts of the country were hit with natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods, damaging hundreds of families in Afghanistan. In 2022, UNHCR assisted 5.9 million people across Afghanistan's 34 provinces with core relief supplies, monetary support, and protection and reintegration initiatives.

rights is rapidly increasing, and the 'isolation' of Afghan women and girls are a clear example," he said. Mr. Guterres has further added that the rights of women and girls have been violated in Afghanistan, and brutal terrorist attacks continue in the war-torn country.

Lack of gender equality and gender segregation has led to miserable living conditions for women and girls in Afghanistan. Henceforth, the UN's focus for 2023 will be concentrated on achieving gender equality and sustainable peace

worldwide.

The United Nations, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and other rights advocacy organizations have repeatedly called on the de facto authorities of Afghanistan to respect the rights of the people of Afghanistan, those of women and girls in particular. However, the country's ruling regime pursues its own policies and practices a rather strict version of Islamic Sharia laws, with no leniency in matters of women's access to education, work, and public life.

‘Rights of women, girls violated in Afghanistan’

UNITED NATIONS (Khaama Press): While explaining the United Nation's 2023 programs, Secretary General Antonio Guterres has said that Afghan women and girls have been 'isolated' due to the restrictions imposed by the country's caretaker regime.

Guterres said the world needs a sustainable peace, that is in line with the United Nations resolutions and international laws.

While explaining the UN's agendas for the year 2023 on peace and gender equality, Guterres emphasized the organizations' continuous efforts towards restoring sustainable peace and fighting against the violation of women's rights across the globe.

He has also warned that the growing tensions among some governments are worrying, therefore, a collective comprehensive approach is required to ease the tensions and move towards lasting peace and stability.

“Violation of women's



UNHCR and Uzbekistan provide aid for Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): The UN Refugee Agency released a statement on Wednesday, informing about winter assistance with the support of the Government of Uzbekistan for Afghanistan.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), with the support of the Government of Uzbekistan, sent 12 trucks with over 48,000 blankets through the International Multifunctional Transport and Logistics Hub in Termez, Uzbekistan, to Afghanistan to provide life-saving assistance to forcibly displaced persons and other vulnerable people in Afghanistan during

ing harsh winter.

The consignments were dispatched from UNHCR's Regional Humanitarian Logistics Hub, which was established in October 2021 with the help of the Government of Uzbekistan.

“UNHCR, jointly with the Government of Uzbekistan, are making all efforts to continue the most critical life-saving humanitarian aid to the Afghan population. This is vital, especially during this cold winter. Thanks to support from the Uzbek Government and local partners, UNHCR can quickly assist in meeting the urgent needs of women, children, and men in Afghanistan,” said

Hospital opened for mentally ill patients in Nangarhar

J A L A L A B A D (TOLOnews): A hospital that contains 150 beds to serve and treat mentally ill patients has been opened in Nangarhar province.

Officials in this hospital said that this hospital will treat the eastern region of

the country.

“For this building, we have considered a capacity of around 150 patients,” said Hayatullah, head of the eastern Red Crescent.

According to officials, the process of treating 60 mental patients has begun

in the hospital and their treatment will be continued until they are fully recovered.

“We are happy here, the doctors are here and help us and now my health is better than in the past,” said Nabiullah, a patient.

“They gave us shoes, jumpers, and other clothes, and they take care of us properly here,” said Hamed Gul, a patient.

Meanwhile, some Nangarhar residents demand more mental health centers for mental patients.

“The program, which is being carried out by Red Crescent, should be extended to all provinces, districts, and villages,” said Gul Ahmad a Nangarhar resident.

“Most of our mental patients roam the streets and people have bad thoughts about them,” said Azad Khan, a Nangarhar resident.

“We have the plan to build health centers in seven zones that have been identified by the Red Crescent,” said Matiulhaq Khalis, head of the Red Crescent.

Previously, mental health hospitals were active just in Kabul and Herat provinces.

Operations conducted against eradicating drugs

KABUL (Agencies): The Deputy Interior Minister for Counter Narcotics Abdul Haq Akhundzada, during his visits from Ghazni said that the counter-Narcotics department of the Ministry conducted 3,700 operations against eradicating narcotics in the country.

During a meeting, the Deputy of Interior Minister, Abdul Haq Akhundzada, reminded saying that based on the decree of the supreme leader of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan the cultivation, trafficking, deals and use of drugs is prohibited across the country.

The Islamic Emirate is determined to fight against drugs and has collected 75,000 drug addicts across the country sent them for treatment, of which 5,000 have been treated received treatment so far, he said.

3,700 counter-narcotics operations have been carried out across the country, in which 147 drug factories and 404 tons of drugs were discovered and destroyed, Akhundzada added.

Mehrabi urges central bank to defend \$3.5b Afghan assets in US court

KABUL (TOLOnews): A member of the Afghan Central Bank's supreme council, Shah Mehrabi, urged the Central Bank to engage with legal counsel to protect its assets which are litigated in US courts.

Mehrabi, who is also one of the four members of the Afghanistan's Trust Fund in Switzerland, said the \$3.5 billion assets that are litigated by the US courts need to be defended by a legal process.

“It is important that the Central Bank of Afghanistan engage United States council to protect its assets from the United States judicial process,” he said. “The longer the Central Bank interests go unrepresented, the greater the plaintiff's incentives are to multiply their actions in the hope of finding a favorable court and successful legal approach, including lobbying congress for special legislation.”

Economists said that the Islamic Emirate needs to be recognized by the international community in order to pave the way for the release of the assets.

“The money belongs to the government of Afghanistan. Whenever the government is recognized, it can take the authority to use

this account and that government has the right to engage in litigation for the money,” said Sayed Masoud, an economist.

“The assets which are deposited by the Central Bank and private banks, are used for supporting the monetary system and loans of a country,” said Seyar Qureshi, an economist.

The Islamic Emirate said that it will seek a legal approach to the release of Afghanistan's assets if they are not freed.

“They seized the property of the people of Afghanistan, this doesn't benefit them. Anyway, the

Islamic Emirate will use all legal aspects to pave the way for the release of the assets, and it will then belong to the people of Afghanistan and return to the Central Bank of Afghanistan,” said the Islamic Emirate's spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid.

Earlier, US President Joe Biden indicated to US Congress he is extending the executive order for the “national emergency with respect to the widespread humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and the potential for a deepening economic collapse in Afghanistan.”

Ministry: 164 billions Afs worth of aid arrived in past 15 months

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Ministry of Finance said that in the past fifteen months more than one million tons of humanitarian aid worth 164 billion Afghanis has arrived in Afghanistan.

This aid, according to the ministry's spokesman Ahmad Wali Haqmal, included food, clothing, and other items.

“Over 1 million tons of food and non-food items from these organizations entered Afghanistan; this amounted to 41,000 shipments with a customs value of 164 billion Afghanis. All these goods went through the customs process and entered Afghanistan without any customs taxes,” Haqmal said.

According to figures from the Ministry of Finance, more than 41,000 packages of humanitarian relief entered the nation between August 2021 and January 2023, of which 23.3 billion Afghanis in

Tons of outdated, low quality medicine disposed

ZABUL (Agencies): 6 tons of outdated and low-quality medicine were disposed in Zabul, says local officials of the province.

Local health officials at the Public Health Department of Zabul say, that Six tons of outdated and low quality medicine, which were collected from pharmacies, laboratories, pharmaceutical companies and stores from the center and districts of this province, has been burned.

The provincial head of Public Health of Zabul Dr. Abdul Hakeem Hakeemi, tasked the health law monitoring teams of that department to accelerate their efforts and monitoring in this sector in the province, said a statement.

Deputy PM stressed conducting uplift projects in country



KABUL (Agencies): The Deputy Prime Minister of the Islamic Emirate, Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi In a meeting with a group of scholars, officials and Mujahideen of Kunduz, termed conducting development projects important for prosperity of the country.

According to a statement released by Arg, the Deputy Prime Minister Hanafi, met with Mullah Rehmatullah Mohammad, the commander of the 203rd Mansoori Army Corps, Mawlawi Habib ur Rahman Sohaib, the Deputy Governor of Kunduz, and a group of

local officials and Mujahideen of that province.

The commander of Mansoori 203rd Army Corps, reminded of the mujahideen of Kunduz sacrifices a lot during Jihad against foreign invaders and the re-establishment of the Islamic system, adding that now people and the mujahideen of this province support the Islamic system.

He mentioned the problems of the people in the fields of education, religious schools, health and transportation and asked the officials of the Islamic Emirate to launch develop-

ment projects in Kunduz province to address the people's problems.

For his part, Deputy PM Hanafi, praised the bravery of the people and Mujahideen of the province during the Jihad time to end the invasions and re-establish the Islamic system in the country.

Hanafi called the implementation of development projects important for the development and prosperity of the country, added that the Islamic Emirate will conduct these projects in all the provinces of the country as soon as possible.



customs taxes were

exempted.

Meanwhile, some economists believe that foreign assistance is crucial to preventing the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

“Even humanitarian aid has been distributed to Afghans in the form of cash, and it has not been able to improve the economic situation in Afghanistan, and we are

witnessing increasing poverty in Afghanistan,” said Mir Shekaib Mir, an economist.

Some residents of Kabul said that the aid of the international community should be distributed transparently to poor people.

“In 15 months, they have paid us one or two times, and that was to help us for only one month and they have not paid after that,”

said Khuda Bakhsh, a resident of Kabul.

“They provided us with 4100 or 4300 once, or they provided us with flour, and it was sufficient for our one month. It will be helpful if they assist us,” said Adil, another resident of Kabul.

Earlier, OCHA reported that in 2022, aid organizations helped more than 25 million people in Afghanistan.

Saudi diplomats leave Kabul, relocate to Pakistan

KABUL (TOLOnews): Saudi Arabia's diplomats left by air and relocated to Pakistan late last week due to warnings of heightened risks of attacks in the Afghan capital Kabul, Reuters reported citing a diplomat and two other sources.

Analysts and military veterans said that the closure of the Saudi Arabian embassy over security issues is not justifiable.

“The decision of Saudi Arabia and some other countries to pull their diplomats from Kabul due to security concerns, is not justifiable,” said Asadullah

Nadim, a political analyst. “In addition to security concerns and security issues, the closure of the Saudi Arabia embassy in Kabul and withdrawal of its diplomats, has other reasons as well that include girls' access to education and women's access to work...”, said Aziz Maariq, a former diplomat.

The Islamic Emirate said that the security of diplomats and embassies is better than before.

“They themselves mentioned the issue of security, we don't see any problem here because the security

situation of Afghanistan, particularly in Kabul, is good. The embassies, especially, are provided with mass security. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is paying attention to the security situation of all government organizations, and embassies and NGOs,” said Zabiullah Mujahid, Islamic Emirate spokesman.

The Islamic Emirate has yet to be recognized by any country in the world. However, some countries such as China, Turkey, Pakistan, Iran, Qatar and others have a diplomatic presence in Kabul.





ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi addressing the inaugural session of the Road Safety Conference for Parliamentarians-2023.

Dogar among 10 PTI workers held in Multan

MULTAN (Agencies): At least 10 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) workers were arrested from party leader Amir Dogar's dera (private visitors' house) in Multan as police raided the place for apprehending party activists allegedly involved in creating chaos outside an office of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) soon after they scuffled with Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) workers.

The former PTI MNA, who was present at the time of the raid, demanded that he be arrested along with party workers. Dogar, who had not been arrested since it was believed he was not involved in the rioting outside the ECP office, told the police, "If my workers have been detained, I will also go with you." The law enforcers complied, and the arrested people were taken to a police station in Cantt. Moreover, the poll organising authority too said that it had not requested Dogar's arrest.

Immediately after the arrest, PTI leader Farrukh Habib took to Twitter to condemn the arrests, saying: "Strongly condemn the arrest of Amir Dogar in Multan. The PDM [Pakistan Democratic Movement] should stop using dirty tactics and Amir Dogar should be released immediately." On Wednesday (today), which was the last day to submit nomination papers for NA 155 and NA 156, PTI leader Dogar and PML-N leader Sheikh Tariq Rasheed reached the ECP office at the same time. As the two were submitting their documents, workers of both sides started spewing vitriol against leaders of the other side. The verbal spat soon turned into a fight with clay pots being thrown and fistfights breaking out.

During the incident, seven people were injured, and all of them belonged to PML-N. Six of the injured people were given aid at the spot. Soon after the clash, the RPO and CPO arrived on the spot and culprits were identified via security footage and videos taken by camera persons on the spot. It was also said that the matter was being investigated at the behest of the ECP, which had lodged a complaint regarding the incident.

According to the police, the footage seen so far showed that PTI workers were more aggressive, which had led to the raid at Dogar's dera. Police at the time of arrests told Dogar that they did not want to arrest him, but on his insistence were forced to. The police also reiterated that the footage was being examined and so far Dogar was still not found guilty of any instigation. Therefore, his arrest was not needed or asked for. It was prompted by Dogar's insistence that he be taken with his workers. In fact, the police said: "It seems that senior leaders of both sides were trying to break up the fight. However, the workers were too agitated and refused to pay heed."

ECP commissioner Multan Saleem Khan said that the inquiry into the incident would be "free of prejudice" and those responsible would be held accountable.

PTI MNAs resignations: LHC suspends ECP order

LAHORE (INP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Wednesday suspended the order of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to accept the resignations of 43 MNAs of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

The court stopped by-elections in 43 constituencies until next order. It also issued a notice to the ECP and other parties and sought their reply. Justice Shahid Karim heard the petition of 43 former PTI MNAs including Riaz Fatyana. Riaz Fatyana appeared before the court with his lawyer Barrister Ali Zafar who argued before the court

that legal requirements had not been met for the acceptance of resignations.

"Tell! Which legal requirement has not been met?" Justice Shahid Karim asked. At this, Barrister Ali Zafar explained about the legal procedure for accepting resignation. The National Assembly (NA) speaker, ECP, and the federal government had been made respondents in the petition. The NA speaker's notifications of January 22 and the ECP's notifications of January 25 had been challenged in the petition. It was stated in the petition that 43 PTI MNAs had written a letter to the NA speak-

er for the withdrawal of resignations on January 23 last.

"The speaker did not conduct an inquiry under the Constitution before accepting the resignations," Barrister Ali Zafar argued before the court. "The MNAs had not appeared before the speaker to have their resignations accepted," he added. "The speaker cannot accept resignations without hearing the MNAs," he stated. "The court should declare null and void the acceptance of the resignations of the petitioners on behalf of the speaker and the ECP," he demanded.

Pakistan terms IMF's few conditions 'unrealistic'

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistani officials termed few of the International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s conditions, "unrealistic". Sources said that the first phase of policy talks was held between IMF and Pakistani officials and discussed the details regarding external financing.

The state bank briefed the IMF team about the needs of Pakistan's external financing but the Pakistani officials did not agree with their prediction regarding external financing. Sources said that the IMF and Pakistani officials could not decide on the target for foreign reserves.

The Pakistani team told the IMF officials there is room for the betterment of the county's economy but

the problems will not solve by burdening the people. Sources further revealed that the importance of talks on February 8 and 9 has increased now and they may delay further. Earlier, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) demanded Pakistan to amend laws for the assets declaration of public servants.

An IMF mission arrived in Islamabad on January 30 to discuss the stalled ninth review of the \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF). According to the sources at the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), the IMF insisting public declaration of the government servants' assets. The international lender has also demanded details of the overseas

assets of the bureaucracy, sources said.

The IMF has also demanded the establishment of an authority to make public the government officers' assets, according to sources. The lender demanded to make movable and immovable assets of bureaucrats in overseas to ensure transparency and accountability, according to sources. It has demanded to set up an Electronic Assets Declaration System for transparency. "Bureaucrats' assets will be checked prior to the opening of a bank account," sources said. "Banks will get information from the FBR for the opening of accounts of bureaucrats."

50 corruption cases sent back to NAB, SC informed

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): National Accountability Bureau has submitted its detailed reply in the Supreme Court according to which from 2019 till June 2022, 50 NAB references were returned during the PTI rule.

The Supreme Court had sought details from the NAB regarding the accused who had got relief or were acquitted due to amendments in the NAB Ordinance during the previous government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). According to NAB reply, 9 references against former minister for water and power Raja Pervaiz Ashraf were returned during PTI regime. Two references against former prime minister Yousaf Raza Gilani were sent back when the PTI govt was in power. Two references were returned against former finance minister Shaukat Tarin. Tarin was a co-accused in a case relating to misuse of power and authority.

A NAB reference against former member Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly Javed Hussain was sent back. In the same way a reference against Liaquat Ali Jatoi was also sent back during PTI govt's tenure. Likewise, one reference each against former KP governor Mehtab Ahmad Khan, former GB health minister Gul Bahar Khan, Farzana Raja and former president Asif Ali Zardari was sent back during the PTI regime.

Petrol shortage hits major cities of Punjab

LAHORE (INP): Long queues of two-wheelers and cars have been witnessed at filling stations in most parts of the Punjab province following a reduction in supplies by oil marketing companies.

A number of pumps in the various cities including Kharian, Sargodha, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Narowal, Okara and Shakargarh have also been closed due to the shortage of petrol, while the filling stations with oil attracted large crowds of motorists and motorcyclists. As the media catches the air of petrol shortage, panicked citizens rushed to petrol pumps on Tuesday.

The widespread rumours of an additional increase in petroleum products are another reason behind the shortage. Consumers want to have more oil for saving money while petrol pumps intend to earn more by creating an artificial shortage of fuel. Petrol dealers insisted that the companies had cut down supplies of petroleum products to the province over long delays in the issuance of letters of credit by private banks for imports.

However, Minister of State for Petroleum, Dr Musadik Malik refuted the news of the oil shortage and said that the country has petrol quantity for the next 20 days at least. Earlier this month, parts of the country faced a similar situation, before the price hike, but despite the painful addition of Rs35 per liter, the basic commodity is still short.

The sources claimed that only a few fuel stations are offering petrol in several cities including Lahore, Sargodha, Gujrat, Bahawalpur, Multan, Multan, Sialkot, and Faisalabad. Motorcyclist Ahmad Awais reported the closure of most filling stations on the Multan and Ferozepur Roads. Distressed people from the various cities complained of fuel shortage while others shared the ordeal to wait for hours to get fuel petrol. Several reports hint at panic buying at petrol stations as several pumps had already stopped sales owing to the limited availability of stocks.

Don't burden flood-hit people with more inflation: FM urges IMF

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Chairman PPP & Foreign Minister of Pakistan Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing the 'Resilient Sindh: From Pledges to Reconstruction' conference demanded the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to soften its conditions for the bail-out package so that the flood victims of Pakistan could be protected from the spiral of 'price hike'.

"Our people have already been drowned by floods and heavy rains and they cannot afford to be drowned again in the flood of price hikes", the Foreign Minister expressed. As a follow-up to the January 9, Geneva conference on 'Climate Resilient Pakistan' the Sindh government organized a high-powered conference on 'Resilient Sindh: From Pledges to Reconstruction' to harness international and local support for the people of its province in the aftermath of the devastating floods here at a local hotel on Wednesday. Bilawal Bhutto said that the federal government was negotiating with the IMF for its programme in the federal capital while this 'Resilient Sindh' Conference was taking place in Karachi.

"Our people have suffered a lot at the hands of heavy floods and unprecedented rains". Chairman PPP further added: "Their standing crops have been washed away and despite tiresome efforts, they have not been able to prepare their lands for the rabi crop and may not be able to make their flooded lands so fit for the upcoming Kharif crop." He further mentioned that in such a state of affairs, they could not be further pushed into the spiral of price hikes. Mr. Bhutto Zardari urged the IMF to offer the same conditions to the people of Pakistan as it had offered to various other nations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Housing Project: Talking about the housing project, Bilawal Bhutto directed Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah to award ownership rights to the affected people who had lost their houses in the floods.

"I would urge you [the CM] to transfer the ownership rights of the houses in the name of the women of the houses so that they could obtain house purchase or other loans to start their business," he said and added this would improve their livelihood and create economic activities. Conference: As per the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment report presented at the conference, Sindh has been at the receiving end of about 61 percent of the total damages and 75 percent of



the total losses due to the floods.

The Sindh government, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), organized a comprehensive consultative conference to identify and concretize avenues for collaboration for a post-flood sustainable recovery in a climate-resilient manner. The unprecedented climate-induced disaster in Pakistan, especially Sindh, since June 2022 has wreaked havoc. With 24 out of the 30 districts in Sindh being declared 'calamity-hit', the recent floods have affected every conceivable facet of life.

The Floods have affected more than 12.4 million people in the province, with more than 814 lives lost as well as over 2 million housing units impacted, and over 450,000 livestock perished. About 20,000 schools have been damaged and more than a thousand health facilities have been affected. Estimates suggest the provincial poverty rate may increase, pushing an additional 5 million people below the poverty line with over 4.3 million additional people facing the threat of food insecurity. The disaster is disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable segments of the population.

The Conference was centered on bringing together multiple stakeholders from various sectors to synergize efforts for resilient recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction of Sindh. The Sindh government presented a 'Strategic Action Plan' to delineate its strategic priorities and implementation plans across the priority sectors of Irrigation Systems, Housing and Community Facilities, Roads Infrastructure, Livelihood, Health, Education, and Human Impact.

The conference also included the

launch of the 'Sindh People's Housing for Flood Affecteds' Program for reconstructing 2.1 million houses which encompassed real-time disbursements to initial beneficiaries. MoUs were also signed with implementing partners, including HANDS, TRDP, NRSP, SRSO, and SAFCO. The prominent participants of the Resilient Sindh Conference included Mr. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Mr. Murad Ali Shah, UN Resident Coordinator, UNDP Resident Representative, World Bank Country Director, Asian Development Bank Country Director, members of the Provincial Cabinet, Ambassadors, Diplomats, leaders of the private sectors, other multilateral development partners and Civil Society Organizations. Presentations were made by the Chief Secretary, Chairman P&D Board, Additional Chief Secretary (Local Government), and Secretary (I&C) SGA&C Department of the provincial government. The Participants were briefed on the Sindh government's Priority, List of Potential Projects, Governance Mechanisms, Joint Survey for Housing Damages, and Implementation Framework of the Government's Housing Project.

The conference was a resounding success, with Pledges for the recovery and reconstruction of Sindh, in addition to the previous pledges at Geneva Conference. Contributions were pledged from the Indus Hospital Network, Bank Al-Falah, and Human Development Foundation. Remarks were made by the representatives of Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (UK), USAID, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, Islamic Development Bank, International Finance Corporation, International Organization for Migration, UNODC, WHO, FAO, Agha Khan Agency for Habitat, UNICEF, and UNFPA.

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari lauded the efforts undertaken by the Government of Sindh for arranging a very beneficial and compelling conference. Mr. Bilawal also lauded the efforts of the Government and Partners in working tirelessly for resilient recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction of the province. Sindh CM Syed Murad Ali Shah thanked the attendees for taking the time to participate in the discourse for a resilient Sindh in the aftermath of the climate catastrophe and the debilitating impact of the disaster.

PHC orders DG EPA, DC Kohat to appear today

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench comprising of Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Qaiser Rashid and Justice Ijaz Anwar ordered Director General Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) along with Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kohat to appear today (on Thursday) Contempt of Court (COC) regarding environmental as well as health and damages of residential infrastructure caused by blasts and cement factories, on Wednesday.

During hearing counsel for petitioner Barrister Asad-ul-Mulk, Additional Advocate General Syed Sikandar Shah and Deputy Director Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Mumtaz Ali appeared before court. Barrister Asad-ul-Mulk argued that applicant Zia Hafeez is resident of Kohat while several business activities are operating in the areas including mining and cement factories which is creating air pollution on one hand while on the other

hand it has caused cracks in residential infrastructures.

However, Chief Justice PHC Justice Qaiser Rashid remarked that court should not allowed business activities in residential areas which creates problems for local populace and observed that court will initiate action against trade outlets playing with the health of the people. Chief Justice inquired from AAG regarding the situation while EPA deputy director informed that he personally visited the site but current COC didn't lay in line with it.

In the meantime, Chief Justice directed Deputy Director EPA Mumtaz to visit the site today (on Wednesday) along Director General Mining and submit report in this regard because it is concerned with the health of people. The counsel further argued that the PHC had issued a judgment in 2017 directing Kohat Cement Factory to run its Electrostatic Precipitators Systems at 15 points at all times on all units but the directions had not been complied with till date.

Barrister Asad-ul-Mulk further submitted that owing to the discharge of excessive levels of fumes, dust and chemicals into the air, the residents of Kohat who live near the factory have become prey to deadly diseases such as cancer, tuberculosis, asthma, bronchitis and other respiratory illnesses. It was added that due to extensive blasting structural damage had also been caused to residential property in the locality.

The Chief Justice directed the EPA representative to forthwith undertake a visit along with Director General Mining of the factory and submit a report in this respect. He stated that the court took environmental matters seriously and the release of toxic chemicals was not only hazardous to human life but also to the flora and fauna of the region. The divisional bench comprising of Chief Justice PHC Justice Qaiser Rashid and Justice Ijaz Anwar ordered DG EPA along with DC Kohat to appear today (on Thursday) before court and explain the apparent dereliction.

Court grants Muree police transit remand of Sh Rashid

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): An Islamabad district and sessions court has granted the Muree police one-day transit remand of Awami Muslim League (AML) chief and former interior minister Sheikh Rashid.

Rashid was arrested Feb 2 by the Islamabad police for remarks he made against former president Asif Ali Zardari. Later, another case was also registered against him at the Muree police station for manhandling a police official at the time of his arrest. The former interior minister was brought to the court amid tight security and as the proceeding commenced, Rashid's lawyers — Ali Bukhari and Intizar Panjhoti — and the prosecutor presented their arguments. After hearing both sides, the court instructed the police to present Rashid before a relevant court in Muree by 2pm on Thursday.

At the outset of hearing, Rashid came to the rostrum and said that a fake case had been framed against him. "All these policemen are my brothers," he proclaimed. Rashid said that he had been a minister 16 times in his life, claiming that "they want to change my political alliances now". He told the court that he had given his phone's passwords to the police but they found nothing in it. He added, "I have never fought with the army ... I belong to them." The AML chief went on to say that the Muree police investigated him for hours and then alleged that the "entire thing" was done by the Aabpara police. "My police [departments] in Karachi and Lasbela are innocent."

Sheikh Rasheed files post-arrest bail plea in court: Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed also on Wednesday filed a post-arrest bail plea in the district and sessions court. As per details, the sessions judge Tahir Mahmood sent the bail plea to additional sessions judge Tahir Abbas Sipra and he will hear the case tomorrow. The plea stated that with the assistance of police, the prosecution has filed false cases against the AML chief Sheikh Rasheed and despite the notice suspension by LHC they filed the case.