

Marriyum blasts Imran F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Thursday taking a jibe at Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan, said that the foreign-funded Toshakhana thief, responsible for the return of terrorism in the country, did not appear in the court again today using the pretext of security.

@thefrontierpost

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

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIX

No. 53

Regd. No. 241

SHABAAN 17 1444 -- FRIDAY, MARCH 10 2023

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

Price. 20



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing the meeting of federal cabinet.

SBP-held foreign reserves rise above \$4b mark

KARACHI (Agencies): The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP)-held foreign exchange reserves rose above the \$4 billion mark after the cash-strapped nation received a \$500 million loan from a Chinese bank. The central bank, in its weekly bulletin, said that its foreign exchange reserves have increased by \$487 million to \$4,301 million as of the week ended March 3, which will provide an import cover of around a month. The SBP received \$500 million last week from the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) as part of the institution's \$1.3 billion facility, just days after it had received \$700 million from the China Development Bank. Pakistan hasn't received funds from any friendly country except for China as the \$350 billion economy struggles to revive the

stalled International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme. Cash-strapped Pakistan has been trying to secure the IMF bailout to avert a debt default, unlock more funding and stave off severe supply shortages. There are \$7 billion of repayments in the coming months, including a Chinese loan of \$2 billion due in March, according to Fitch Ratings. The nation needs to repay about \$3 billion dues in the upcoming payments while \$4 billion is expected to be rolled over, SBP Governor Jameel Ahmad said in an analyst briefing after the announcement of the monetary policy rate — which has been jacked by to a 27-year high of 20%. But as the IMF deal sees a delay, the Pakistan rupee has plunged to historic lows and closed at 282.30 against the dollar — and if

all goes well for Pakistan in the coming days, experts believe that the local currency can only recover to 265. In his address to an event earlier on Thursday, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said that the IMF was "satisfied" with Pakistan's actions, but the staff-level agreement could not be signed this week. "We seem to be very close to signing the staff-level agreement hopefully in the next few days," Dar said in his address during a seminar titled "Reviving Economic Stability through the Strengthening of Public Financial Management" in the federal capital. Due to a shortage of dollars, the government has also imposed restrictions on imports — resulting in the partial closure of not only textile but automobile manufacturers as well, prompting unemployment fears.

COAS for development of Balochistan

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir visited Gwadar. According to the ISPR, he was briefed on prevailing security situation, Formation's operational preparedness CPEC security and efforts for ensuring a peaceful and secure environment. The Army Chief appreciated the efforts of all ranks and urged to continue working with professional commitment for the good of the people of Balochistan. He interacted with local notables, elected representatives and people from different walks of life. While interacting, COAS emphasized that handful of misguided elements cannot shake the resolve of the people of Balochistan and the Armed Forces, committed towards ensuring peace and prosperity. He laid particular emphasis on socio-economic development of the area. He announced welfare projects related to education, installation of solar systems, fisheries, water, health, sports and livelihood.

PM okays release of wheat to GB

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Prime Minister Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif on Thursday approved immediate release of 26,666 metric tonnes of wheat to Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) for two months. According to a notification issued by the Prime Minister office, the Prime Minister also directed the Finance Division to allocate 2.5 billion rupees for Gilgit-Baltistan to meet urgent requirement of the region. The Prime Minister further directed Ministry of Kashmir Affairs to submit a comprehensive and sustainable plan for price rationalization in consultation with all stakeholders for consideration of Economic Coordination Committee within three days.

Power tariff for Karachi to be raised

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Ministry of Energy (Power Division) decided to jack up the power tariff by Rs 4.76 per unit for K-Electric consumers in the context of two different quarterly adjustments. The electricity tariff is likely to get expensive for the consumers of Karachi in the context of two different quarterly adjustments. The stakeholders were likely to approve the latest tariff rate from the federal cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. "In the first quarter adjustment of the financial year, electricity tariff will increase by Rs 3.21 per unit, while in the second quarter adjustment from last year, power tariff will increase by Rs 1.55 per unit," sources added. This tariff hike was decided to maintain a uniform tariff across the country, the additional charges will be applicable in 2023 between March and May. It is pertinent to mention here that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif summoned a meeting of the federal cabinet on Thursday [today] at 4 pm. According to sources, the federal cabinet meeting will be chaired by PM Shehbaz Sharif in which Hajj Policy 2023 will be presented for approval.

Imran, PTI leaders booked over chaos in Lahore protest

LAHORE (INP): Punjab police on Thursday lodged a case against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan and other PTI leaders over creating chaos during PTI's protest in Lahore's capital. A First Information Report (FIR) lodged against Mr Khan stated that up to 400 people including armed men vandalised the venue and threatened the security institutions on the guidelines of Mr Khan and PTI leaders including Farrukh Habib, Fawad Chaudhry, Hammad Azhar, Mahmoodur Rasheed, Ijaz Chaudhry, and others. "Enraged protestors pelted stones at the police personnel," the report added. The FIR stated that PTI activists' vandalism injured 13 police officials as well as six activists. "They were shifted to Services hospital where injured Ali Bilal succumbed to his injuries", the report added. Taking to Twitter, PTI senior vice president Fawad Chaudhry wrote, "I have been in Islamabad for past two days to plead the court for Mr Khan's security, but Punjab police lodged a case against me over vandalism in Lahore. It reflects the credibility of administration that has been imposed in Punjab". Earlier, the party had planned to kick start its election campaign with a rally from Zaman Park to

Data Darbar. However, it later put off the campaign until Saturday but dedicated the rally to the judiciary. Before the start of the rally, the Punjab government imposed Section 144 in Lahore for seven days with immediate effect, banning rallies, processions and gatherings in the provincial capital due to security reasons. Later, the PTI called off its pro-judiciary rally. Soon after the imposition of Section 144, police started detaining PTI workers and closed roads leading to Zaman park to block the rally. Things turned sour when police officials resorted to tear gas shelling, water canons and baton charge to disperse the participants from gathering for the rally. It left multiple injured and one dead, and Mr Khan claimed that he had been murdered by the police. Terming it a black day, the PTI stated, "Another dark chapter of tyranny and repression and the worst fascism has been added in the history of those committing the crime of upholding democracy through law." A spokesperson of the Punjab government rejected the claims of custodial killing, saying the purported videos were not from Wednesday's incident but the 'Jail Bharo Tehreek' (court arrest movement). Amnesty

International expressed concern over the "blanket ban" on protests in the province's capital. Taking to Twitter, it wrote, "Authorities in Pakistan has placed a blanket ban on protests in Lahore. The authorities have used a draconian colonial-era law to crush dissent hours before several protests". Govt forms committee to probe Lahore clashes between police, PTI workers: The Punjab government has formed an inquiry committee to ascertain facts into the incidents of police clashes with workers of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in Lahore. PTI Chairman Imran Khan said on Wednesday that one of its workers was killed after police launched a crackdown on those participating in the party's rally following the imposition of Section 144. The party had planned to kick start its election campaign on Wednesday with a rally from Zaman Park to Data Darbar. However, it later put off the campaign until Saturday but dedicated the rally to the judiciary. Before the start of the rally, the Punjab government imposed the Section 144 in Lahore for seven days with immediate effect, banning rallies, processions and gatherings in the provincial capital due to security reasons.

Steps to celebrate Golden Jubilee of Constitution discussed

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Advisory Committee of Parliament (ACP), on the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the Constitution, met on Thursday to track the progress of preparations for the upcoming celebrations. The meeting convened under the headship of Senator Mian Raza Rabbani to oversee preparations for the Golden Jubilee of the 1973 Constitution, has taken important decisions to finalize the arrangements for the upcoming celebrations. The meeting which held at the Parliament House, discussed various aspects of the upcoming event. During the meeting, Minister for Finance Ishaq Dar assured the Committee of full support and facilitation from government

departments, while former Senator Farhat Ullah Babar emphasized the critical role of media in raising awareness about the celebrations. He also stressed the need for clear directions to be outlined for all government departments to facilitate these preparations. Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb informed the Committee that her ministry would take the lead role in executing a robust media campaign, which will begin from March 10, 2023. The campaign is aimed at creating awareness about the significance of the 1973 Constitution and its impact on Pakistan's socio-political landscape. MNA Mehnaz Akbar Aziz acknowledged the progress of the committee and suggested the compilation of a booklet on the Constitution for children.

Meanwhile, MNA Asiya Azeem suggested that programs should be telecasted frequently on television to create awareness about the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution. The Committee, under the leadership of Mian Raza Rabbani, has decided to hold more frequent meetings to ensure the timely completion of preparations for the Golden Jubilee celebrations. The Committee has also delegated tasks related to the event to its members. The Golden Jubilee of the 1973 Constitution is a momentous occasion for Pakistan, and the government is committed to ensuring that the celebrations are a grand success. The efforts of the Advisory Committee and other stakeholders involved in the preparations are expected to make the event a memorable one.

The Frontier Post

FIA arrests Shoab Shaikh

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Thursday arrested Shoab Shaikh, owner of a private television channel and chief executive of Axaact, for allegedly giving Rs5 million as a bribe to then-additional district and sessions judge Pervaiz Qadir Memon for getting acquitted in a fake degree case. FIA spokesperson said the businessman was arrested by the agency's anti-corruption circle in the federal capital.

Federal Cabinet approves Hajj Policy, Clean Air policies

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Cabinet on Thursday approved the Hajj Policy 2023 and the National Clean Air Policy. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, chairing the cabinet meeting, said the authorities should prepare a comprehensive and effective strategy as soon as possible in cooperation with the officials of Saudi Arabia to provide the best possible travel and lodging facilities to pilgrims during the Hajj. He appreciated the Ministry of Climate Change for formulating the Clean Air Policy, and directed that necessary steps should be taken for its effective implementation. The Ministry of Climate Change presented the new policy before the cabinet for approval. The cabinet was told that in the previous years air pollution had risen to dangerous levels in many big cities. According to the Air Quality Index Report 2022-23, Karachi and Lahore were the cities most affected by air pollution. It mentioned that due to air pollution the average life of people was reduced by 2.7 years. As per the 2016 report of the World Bank, Pakistan's economy was suffering huge losses because of the air pollution problem. In recent years, the number of accidents caused by smog in cities

and different diseases spiraled. The Ministry of Climate Change prepared an extensive policy covering a number of subjects, including protection of health of citizens, steps to reduce per year deaths, promotion of agriculture, reduction in air pollution and for improvement in quality of air in urban and rural areas. The policy recommended to encourage and promote upgradation of fuel from Euro 5 standard to Euro 6, introduce strict laws to control industrial emissions, modernize agriculture, effectively stop burning of crop waste, adopt international standards for waste management and use low emission gases in cooking. The adoption of policy would decrease emission of poisonous gases by 40 percent in the next 10 years. The effective enactment of policy would be ensured by a National Action Committee, which would provide long term guidance for its implementation and also bring changes in it after every five years keeping in view the ground realities. A technical committee would also be constituted to come up with a strategy to ensure execution of the policy and send periodical reports to the National Action Committee. The committee would also present recommendations to remove obstacles in the way of implementation of the policy. Execution of the clean air

policy could lead to increase in the average human life in Pakistan by two years. The cabinet was also briefed on a strategy for fuel conservation. It was told that the ministries of Power, Petroleum, Industry and Commerce and Information were ensuring on priority basis implementation of the targets set by the cabinet. On the recommendation of the Ministry of Law and Justice, the National Accountability Amendment Ordinance 2023 was approved. The recent amendments in the National Accountability Ordinance 1999 had created legal complications because of which it became difficult to transfer a lot of cases which did not come in the ambit of NAB ordinance, to other courts, tribunals and forums. After consultation with all stakeholders, the NAB Ordinance XVIII was amended after which the accountability courts would get a legal cover to transfer cases to other courts and forums. The amendments would also end the perception that those cases which did not come in the purview of NAB Ordinance, were decriminalized. The cabinet also ratified the decisions made by the Economic Coordination Committee during its meetings held on March 1 and March 6. It also ratified the decisions taken by the Cabinet Committee for Legislative Cases in its meeting held on March 6.

PTI serves legal notice to KP Governor

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) lawyer Qazi Muhammad Anwar Advocate served legal notice to Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to announce schedule for provincial assembly elections within 24 hours otherwise to face legal proceedings, on Thursday. In this regard, Qazi Muhammad Anwar Advocate has served urgent notice and stated that Governor has taken oath as well as dissolved Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly on Chief Minister Mahmood Khan, it is obligatory for him to announce election schedule within 24 hours. The legal notice added

that Governor didn't announce election scheduled by playing delaying tactics while he also claimed in a press conference that announcement of poll-date is responsibility of Election Commission of Pakistan. Governor has used different tactics to manipulate election schedule and also claimed that Peshawar High Court cannot direct him for announcement of election date, the legal notice argued. Following Sou Moto notice decision by Supreme Court of Pakistan, 30th April selected for polling in Punjab by President but Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa once again played with ECP to manip-

ulate the announcement election date which is unconstitutional, the notice added. The legal notice argued Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to announce date within 24 hours otherwise a complaint should be filed before federation as well as legal proceeding under treason from constitution and other related affairs should be initiated against him. It is worthy to mention that Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa claimed that announcement of election date is more difficult than sighting Eid crescent on Wednesday while talking to media personnel following his meeting with Election Commission of Pakistan.

LHC suspends ban on airing of Imran's speeches

LAHORE (Agencies): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Thursday suspended the ban imposed by the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) on broadcasting live or recorded speeches of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan on satellite TV channels. Justice Shams Mehmood Mirza presided over the petition filed by the former premier challenging PEMRA's ban and announced the reserved verdict. He also proposed the formation of a full bench to hear the case. The prohibition order stated that Imran was "levelling baseless allegations and spreading hate speech through his provocative statements against state institutions and officers which is prejudicial to the maintenance of law and order and is likely to disturb public peace and tranquillity".

PEMRA had said the airing of hateful, slanderous and unwarranted statements against state institutions is "in sheer violation of Article 19 of the Constitution and a judgment of the Supreme Court". It has been observed that such content was telecasted by TV channels without effective utilisation of time-delay mechanism in violation of provisions of PEMRA laws as well as judgments of the apex courts, the media regulator added. Challenging the order, Imran had filed a petition with the LHC through barrister Muhammad Ahmed Pansota, contending that in the judgment reported as "Imran Ahmad Khan Niazi Vs PEMRA", then chief justice of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) Athar Minallah had declared a similar PEMRA prohibition order as "ultra vires the Ordinance" (over-stretching itself beyond the powers conferred upon it) on similar grounds. Imran's counsel had stated in the petition that PEMRA has issued the impugned order in excess of the jurisdiction vested in it and without having regard to the constitutional rights guaranteed under Articles 19 and 19-A of the Constitution. Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan had on Wednesday recused himself from hearing the case and sent the case file to the LHC chief justice, requesting to fix it to another bench. As proceedings commenced, Imran's counsel argued that PEMRA on March 5, 2023, issued an impugned order, arguing that the regulatory body's allegations were untrue.

'Youth real driving force for country's future'

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Senior Vice President and Chief Organiser Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Maryam Nawaz on Thursday termed the youth the real driving force of the country, saying that the Muslim League was the only political party which had an ambitious agenda for this major chunk of the population. She said that unlike Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's mere slogans for the youth, the PML-N was the party which had youths' more representation in the parliament, which depicted the real picture against hollow slogans. Addressing the party's young leadership here, she said that the PML-N did not want to use the youth as a fuel for achieving personal agendas, rather it wanted to make them part of the decision-making process at national level. She said the majority of the country's population consisted of the youth, whether it was rural or urban population. She said there was dire need to give them a

right direction so that they could contribute to nation-building. Maryam Nawaz, terming the youth real strength of her party, said that their participation in organisational matters would be ensured. The PML-N had become a youth representative party in a true sense, as the party had credit of initiating various schemes aimed at providing better employment and business opportunities to them. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and Shehbaz Sharif worked for making the youth self reliance whenever the PML-N got an opportunity to serve the country, and started various initiatives through financial assistance, scholarships, soft loans, etc. The PML-N chief organiser said that Shehbaz Sharif had introduced education-friendly Punjab Education Endowment Fund project, whereas interest-free loan scheme was also launched by the PML-N government. She said the youth was attracted toward the latest technology by providing them with laptops, while local and inter-

national scholarships were also provided to brilliant and deserving students. She said there were ample opportunities to excel in the field of Information Technology, and the youth of the country had a right place to display their skills and get their share in the local as well international market. Maryam regretted that the PTI was using the youth to achieve its political goals, but no one was there to lead them as they were called onto the roads every time for agitation while the party chief was hiding in his Zaman Park residence. The PML-N senior leader said she was sad to hear about an untoward incident, which happened on Wednesday during a so-called PTI rally, wherein a political worker passed away. She said transparent investigation into the incident should be held to ascertain that who was responsible for his death. She regretted that negative thinking was deliberately promoted among the youth during the previous four-year rule of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf.

Three more terrorists killed in North Waziristan operation: ISPR

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Three more terrorists were gunned down by security forces in a clearance operation following an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in North Waziristan's Datta Khel general area a day earlier. According to ISPR press release, an intelligence-

based operation (IBO) — conducted in general area Datta Khel of North Waziristan District — was followed by a sanitisation of the area by security forces. "During intense exchange of fire, three more terrorists were killed," the ISPR said, taking the total death count in ongoing clearance operation to nine. The ISPR said area locals "appreciated the security forces response and expressed their full support to eliminate menace of terrorism from the area". A day earlier, the security forces killed six terrorists in an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in North Waziristan's Datakhel area.



Scientific approach vital for making progress: Qamar Zaman Kaira

LAHORE (APP): Advisor to Prime Minister on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Qamar Zaman Kaira said on Thursday that all developed countries in the world had made enormous progress in the field of science which helped them to rule the world. Addressing the 'Scicon 1.0' here at Forman Christian College (A chartered University), he said, "Scientific approach always paves way for society to move forward."

He said that no nation could become prosperous in the real sense without ensuring scientific development. Qamar Zaman Kaira said that he was very happy to witness demonstrations by students of their projects. Promotion of science helped in bringing a lot of facilities for humans, besides finding treatments of different diseases, he said and added that advancement in science also helped in overcoming stubborn mindset approach.

He said that today

Pakistan had been facing a lot of challenges, adding that scientific approach would definitely help it to excel. He urged the students to benefit from the best available opportunities as this would yield good results. There was a need to add value to our products to boost country's export, he said. He said, "It is unfortunate that despite being an agricultural country, Pakistan import wheat, pulses, sugar etc." He said that science provides solution to problems, adding that scientific approach was necessary for making progress in different fields of life. Later, Forman Christian College Rector Jonathan Addleton presented a souvenir to the Advisor to PM. Lahore Board Chairman Dr Mirza Habib Ali also spoke on the occasion. Earlier, Qamar Zaman Kaira witnessed different projects of students and interacted with them. Students briefed the Advisor about their models and demonstrated their working

as well. Talking to the media, Kaira said that elections would be held as per the constitution, adding that elections process would gear up gradually. He said there was a debate that elections in the country should be held at the same time, keeping in view the country's financial and security situation. He said, "If all stakeholders reach a consensus on holding elections at the same time in the country it would help in saving billion of rupees." To a question, he said that Asif Ali Zardari believed in finding ways and giving sacrifices just for progress and stability of the country. To another query, he said that violence approach could not be defended at all. He said that Imran Khan should leave provocative language and politics of violence. Qamar Zaman Kaira said the country was going through a critical phase but with the grace of Allah Almighty it would not default.



LAHORE: Special assistant to Prime Minister for youth affairs Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja viewing displayed Art during poster competition and spring plantation drive at NCA. —APP Photo

CM Naqvi chairs meeting on 'Free Ata Package'

LAHORE (PPI): Punjab Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi on Thursday ordered the provision of bags of flour to deserving people free of cost ahead of the holy month of Ramadan. He was presiding over a meeting held in Lahore to review the 'Free Ata Package'. Speaking on the occasion, the chief minister expressed the hope that the package introduced by the provincial government would provide much-needed relief to the poor and down-trodden. He announced increasing trucking points for the purpose. CM Naqvi directed the Punjab Information Technology Board to devise such a procedure that people could get flour without much hassle. He also directed the Board to keep the backup system ready. "We have to provide relief to people in such a way that they don't have to make lines," he said. Chief Secretary, Planning and Development Board chairman, secretary food, secretary finance, Punjab Information Technology Board chairman, DG Industries and other concerned officials attended the meeting.

He said that the port city had given mandate to the JI which would give mayor to them. He said the PDM and the PPP government failed to control inflation and ensure peace and order. He said 11 months of the current government were the reflection of the poor performance of 14 parties. He said the unity government continued the policies of the PTI, gifting the people with inflation and unemployment. He said since the ruling parties failed to perform, the JI was left as the only option with the people to vote for in elections. If voted to power, he said, the JI would transform the country into Islamic welfare state.

SAPM inaugurates poster exhibition at NCA

LAHORE (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Youth Affairs Shaza Fatima Khawaja inaugurated the poster exhibition on the topic of climate change at National College of Arts, here on Thursday. The poster-making competition and exhibition were organised among the students on the topic of environmental changes. The participants of the exhibition appreciated the creative posters of the students of the NCA design department. Speaking on this occasion, the SAPM said that securing the future of the youth was among the top priorities of the government, adding that youth of the country was capable and determined, they only need a guideline or platform to grow forward. The SAPM said that Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz was committed to facilitate the youth of the country in every field, and for the purpose Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had started various youth development programmes. She asserted that she was paying special attention to the challenges faced by the youth and making efforts to resolve these challenges. She stressed the need for comprehensive plantation strategy to deal with current environmental challenges, saying that today she was happy to see the active participation of the youth in the poster exhibition on environmental change. Youth were much aware from these environmental challenges, she added. Plantation was indispensable to deal with the challenges of environmental changes, she asserted. She further said that she always had a desire to come to the NCA, as NCA was a historical institution, and students from here made the name of Pakistan famous by reaching high positions abroad.

Ex-Punjab governor Chaudhry Sarwar to join PML-Q

LAHORE (NNI): Former Punjab governor Chaudhry Sarwar has decided to join Pakistan Muslim League Quaid (PML-Q), citing sources. Sources said that Chaudhry Sarwar will reach Lahore from London tomorrow. The senior politician will hold a meeting with PML-Q chief Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain and announce joining the political party. In January, the politician

Earlier, Sarwar was a Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader and Punjab governor during former premier Imran Khan's government. He was removed from governorship before the election of the Punjab chief minister (CM). It was rumoured that Sarwar was removed from his position due to his contacts with the Aleem Khan faction. In January, the politician

told the foreign media that he is not greedy for power and he wanted to leave a legacy after joining PTI. He added that a democratic political party must exist in the country. To a question, he said that he will always share his thoughts before whatever political party he joins. He added that he will definitely consider joining a political party if its manifesto is in line with his thoughts.

Federal Cabinet approves much needed National Clean Air Policy: Sherry

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman on Thursday said the Federal Cabinet had approved the much needed 'National Clean Air Policy', proposed by the Ministry of Climate Change. The minister, in a series of tweets, thanked all the cabinet members for unanimously approving the policy. Sherry Rehman said: "This policy has the need of the hour which has been formulated in consultation and partnership with all

stakeholders. It aims to reduce air pollution in Pakistan, improve air quality, reduce annual deaths, improve citizens' health, increase economic activity and ensure food security." She said Pakistan was the third most polluted country in the world in terms of air pollution in 2021, while Lahore and Karachi were the most polluted cities in Air Quality Index 2022-23. "Air pollution has become a serious environmental and health problem. In 2019, 235,000 people died due to air pollution in Pakistan."

The minister noted that air pollution had shortened the average life expectancy in Pakistan by 2.7 years. According to the World Bank, she said, air pollution in 2013 caused an economic loss of \$47.8 billion in Pakistan, which was 5.88% of the GDP (gross domestic product). "We needed a comprehensive policy to reduce these losses. All losses can be mitigated by the technical and administrative measures of this policy," Sherry Rehman said.

Govt does not seem in election mood: Rashid

LAHORE (NNI): Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rashid Ahmad said it seemed that the government was not in the mood of holding elections. In a series of tweets, the former interior minister welcomed the announcement of schedule for polls in Punjab by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and hoped that they would not be delayed further. He said the government could face contempt of court proceedings by delaying the elections as the Supreme Court had ruled polls must be held within 90 days of the dissolution of the assemblies. He also hit out at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Ghulam Ali for not implementing the court orders, adding that the delaying tactics were being used under a conspiracy. He claimed that political decisions would now be taken in courts in coming days. The government was only running after its vested interests instead of bringing political and economic stability in the country. He also lashed out at the interim government, saying it was only responsible for holding elections but it imposed Section 144 the day election schedule was announced. He said one worker of the PTI was died during Lahore rally, adding that attempt to suppress the PTI proved damaging for the government.

DG MDA hold meeting with officers

KARACHI: Abdul Rasheed Solangi, Director General, Malir Development Authority hold meeting with the officers of MDA in his office today which was attended by all Directors of Finance, Land, Estate, Recoveries, Planning and Engineering, Administration and Incharges of various schemes, I.E, Taisar Town, New Malir Hoisting Scheme and Shah Lateef Town. DG MDA directed all officers to maintain punctuality, quick disposal of all pending matters and issues, ensure easy access to the general public while resolving their issues. DG directed officers concerned for immediate removal of encroachment from MDAs land and contact to the DC concerned and Director Antienroachment on this regard and weekly report may be submitted to him. Recovery process may be accelerated, infrastructure facilities may be ensured in all housing schemes. DG gave his vision to establish new low cost housing schemes for the poorest of poor people of this Province and new state of the art Industrial Zone may also be established. Also new scheme for the women artisan may be established to ensure economic empowerment of women. He also directed them to work hard and strengthen thus authority while serving the people of this Province efficiently.

Dry weather expected in most parts of country

ISLAMABAD (INP): Mainly dry weather is expected in most parts of the country, while day temperatures are likely to increase in plain areas. Temperature of some major cities recorded on Thursday. Islamabad, twelve degree centigrade, Lahore sixteen, Karachi twenty-one, Peshawar thirteen, Quetta eight, Gilgit ten, Murree six and Muzaffarabad eleven degree centigrade. According to Met Office forecast for Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, partly cloudy and dry weather is expected in Srinagar, Pulwama, Anantnag, Shopian and Baramulla, cold and dry in Leh while dry in Jammu. Temperatures recorded, Srinagar, Pulwama and Shopian five degree centigrade, Jammu seventeen, Leh minus four, Anantnag six and Baramulla four degree centigrade.



KARACHI: Ms Irum Tanweer accepting memento on International Womens Day at Karachi Press Club.

JI Emir demands general elections, linking stability to national poll

LAHORE (NNI): Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Emir Sirajul Haq has reiterated the demand for general elections, linking stability to the national poll. Elections in parts would further the instability and added to the prevailing crises, he said while talking to the JI workers at Mansoorah on Thursday. Haq, who would go to Quetta on Friday to participate in sit-in against the illegal detention of the "Gwadar Rights Movement" leader Maulana Hidayatullah Rahman and his colleagues and for the rights of the residents of the port city, also criticized the government for pushing the people of the province to the wall instead of address-

ing their demands. He said the deprivations of Balochistan were touching the peak as the masses were deprived of from basic needs despite being holders of the land full of resources. The JI chief questioned the delay by the Election Commission of Pakistan in completion of Karachi local body polls. He said it seemed the ECP was facing pressure from the Sindh government which already involved in rigging. He said Karachi was the backbone of the national economy and there should be powerful city government to ensure peaceful environment for economic activities. He said the residents of

the port city had given mandate to the JI which would give mayor to them. He said the PDM and the PPP government failed to control inflation and ensure peace and order. He said 11 months of the current government were the reflection of the poor performance of 14 parties. He said the unity government continued the policies of the PTI, gifting the people with inflation and unemployment. He said since the ruling parties failed to perform, the JI was left as the only option with the people to vote for in elections. If voted to power, he said, the JI would transform the country into Islamic welfare state.

Pakistan most affected by climate change: Administrator Karachi

KARACHI (APP): Administrator Karachi Dr. Syed Saif-ur-Rahman on Thursday said that Pakistan was among the countries most affected by climate change, seeking citizens to plant trees to combat the environmental changes, failing to do so would cause irreparable loss. He said this while addressing a function organized on environmental challenges at Indus University on Thursday. Chairman Board of Intermediate Education Prof. Saeed uddin and others also spoke on this occasion. The admin-

istrator said that it was a fact that human beings had caused the most damage to the planet. He said that extreme heat in Karachi, extreme cold, bad weather in the month of March, snowfall in Chitral and floods in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan are the effects of climate change. He urged the students to go ahead to help the government and take charge of greening and beautifying your country, those who can afford water, electricity and gas should not waste it.

NOTICE OF TENDERS

1. Application are invited for provision of following furniture works form Contractors / Firms borne on the approved list of QMG / Formation & Garrison Commander:-

| Ser | Name of work | Estimated Cost | Completion Period | Date of receipt of Applications for bidding / Tenders | Date & Time of Closing of Tender | Date and Time of Opening of Tender |
|-----|---|----------------|-------------------|---|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| a. | Provn of Hosp Fur against Dft- Gar HQ Kohat (Job No. 1746 of 2022-23) | Rs. 1209317/- | One Month | 17-03-2023 At 1:00 PM | 27-03-2023 At 11:30 AM | 27-03-2023 At 12:30 PM |

2. Contractors / Manufacturers borne on the approved list of Central, Provincial, PWD and Railway who have broad based manufacturing setup can also apply along with Rs. 1000/- earnest money in the shape of Treasury Challan (for each tender), proof of their being on list of approved contractor and detail of furniture work carried out during last two years. Interested firms are requested to fwd their applications for issuing of bidding / tender documents to Garrison Furniture Yard C/O HQ 9 Div Kohat Cantt as per above mentioned schedule. Incomplete applications / tender will not be entertained. The tender Notice is also available at PPRA website www.ppra.org.pk



KARACHI: Abdul Rasheed Solangi, Director General, Malir Development Authority meeting with officers of MDA at his office.

AIOU has become first priority for women living in remote areas: VC

KARACHI (PPI) Vice Chancellor Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood said that AIOU has become the first priority for women living in remote areas of the country, especially girls who have given up on education due to social and economic constraints. Sharing his views during a discussion with journalists, the VC AIOU further informed that out of 1.2 million registered students at this national university, more than 51% are female students. Dr. Nasir said that AIOU is playing an exemplary role in increasing the literacy rate of the country, for this purpose, the university provides free matriculation education in

Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan and merged districts (EX-FATA). He said that the university also provides free education to disabled persons, transgenders, and jail inmates, as education is the basic right of everyone. AIOU also provides scholarships and fee concessions to poor and deserving students across the country who cannot continue their education due to financial constraints, he added. Dr. Nasir Mahmood further said that the entire system of AIOU has been digitized. Books of matriculation, FA, and BA are being dispatched as per the previous procedure, while the books of all other programs are available on our website (www.aiou.edu.pk). Dr.

Nasir Mahmood, in response to a question, said that students of areas where internet facilities are not available can avail the free internet facility at the nearest regional offices of the university to upload assignments, attend workshops, and online classes. Answering another question, Dr. Nasir Mahmood said that to maintain the quality of teaching and learning, teachers from all the universities across the country are registered with us as part-time tutors. He said there is a monitoring system in the quality enhancement cell and not a single fake degree of AIOU has been reported to date, which indicates the efficiency of monitoring system of this university.



Funds are available for everything expect education: CJ observes

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench comprising of Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Qaiser Rashid and Justice Ijaz Anwar annoyed absence of Secretary and Director Elementary & Secondary Education from court in cases regarding unavailability at Government Schools, on Thursday.

During hearing Additional Advocate General Syed Sikandar Shah and District Education Officer (DEO) Male Liaquat Ali appeared before PHC in writ filed by Subhan Ullah stating that Government Model School lacking furniture while students are

compelled to learn in deteriorating building. DEO Male informed that he visited the said schools which lack furniture with deteriorating building while added that an alternative space should be provided soon to the school.

In the meantime, Chief Justice Qaiser Rashid observed that unfortunately students are compelled to obtain education within worsening building which lacks both furniture and electricity while inquired regarding responsibility in case of collapsing the structure?

Director and Secretary Education didn't leaving their offices to see what is going on in the department

and does not come to court for submitting report that everything is right, the chief justice remarked.

DEO Male Mohmand informed that Rs1 million is available with the department and two rooms should be constructed on available resources while DEO Female Khyber informed that she personally visited Government Middle School which lacks furniture but bid has been announced in this regard. However, Deputy Director Education informed that availability of facilities was delayed due to lack of funds.

Although, Chief Justice annoyed unavailability of funds and remarked that money is available for

everything expect education while ordered Secretary Finance to release funds within 15 days for provision of furniture.

On resuming of hearing Secretaries Education and Finance Mustasim B Allah and Muhammad Ayaz respectively while assured that furniture should be provided within 24 hours to the said school and added that bids had already announced for other schools across erstwhile Fata.

Secretary Finance Muhammad Ayaz that department will release funds immediately following requisition from education's department while divisional bench of PHC adjourned further hearing.

As many as 64 sport's projects to be complete soon
Kashif Ullah Khalil

PESHAWAR: Assistant Director Sports and Youth Affairs Dr Riaz Anwar briefed on under construction projects and directed arranging of activities for young generation, on Thursday.

Secretary sports and youth affairs and Mustaq Director General Sports Khalid Khan and other senior were present in the meeting. He said that youth is the positive activity the focus and negative activities Assisted Participation Director.

AD Sports and Youth Affairs claimed that work 62 projects of the youth department of sports affairs is underway 57 sports bodies at five projects. He added that Hayatabad cricket ground appreciated and expressed his determination to organize matches in the ground soon.

Sports and youth affairs department informed dr. Riyaz Anwar assistant commissioner organized the district in the year. Assistant Director for the sports and youth Dr. Riaz anwar the performance of the department of the sports and youth.

He informed the challenges faced of the department of sports and youth.



PESHAWAR: Vice Chancellor AWKUM Professor Dr. Zahoour Haq presenting a cheque worth Rs1.6 million to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan for earthquake victims of Turkiye.

KMU launches e-assessment computer based examination system

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Vice Chancellor Khyber Medical University (KMU) Peshawar, Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq officially inaugurated the e-assessment system to make the University's examination computerized.

In this regard, the opening ceremony was held at KMU-Institute of Health Sciences, Islamabad on Thursday, where Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq was the chief guest, Registrar Prof. Dr. Muhammad Saleem Gandapur, Additional Controller of Examinations Dr. Syed Hafeez Ahmed, Dean allied Health Sciences Prof. Dr. Haider Darain, Director IHS Islamabad Sheikh Muhammad Atif, other officers of the Examination Department, faculty and

students were also present on the occasion. It is worth mentioning that KMU is the first University in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa which has adopted the modern digital system of e-assessment to make examinations of various fields and levels easy, transparent and cost-effective. Under this system, all the undergraduate and post-graduate examinations organized by the university will be gradually converted into e-assessment (computer-based examinations).

Meanwhile, speaking on the occasion, Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq said that today was a very happy day for us because today we had successfully tested e-assessment which would not only ensure transparency in exams but would also save time and resources besides

ensuring the release of results within 48 hours. He said that we have set a target to convert all MBBS, BDS, nursing and allied health sciences traditional method exams to modern e-assessment systems within the next six months.

The VC said that this system had already been approved by the academic council of the University, therefore we had decided to convert all paper-based undergraduate examinations into e-assessment of computer-based examinations for which development of the software and hardware was in progress on a daily basis and the day was not far when all KMU exams will be transferred from paper to computer in the near future.

CM's aide on health visits IKD

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Advisor for Health Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Prof. Dr. Abid Jameel visited the Institute of Kidney Disease Hayatabad Medical Complex (IKD-HMC) Peshawar here on Thursday. The caretaker advisor reviewed the facilities and other matters provided to the patients in IKD.

The Caretaker Advisor inaugurate the waiting room constructed for dialysis patients and attendants and planted sapling under the plantation drive at the hospital premises.

Earlier, in the ceremony organized on the occasion of World Kidney Day, the caretaker health advisor was welcomed by the Director IKD-HMC Prof. Dr. Mazhar Khan. On this occasion other staff members were also present.

Director IKD-HMC made the Health Advisor visit the various departments of the institute and briefed him about the facilities available to the patients. The 28-bed dialysis unit of IKD is providing the best facilities to the patients on a daily basis.



PESHAWAR: Lady Health Workers chanting slogans during a protesting in favour of their rights. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza

City Police bust 3 deadly gangs of robbers, snatchers

PESHAWAR (APP): Faqirabad Division Police of the capital city busted three deadly gangs of robbers, snatchers and dacoits, said a press release issued here on Thursday.

On the directives of the SP Faqirabad Division, Dr Mohammad Omar and under the supervision of ASP Faqirabad, Syed Talal Ahmad Shah, DSP Gulabahaar Shakeel Khan, the Station House Officers (SHOs) of Police Station Gulbahar, Rafiq Khan and Paharipura, Bilal Hussain busted a deadly gang of robbers and arrested 12 members of the gang wanted to police in connections with various cases of snatching at gun points.

The arrested also include some nationals of the

neighbouring country Afghanistan while others were the residents of Faqirabad, Sheikhabad, Gulabahaar, Chamkani and Landi Kot of district Khyber.

Police have recovered a total of 60 precious mobile phone sets and an amount of Rs.0.5 million in cash while six pistols and 10 motorcycles used by the gangs for criminal activities have also been recovered from the accused.

The gang members also include an expert of tampering with engine and chassis numbers of the motorcycles.

Police have started efforts to search out the actual owners of the stolen motorcycles and mobile phones to hand them over to them.

626 suspects arrested; huge caches of arms recovered

District police during various operations and crackdowns, arrested 626 suspects and recovered a huge cache of arms during the last month.

According to the performance report for the month of February issued here on Thursday, the police recovered 55 Kalashnikov rifles, 622 pistols, 12 shotguns, 56 other rifles, and around 19,000 cartridges of different bores from the custody of the accused arrested.

In a statement issued here by Capital City Police Peshawar, the accused arrested included proclaimed offenders and illegal Afghan nationals.

Prosecution department awards nine prosecutors

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Directorate of Prosecution Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has awarded nine Public Prosecutors to recognize their performance during 2022, on Thursday.

Director General Prosecution Dildar Muhammad has distributed certificates and shields among most functional prosecutors across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The award winning Public Prosecutors including of Arif Bilal Senior Public Prosecutor, Uzma Nasir Deputy Prosecutor, Fozia Durrani Assistant Public Prosecutor, Fazal-e-Norani, Huma Murad, Muhammad Ayaz, Muhammad Ullah and Safi Ullah Wazir Senior Public Prosecutor.

Robber killed in encounter with police

PESHAWAR (APP): University Town Police gunned down a robber in encounter while his accomplice managed to escape on Thursday morning.

According to police, a police mobile team was patrolling in a locality on Canal Road when two robbers riding on a motorcycle opened fire on them and police also retaliated in self-defense.

During the exchange of fire one of the riding robbers was shot dead while the second managed to escape. Police have recovered a pistol and empty shells of cartridges and important evidence from the spot.

On receiving the information of the incident, police officers along with a heavy contingent of police rushed to the spot and further tightened checking at the checkpoint and initiated a large-scale search operation in various localities.

According to police, there were no identity related documents with the dead robber and on search only a mobile phone has been recovered from his body.

28 shopkeepers arrested

PESHAWAR (APP): 28 shopkeepers were arrested and 13 others were issued warning during a crackdown against profiteers in Hayatabad Township on Thursday.

Shah Fahad, a team of the district administration conducted raids on shopkeepers in various markets of the township and inspected 72 shops.

Out of the total inspected shops 28 shopkeepers were arrested for profiteering, lack of official price list, selling of under-weight roti and unhygienic conditions while 13 others were issued warnings for bringing improvement in their environment. The arrested shopkeepers include fruit & vegetable sellers, bakers (nanbais), milkmen, grocers and others.

Director PAJCCI calls on Additional IGP

PESHAWAR (APP): Leading businessman from KP and Director Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI), Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi Thursday called on Additional IGP Operations

KP, Muhammad Ali Babakhel at his office.

During the meeting, the Police high up and businessman held informal discussion on overall economic conditions in the province besides law and order situation, says a press statement issued here.

Zia Sarhadi apprised Muhammad Ali Babakhel about pace of trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan and needed measures for bringing improvement in it.

He also appreciated services of Police along with other security forces in smooth and secure passage of containers containing goods for export to Afghanistan.

Zia said due to prevalence of peace and tranquility, the commercial activi-

ties can flourish and can bringing prosperity in the region by offering more livelihood opportunities.

On this occasion, Additional IGP KP, Muhammad Ali Babakhel held out assurance of full cooperation to business community of the province.

He said ensuring lasting peace for people from all segments of society is responsibility of the Police for which our force is performing duty with full dedication and even rendering sacrifices of their lives.

Zia said the sacrifices rendered by our security forces including Police are held in high esteem by countrymen and will be written in golden words in the annals of history.

Anti-Corruption Court rejects BBA to six accused

PESHAWAR (APP): Special Anti-Corruption Court, Judge Rajab Ali Shah on Thursday rejected the bail before arrest (BBA) appeals in 20 FIRs registered by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) against six alleged accused. FIA has registered 20 FIRs against six accused for irregularities and misuse of power in issuance of passports. The accused include Assistant Director (AD) Passport (Peshawar), Liaquat Ali, Superintendent Facial Desk Passport Headquarters Islamabad and four Data Entry Operators (DEOs) Faisal Shabir, Imdad Raza Shah, Rohit and Naseem Akhtar.

WSSP starts cleaning of Hazar Khuwani Canal

PESHAWAR (APP): Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar (WSSP) has started cleaning of Hazar Khuwani Canal branch at Yakatoot following orders of Peshawar High Court, said a press release issued here Thursday. Waste bins have also been installed at various locations from Bairy Bagh to Cemetery to prevent littering and waste dumping in the canal. It is worth mentioning that irrigation department is responsible for cleaning of but WSSP management has initiated de-silting in accordance with court orders to clean canal and launch an awareness campaign. "We are committed to fulfill our responsibilities regarding cleanliness and sanitation of the city. The Yakatoot canal cleaning campaign and awareness drive proves commitment of WSSP to keep environment clean" said Chief Executive Officer WSSP Dr. Hassan Nasir said while commenting on canal cleaning campaign. He said that an awareness campaign is also underway to spread information among residents and shopkeepers, schools and imams about benefits of cleanliness and to curb littering and waste dumping in the canal.

ties can flourish and can bringing prosperity in the region by offering more livelihood opportunities.

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PESHAWAR: Vendor selling bananas in fruit market.

YDA deplors Rs444m alleged misappropriation of funds under SIC

PESHAWAR (APP): The Young Doctors Association (YDA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has deplored the alleged misappropriation of Rs 444 million funds of Sehat Insaf Card (SIC) in the previous PTI tenure.

In an official statement issued on Thursday, the YDA KP said that the scrutiny of accounts of Lady Reading Hospital for the year 2021-22 into SIC, had revealed that a total of

Rs444,304,775 were received from State Life Insurance Corporation against claims of Rs 585,025,262 under the heads of medicines, lab tests but the received amount was not deposited in the government treasury.

The YDA said that the association had been pointing out the alleged corrupt practices of the former PTI health minister and added its members were victimised by the previous PTI

government. It alleged that due to the wrong policies of former health and finance minister Taimur Salim Jhagra, the province had defaulted and the salaries of employees were being delayed in his tenure. The YDA said that keeping in view the sensitivity of the issue that it had decided to finalise the future course of action in its emergency meeting of the General Council.



PESHAWAR: Members of All Employees Coordination Council holding protest in front of Provincial Assembly building. — F.P. photo

Imran's self centred politics spoiled democracy

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) provincial information secretary Amjad Khan Afridi on Thursday questioned that how come Imran Khan and his party demands new elections in the country after showing disrespect to the National and Provincial Assemblies and mandate of the people.

In a statement issued here, he said that the eagerness to return to the NA after tendering resignation and not attending the Parliament proceedings despite contesting elections on 9 NA seats in the by-poll shows that Imran Khan is a self-centred person who has spoiled the democratic system for his own satisfaction.

"Imran Khan dissolved the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies for his own satisfaction, ego and arrogance," he remarked.

Amjad said this person is not reliable and fit for any field of life because he feels satisfaction in creating and spreading chaos in society, adding that such a person can never support positive thinking and progress.

He noted that Imran tried to blackmail the state institutions, especially the judiciary to get decisions of his own will and provoked people for violent protests to achieve his ulterior motives. He said that those who were trying to obstruct the development process in the country as part of a for-

eign conspiracy would have to face the consequences.

PPP KP condemns attack on Daud Burki residence: PPP KP chapter has condemned firing at the residence of party activist Daud Burki Advocate and demanded immediate arrest of the culprits involved in the incident.

The acting PPP KP Chief and Minister of State, Mohammad Ali Shah Bacha has condemned the incident in strong words.

He also phoned Daud Burki Advocate and inquired about his health and also assured him and attributed the incident to an attack on Pakistan Peoples' Party and demanded immediate arrest of the persons behind it.



In brief

SRSP organizes workshop F.P. Report

MARDAN: A three-day training workshop was organized for the members of District Reconciliation Council Mardan organized by United Nations Development Program SRSP in which DRC Mardan Chairman Ehsanullah Bacha, Haji Alamzeb Khan, UNDP ADR Officer Salmi Bibi, Training Coordinator Asif Khan, DSP Adnan Azam Khan and others participated. Workshop participants were trained on mediation, negotiation, communication, human rights, protection of constitution and laws, among others. At the end of the workshop, certificates were also distributed among the participants. On this occasion, the members of DRC Mardan were felicitated for handling record cases. Addressing the participants, DSP Adnan Azam Khan said that with the establishment of DRC Mardan, the burden of different types of cases has been reduced not only on the police stations. Rather, the cases of rich and poor are being solved with ease and impartiality. DRC Mardan Chairman Ehsanullah Bacha said that his council received 6,910 applications in the last seven years in which 6 thousand 761 disputes have been resolved. The above settled cases included recovery of over Rs 25 crore, property and other domestic disputes while only 79 cases are currently under hearing and 70 cases have been sent to court.

Education expo ended in Swat F.P. Report

MINGORA: Two-day education expo concluded in University of Swat in which numerous universities from all over Pakistan participated. Commander Peshawar Corps, Lieutenant General Hassan Azhar Hayat graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. Corps Commander interacted with the students, visited stalls and also distributed prizes among students.

Rescue 1122 deals 353 emergencies F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Rescue 1122 has claimed to tackle 367 different kinds of emergencies across the district Khyber in the month of February, 2023. In a report shared by the emergency officer of the Rescue department of Khyber, Syed Shoab Mansoor said that a total of 353 incidents, comprised, 152 were of medical emergencies, 40 of traffic accidents, 10 were fire eruption happens, 12 of firing and conflict happens, 20 incidents of recovery, 04 drowning, 01 explosion. The monthly report revealed that a total of 15513 calls had been received out of which 15105 were unnecessary and 169 were fake ones. It further stated that 114 patients had been provided first medical aid on the spot and referred to various hospitals in or outside the district for further medical assistance. The district emergency officer urged the local people to avoid fake phone calls to the Rescue center as it affected the efficiency of the rescue workers to rapidly respond to a genuine incident somewhere in the district. He also called upon the motorists to assist them by giving way to the Rescue ambulances and vehicles to deliver timely relief and treatment to the affected persons. According to the locals, the lonely department has been engaged serving the tribesmen since the first day of its establishment in the district.



QUETTA: Students participating in a rally in connection with World Kidney Day.

Edu Boards urged to discourage cheating

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The advisor to the caretaker chief minister for elementary and secondary education Rehmat Salam Khattak has said that less intelligent students often get more marks than intelligent ones by cheating in examinations. He was addressing an award function at the board of intermediate and secondary education (BISE) Malakand as chief guest here on Thursday. The function was also addressed by the board's chairman Prof Zamin Gul. The schools' heads, teachers, students and board officials attended the function.

Khattak asked parents to keep away their children from cheating in examinations as they always failed in competitive examinations in future. He asked the educational boards'

heads to take practical and applicable measures to curb the menace of cheating in examinations. The CM advisor said the educational boards, teachers and parents all should play their active role to discourage cheating and rote system in examination for a bright future of the new generation. He said the government had prioritized the sector of education and spent a huge amount on improvement of education at government schools and colleges.

The BISE Malakand chairman Prof Zamin Gul highlighted the board performance and issues faced by it. The top three position holder students of the last year secondary school certificate (SSC) and higher secondary school certificate (HSSC) examinations were awarded with gold browns and silver medals

on the occasion. Women's Day: The Development and Empowerment Women Association (DEWA), a non-governmental organization working for women's rights in Lower Dir arranged different events to mark the International Women Day here the other day.

A session on women's rights and empowerment, a panel discussion on women's leadership and an art exhibition featuring the work of women artists were arranged. The DEWA executive director while speaking on the occasion highlighted the importance of empowering women and promoting gender equality. He said that his organization was struggling to empower women through education, training and economic support.

Father shot kills daughter over verbal abuse

F.P. Report

MARDAN: A father shot and killed his 16-year-old daughter due to verbal abuse in the premises of Rustam station, on Thursday.

According to details, wife of Diyar Khan Residents of Sherin Khan Chowk Rustam, filed a report with the Rustam Police Station and said that today we were in our house. As usual, I was busy in the kitchen at home. My husband Diyar Khan, son of Misal Khan and my daughter were both registering the work account of the tractor.

That during this time, the daughter made a mistake, on which the father, who is a blood pressure patient, got angry and scolded her. To which the daughter responded and fired at him with the pistol lying in the room. Being hit by that, she fell right on the spot. The reason is said to be verbal repetition.

25 thousand trout seedlings released in Shangla

F.P. Report

SHANGLA: As many as 25 thousand trout fish seedlings released in Leolonai riverine by Fisheries department to increase fish framing in area, on Thursday.

Assistant Director Fisheries Muhammad Israel said that Shangla is suitable for trout framing due to its climate and natural topography. He added that seedlings were released to increase trout fishes in the natural reservoirs which will be helpful to create employment opportunities and to boost tourism in the area. AD Fisheries claimed that stern actions should be taken against illegal hunting and mass capturing of fishes leading extinction of the species. He added that local framers should be appreciated to invest in fish framings and technical support will be also provide at their doorsteps.

WSSCK opens sewerage treatment plant

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Water and Sanitation Services Company Kohat (WSSCK) has inaugurated a newly-built sewerage treatment plant in Kohat Development Authority under Asian Development Bank-funded KP Citizens Improvement Project.

The construction of a new Sewerage Treatment Plant was completed at the total estimated cost of Rs6billion within a period of three years. According to details, the construction of the new sewerage treatment project in Kohat was formally inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner Kohat Dr Azmat Wazir during a ceremony held here on Thursday. Additional Deputy Commissioner Kohat Bashir Ahmad, WSSCK Chief Executive Officer Arif Rauf, Chief Engineer Mian Mohsin Gul, Deputy General Manager Tahir Hafif, responsible of the WSSCK Operations, JHKGW Constructor, Creative Consultant and KPICP staff were present during the inaugural ceremony.

UN appreciated BISP for poverty alleviation: Kundi

Saqib Mushtaq

MULTAN: Minister of State for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Faisal Karim Kundi said that the government has allocated more funds for Benazir Kafalat program. Addressing the press conference, he added that so far 8 lakh 72 thousand surveys have been completed in Benazir Dynamic Registry Centers.

He said that currently more than 8.9 million women are benefiting from the Benazir Kafalat programme. Taking into account the economic conditions of the people, the Government of Pakistan and Chairman Pakistan People's Party / Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari have increased the quarterly installment of BISP by 25%. Women receive their full amount and also get a receipt. He said that the entire world has faith in the Benazir Income Support Program, that's why its budget has been increased by 40 billion despite the difficult economic conditions.

Talking about the dynamic registry center, he said that four dynamic reg-



istry centers have been established in Multan district where 13 counters are working.

In these offices women can get their new survey done and register their economic change. While at present more than 2 lakh 38 thousand families are being given scholarships under the Benazir Income Support Program in Multan district. He added that BISP has been recognized by the United Nations and other leading international organizations.

The Minister of State praised the performance of the staff of Benazir Income Support Program and directed them to serve the

people as much as possible. Minister of State stated that government will continue economic assistance to thousands of families by providing income support. He said the number of beneficiary families would be increased to nine million under the Benazir Kafalat Programme till June.

BISP is internationally acclaimed programme and had been proved as the most successful social protection intervention for the most vulnerable communities of the country. He said the first ever dynamic survey had been launched to include more deserving beneficiaries and exclude the non-deserving ones.

Pakhtunkhwa Radio hold assignment

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Pakhtunkhwa Radio Kohat organized a special program on the eve of International Women's Day, which was participated by the Former Member of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Musarrat Shafi Advocate as a special guest.

Speaking on the occasion, Musarrat Shafi said that they were not believe on unrestrained freedom of women under the guise of women's rights rather talk about their legitimate rights as per the teachings of Islam. She said that the society was a combination of men and women, therefore the role of women could not be neglected any way. So there was a dire need to give equal opportunities to women in all spheres of life, she added.

Former MPA said, as they were living in an Islamic society, therefore they would strictly adhere to the Islamic values and



raise voice for the legitimate rights of women at every appropriate forum. She while refuting the concept of women's weakness said that they were not weak at all but they could play their role strongly at every level if they were given proper opportunities. She said that Islam is a universal religion which had given rights to the women 14 hundred years ago which the so-called forces had not yet given even today.

So, it is the need of the hour to educate women, especially the rural women about their rights defined in Islam, she further added.

Musarrat was of the view that the role of radio and social media including Ulema was of great importance in easily educating the women of their legitimate rights at home.

She appreciated the efforts of Pakhtunkhwa Radio Kohat for arranging special broadcast on the eve of International Women's Day. She urged the mothers to take courage and educate their children especially their girls. She also emphasized to skill their girls so that they could be useful in practical life and instead of depending on men be their arm and supporter in earnings.

Need for ensuring women's rights stressed

Rafiullah Mandokhail

QUETTA: Civil society and non-governmental organizations and university, colleges organized events to mark the International Women's Day across Balochistan. The day has been observed to honor women from every walk of life and to show gratitude to them for their tireless efforts and meaningful contributions.

Action for Welfare and Awakening in Rural Environment (AWARE-ORG) commemorated the International Women's Day by appreciating and acknowledging the efforts of women for performing tremendously and heroically in their respective fields. Director AWARE

Muhammad Abid Sherani highlighted the importance of girls' education that empowers women both socially and economically which can further strengthen their role in decision making in the society. He also highlighted reasons behind society's failure to empower women, who constitute half percent of total population.

"The true liberation of women could come from their socio-economic and gender emancipation initiatives. Only an annual celebration was not enough to ensure women's importance in society. The women are still facing injustice in society," he lamented. He said that the women's role has always remained important and

positive in the development of society. The United Nations had recognized International Women's Day early in the 70s, but the occasion has its roots in labour movements of the early 20th century.

AWARE Balochistan has a key role in imparting education but also creating skill opportunities in various trades to the women of the poverty-hit province. So far, hundreds of women and girls in the remote districts of the province have been supported in providing employment by making them skilled women. Dozens more are still enrolled in computer, English language, dress-making and beautician courses offered by the organization, he added.

Chitral people demand completion of roads

F.P. Report

CHITRAL: The civil society, notable and public representatives on Thursday deplored suspension of construction work on the roads from Lowari Tunnel to Chitral, Chitral to Shandur, Ayun, Bomburit by the National Highway Authority (NHA) from last five months.

In a meeting held here with Deputy Commissioner Lower Chitral Muhammad Ali Khan here, they said that the work on the roads were started a year ago but was left uncompleted and from the last five months there was no progress. They presented a unanimous resolution to the DC and demanded that the work on these roads should be started immediately and the

affected owners of the lands of the three projects should be compensated without any delay.

It was demanded through the resolution that the NHA should work on these roads as per the SOPs and follow the rules to prevent dust and remove debris from the roads for the facilitation of the commuters as well as the local population. They further demanded initiation of construction of work on Darosh, Arundu, Sheshikoh roads and widening of Booni, Ower, Milkho, Trich road and construction of road leading to Chitral University besides paving of and these roads for a safe travel.

The resolution deplored inordinate delay in con-

struction of Booni to Buzund, Torkho road, adding that the work on 32 km long road was in progress from last 14-year until now 50 per cent work could not be completed. They urged the Federal government to pursue approval of PC-1 of Chitral to Garm Chashma and Durra Pass road from ECNEC.

The resolution was presented by Maulvi Israruddin Al-Hilal, Chairman Chitral Development Moment (CDM) Waqas Ahmed Advocate, Inayatullah Aseer, Safdar Ali Kash, Sheikh Abdullah, Amir Muhammad and others. The DC while addressing the people assured to take up the issue with appropriate forum.



Women deal with added burdens of Turkey's quake disaster

ISTANBUL (AFP): The shelves of the makeshift clinic -- little more than an orange storage container -- offer everything women are too shy to ask for on the streets of Turkey's quake zone. From underwear to period and contraception products, doctor Meltem Gunbegi reconnects women with the basics they feel uncomfortable discussing in the crowds of mass aid distribution centres.

She also offers a receptive ear, helping the women of southern Turkey's destroyed city of Antakya to start processing the grief and death they have been subjected to in the past month. The toll from the 7.8-magnitude earthquake now stands at more than 46,000 in Turkey and at nearly 6,000 in Syria, making it one of the world's 10 deadliest of the past 100 years.

A top United Nations official said that the damage alone amounted to more than \$100 billion, with extra money needed for recovery costs. "Many are shy when it comes to asking for basics, such as bras, wax bands and tweezers, so they come and visit our container," said the 33-year-old doctor. More women are having genital issues because of poor hygiene conditions in the tent cities set up across the 11 quake-hit provinces, Gunbegi said.

But she also sees women who are clearly still in shock and too traumatised to start thinking about their own bodies -- even when they are pregnant. "They experienced a lot of death, a lot of destruction," said the doctor. "They really don't seem to think about the baby. They are in a state of trauma." Semire Duman, 51, an earthquake survivor who has been living in a tent for a month, said women have a lot of needs.

"We have no shower, no toilet, no water, nothing," she told AFP, and then almost whispering: "We don't have underwear." Gazele Sumer, 57, complained of lack of privacy in tents. "We are six people in one tent," she said. "We sit here, we eat



there, we sleep here," she added. Selver Buyukkelles, an earthquake survivor who works with the Mor (Purple) Solidarity, said women bore the brunt of daily burdens -- such as doing chores and taking care of family -- even before the February 6 quake. Now, they are trying to do the same while dealing with personal pain and an acute sense of insecurity that comes with life out on the streets.

"Women queue to get food at distribution centres. They cook, they take care of the children and the elderly. They do the dishes. They do the laundry," the 28-year-old said. "Women feel responsible for their family's situation. They fear a new earthquake and the communal life in tents makes them insecure," she said. At this stage, activists and doctors interviewed by AFP have not observed more cases of domestic violence or abuse, despite Turkey's poor record on the issue. Fidan Ataselim, secretary general of the We Will Stop Femicide Platform, has called for "safe shelters" and "prevention centres" to be set up for women in damaged regions.

We Will Stop Femicide publicises the murder and abuse of women in

the mostly Muslim but officially secular state. In 2022, at least 327 women were killed and 793 injured, according to data compiled by the platform. Back at Antakya's Dostluk (Friendship) park, not far from Gunbegi's makeshift clinic, volunteers work in shifts making sure that some 200 women sheltering in dozens of tents are safe. Others are keeping vigil outside toilets and shower cabins. "Safe zone for women and LGBT+ here," proclaim posters in Turkish and Arabic.

The Arabic is a nod to the millions of refugees and migrants who have been living across stretches of southern Turkey since the start of the civil war in neighbouring Syria 12 years ago. "We have a security system for both women and LGBT+, who are more vulnerable in such disasters," said Aslihan Keles, 23, one of the volunteers in the park. Turkish women often join marches on March 8 -- the official International Women's Day -- demanding better lives and protection against domestic violence. But this year, things are different in the quake zone, Keles said. "Here, there is an emergency," she said. "This time, we are in field -- but for a very good cause."

Two dead in Chile airport attempt

SANTIAGO (Agencies): An attempted multimillion-dollar airport heist in Chile has resulted in a shootout that left a would-be robber and an airport security official dead. The botched endeavour took place at the Arturo Merino Benitez International Airport in the capital of Santiago. Between 10 and 12 robbers attacked as airport workers were moving \$32.5m in cash off of a plane.

"Valuable cargo arrived on a LATAM plane from Miami which was to be taken by the Brinks [security] company, at which point the subjects burst into the area and were repelled by security officials," said Eduardo Baeza, a prosecutor tasked with leading the investigation. Organised crime has been a concern in Chile in recent years, and the airport has been targeted in the past. In 2017, an armed group stole about \$18m, and three years later a similar heist took \$15m from an armoured truck.

Deputy Interior Minister Manuel Monsalve told reporters that security officials entered into a shootout with the robbers, foiling a "highly organised, highly armed and probably very well-planned robbery". Authorities said that one of the assailants and an airport security official were killed. Monsalve told reporters that the robbers tied up a security guard and entered the airport in three vehicles. The AFP news agency reported that the robbers broke through a gate and headed to the cargo area, where they hoped to intercept the \$32.5m before it was moved locally. After being confronted by security officials, the armed men reportedly fled, setting two of their vehicles on fire on a nearby highway. A search for the perpetrators is ongoing.

Seven dead in Syria drone strike

DAMASCUS (AFP): Seven people including several civilians were killed when a drone strike targeted a weapons factory belonging to Iran-backed factions in government-held eastern Syria, a war monitor said. It was not immediately clear who was behind the strike in Deir Ezzor province, where Iran-backed factions hold sway and where a US-led coalition and Israel have previously carried out attacks.

"Seven people were killed and 15 wounded in a drone strike targeting a weapons factory and a truck loaded with weapons," both belonging to Iran-backed groups, said Rami Abdel Rahman, who heads the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. Three pro-Iran fighters from Afghanistan, three Syrian civilians and one unidentified Syrian were killed, Abdel Rahman told AFP, adding that the building targeted was only recently converted into an arms factory.

Israel has carried out repeated air and missile strikes against government forces and their Iran-backed allies in Syria since the civil war broke out in 2011. It rarely comments on individual military operations. A US-led coalition fighting the remnants of the Islamic State jihadist group in Iraq and Syria has also carried out strikes against pro-Iran fighters in Syria in the past. Attack targeted a part of Deir Ezzor that is home to residences of top Iranian commanders and senior officers of Lebanon's Hezbollah movement as well as an Iranian hospital for cholera patients, Abdel Rahman said.

Pro-Iran factions aligned with the Syrian government, including Iraqi groups and Hezbollah, are heavily deployed south and west of the Euphrates River which bisects Deir Ezzor province. Syrian state media said a landmine planted by Islamic State group "terrorists" exploded in the same neighbourhood, killing three and wounding seven. "Three citizens were killed and seven others injured" in the explosion, state news agency SANA reported. It published photographs of the aftermath of the blast that showed extensive damage to a building and a truck.

Syria child quake victims, flown to UAE, unaware of heartbreak to come

DUBAI (AFP): Cradling a pink stuffed animal as she sleeps in a United Arab Emirates hospital, a nine-year-old Syrian earthquake survivor is recovering from the wounds that nearly claimed her life, believing her mother is still alive. Sham Sheikh Mohammed, who suffered severe crush injuries in a 40-hour ordeal under the rubble, has not yet been told that both her mother and sister died in the February 6 earthquake that killed more than 50,000 people in Syria and Turkey. "I tell her that her mother is in critical care and that her condition is difficult," said her father, Mohammad, who has barely slept since Sham and his 15-year-old son, Omar, were taken from Syria's rebel-held northwest to Turkey and then flown to Abu Dhabi for emergency medical treatment.

Sham's story captivated Syrians and others around the world after a viral video showed her humming a tune with the White Helmets rescue group that worked for six hours to free her. She and her brother are among 12 Syrian quake survivors who were flown by the UAE for specialist care for their crush injuries in Abu Dhabi. Doctors at the Burjeel Medical City hospital say they have "controlled" life-threatening infections in her lower limbs, without commenting on whether they were forced to amputate. "Sham's condition is stable," said her father, also declining to give further details. Sham's survival encapsulated the tragedy, hope and heartbreak of the 7.8-magnitude quake that levelled buildings across Turkey and parts of Syria last month.

After her rescue in the town of Armanaz, in Idlib province, captured global attention, the UAE dispatched a medical aircraft to fly her and Omar to Abu Dhabi from Istanbul. "Both children are now recovering well," their doctor in Abu Dhabi, Michael Uglow, said in a statement last week. But Sham is not the only young survivor who will soon face a harrowing revelation. In a nearby hospital, Israa al-Abdullah receives routine updates on her medical condition but no news on the fate of her family.

Like Sham, the 17-year-old from the

Syrian government stronghold of Jableh was rescued after spending hours trapped in rubble. She has injuries to her skull, pelvis and shoulder and nerve damage in her eyes, said her brother Mohammad, a Syrian army soldier who was in Damascus when the quake hit. What Israa doesn't know is that her parents and four other siblings all died in the earthquake, along with a brother's wife and daughter. Israa, her 12-year-old sister and one nephew were the only survivors.

"We told her that everyone is alive," said Mohammad, closing the door of Israa's hospital room so she couldn't overhear. Israa asks most about her mother, her sister Ghufra as well as her young niece Jana -- all of whom were killed, Mohammad said. "I tell her I don't have phone credit in the UAE" when she asks to speak to them, he told AFP at the Sheikh Shakhbout Medical City hospital. Hooked to monitors and an intravenous drip, Israa pants heavily but can barely speak. The nerve damage has left her cross-eyed and suffering from impaired vision.

Doctors say she will likely make a full recovery, according to Mohammad. But until she improves, the truth about her family will remain a secret. "I buried my family members one after the other," Mohammad said. "I can't tell (Israa) anything until God cures her and she can get up on her own two feet." In a nearby room, Ali Yussef Remmo, a displaced Syrian from the countryside of Latakia province, is receiving treatment for injuries in his lower limbs. The father of three has regained partial leg mobility and is confident that he will walk again. But he is plagued by the loss of his youngest son and his wife, who was two months pregnant when their building collapsed.

The hardest part of being in an Emirati hospital, he said, is receiving platefuls of food, knowing he couldn't afford dinner for his family the day the tremor took their lives. "My son died hungry," he said, tears swelling in his eyes. "When I come to eat chicken, or meat, or an apple or a biscuit, I think that of my 10-year-old was deprived of all of these things."

NATO cautious amid ongoing blasts probe

BRUSSELS (Agencies): NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg has called for caution following media reports that a pro-Ukrainian group may be responsible for blowing up the Nord Stream pipelines supplying Russian energy to Europe. While not pointing to any official Ukrainian involvement, a New York Times report published said intelligence reviewed by United States officials found a pro-Kyiv group may be behind the attacks in September, which became a flashpoint between the West and Russia after last year's Russian invasion of Ukraine.

"There are ongoing national investigations and I think it's right to wait until those are finalised before we say anything more about who was behind it," Stoltenberg said. The explosions on the pipelines connecting Russia and Germany took place on September 26 in the exclusive economic zone of Sweden and Denmark. Both countries have concluded the blasts were deliberate but have not said who might be responsible.

Russia, which has previ-

ously blamed the West, seized on the news to demand a transparent investigation in which it also wants to participate. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov suggested the media reports were a coordinated bid to divert attention and questioned how US officials could assume anything about the attacks without an investigation. Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov said the media reports were a "little bit strange" and had "nothing to do" with the Ukrainian government.

Reznikov said he was not worried about the prospect of the media reports weakening support for Ukraine. "Germany warned against 'jumping to conclusions'," "We have to make a clear distinction whether it was a Ukrainian group, whether it may have happened at Ukrainian orders, or a pro-Ukrainian group [acting] without knowledge of the government," German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said. Pistorius said on the sidelines of a summit in Stockholm that the likelihood was "equally high" that it could have been a

"false flag operation staged to blame Ukraine".

Meanwhile, Germany's federal prosecutor confirmed that investigators had raided a ship in January that may have been used to transport the explosives used to blow up the pipelines, but said there was no reliable information yet on motives, perpetrators, or whether the attack was state-sponsored. European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell told reporters that there was "no suspicion against employees of the German company that rented out the ship". "As long as investigations into Nord Stream blasts are ongoing, we can not draw conclusions," Borrell said.

Germany's ARD broadcaster and Zeit newspaper said that the operation to place explosives on the seabed was carried out by six people, five men and one woman, who used forged passports. They transported explosives on a yacht rented from a German charter company by a Poland-based firm owned by Ukrainian citizens, according to the report and prosecutors.

No to the Russian law: Georgians protest bill

TBLISI (Agencies): Police in the Georgian capital Tbilisi have fired water cannons and tear gas to disperse crowds protesting against a proposed "foreign agents" law that is reminiscent of a Russian measure used to silence critics. Hundreds of police converged on streets around Georgia's parliament building in a bid to break up the protests. Thousands gathered there for a second day, holding Georgian and European Union flags and chanting "no to the Russian law".

Tear gas billowed down Tbilisi's central Rustaveli Avenue, where parliament is located, forcing at least some of the demonstrators to move away. The protesters are demanding authorities drop the bill on "transparency of foreign funding", which requires any organisations receiving more than 20 percent of their funding from overseas to register as "foreign agents" or face substantial fines. The ruling Georgian Dream party says it is modelled on legislation in the United States that dates from the 1930s. Critics, including President Salome Zourabichvili, say it is similar to a law Russia enacted in

2012 that has been used to shut down or discredit organisations critical of the government and could harm Georgia's chances of EU membership. Georgia applied for EU membership together with Ukraine and Moldova days after Russia invaded Ukraine in February last year. In June, EU leaders granted formal candidate status to Kyiv and Chisinau but told Tbilisi it had to implement several reforms before it could be considered. Thousands of people have been massing for days in Tbilisi to protest against the law and clashes broke out after legislators approved the measure in its first reading. Police used tear gas and water cannon against the demonstrators and said more than 70 people had been detained. Some 50 police officers were also wounded, they said. The protests restarted with a march down Rustaveli Avenue to mark International Women's Day, which is a public holiday.

"We cannot let our country become pro-Russian or a Russian state, or undemocratic," said Vakhtang Berikashvili, a 33-year-old software engineer. Another

protester, Elene Ksovreli, 16, said the Georgian people "will not allow them to make Russia define our future". "We, young people, are here to protect our everything," she told the AFP news agency. Aza Akhvediani, 72, called the Georgian government "stupid". "I know what's happening in Moscow. They stop every passerby and do whatever they please to them. I think the Georgian government wants the same," she said. Politicians in the EU have also expressed concern.

The draft law "goes directly against the Georgian authorities' declared ambition to receive candidate status for EU membership", said a statement from EU members Maria Kaljurand and Sven Mikser. "The new law's purpose, under the guise of promoting transparency, is to stigmatize the work of civil society organizations and media," the statement added. In response to the situation, the US urged the Georgian government to show "restraint" and allow peaceful protests, while Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called for "democratic success" in "friendly Georgia".

Nigeria postpones local state election after court ruling

NAIROBI (AFP): Nigeria's electoral agency said it had postponed a weekend governorship election by one week following a court decision over machines used in voting tallies.

The so-called BVAS machines are at the centre of a legal dispute over last month's contested presidential election which results show Nigeria's ruling APC party candidate won, but the opposition claims was marred by massive tampering. With President Muhammadu Buhari stepping down in May after two terms, many Nigerians hoped a clean, transparent vote would usher in a leader capable of tackling growing insecurity and deepening poverty in Africa's most populous nation.

The main opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and Labour Party say delays in voting in the February 25 presidential ballot and problems in uploading results through the BVAS need to be investigated and are challenging the results of the election. A court earlier had rejected an opposition demand to halt the reconfiguring of BVAS

so their teams could check for forensic evidence of ballot rigging. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) said in a statement the court process had delayed its preparations for the vote for state governors.

"While the ruling of the tribunal makes it possible for the commission to commence the preparation of the BVAS for the governorship and state assembly elections, it has come far too late for the reconfiguration," INEC said. "We thank Nigerians and friends of Nigeria for their understanding as we continue to deal with these difficult issues." Election delays are not unheard of in Nigeria. In 2019, INEC delayed the presidential election by one week just hours before polling stations opened citing logistical problems.

INEC said the new governorship vote would take place, March 18. Ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) candidate Bola Tinubu, a former Lagos governor, won 8.8 million votes in the race to succeed Buhari, with PDP's Atiku Abubakar at 6.9 million and surprise third chal-

lenger Labour Party's Peter Obi at 6.1 million. In a bid to improve transparency, INEC introduced BVAS for the first time at the national level as well as its IReV, an online database for uploading results from local polling stations. But some voters and opposition parties said huge delays in voting and failures in the system when uploading tallies allowed for ballot manipulation and disparities from what was counted locally.

Legal ruling was the first volley in what is expected to be a long legal battle over the results of the presidential election. In 2019, when PDP's Abubakar lost to Buhari, he also challenged the results claiming irregularities. The supreme court dismissed his case months later. Obi, a former governor, filed to stop INEC from reconfiguring BVAS machines to give his team a chance to inspect them.

The court ruled that the opposition demand could not be granted because INEC needed to carry out the reconfiguration to hold state governor elections. The court said any

data could be safely stored on a backend server. INEC also said it reassured political parties and candidates that all data from the presidential election would be backed up and available. Obi, who won over many younger voters with his message that he would usher in change, had been in the Abuja court for the ruling. The Labour Party candidate said last week he would challenge the outcome of the election in court, claiming he would prove to Nigerians he had won the presidential race.

With the third largest number of votes, he managed a significant feat for an outsider in a country where two establishment parties, the APC and PDP, have dominated since the end of military rule in 1999. PDP candidate Abubakar, who lost his sixth bid for the presidency, denounced Tinubu's victory, describing it as "rape of democracy". International observers, including from the European Union, also noted logistical problems, disenfranchised voters and a lack of transparency by the INEC.

UN urges 'immediate' end to Israeli-Palestinian violence

UNITED NATIONS (AFP): The United Nations urged Israel and the Palestinians to "immediately" end violence as intra-Palestinian tensions erupted following a deadly Israeli military raid in the occupied West Bank. Palestinian Authority security forces in the West Bank city of Nablus fired tear gas at mourners attending the funeral of a Hamas militant killed in the raid, amid a surge in violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"We are in the midst of a cycle of violence that must be stopped immediately," UN Middle East peace envoy Tor Wennesland said in a statement. "The Security Council has spoken with one voice, calling on the parties to observe calm and restraint, and to refrain from provocative actions, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric." Abdel Fatah Hussein Khroushah, 49, and five other Palestinians were killed during intense fighting with Israeli forces in Jenin, a scene of frequent clashes in the northern West Bank.

The Israeli army said Khroushah was a "terrorist operative" suspected of

killing two Israeli settlers in the Palestinian town of Huwara on February 26. An AFP correspondent at the funeral in Nablus saw Palestinian mourners hurling insults at police and equating the Palestinian Authority (PA) to "prostitutes" and "spies" for its coordination with Israel. In January, in the aftermath of another deadly Israeli raid in Jenin, the PA said it was ending security coordination with Israel. The PA is controlled by president Mahmud Abbas's Fatah movement, a rival faction to Hamas.

Palestinian security service spokesman Talal Dweikat said officers securing the funeral had intervened when an argument broke out after "a group unrelated to the martyr's family kidnapped the body and lowered it to the ground". Palestinian news agency Wafa reported. Hamas spokesman Abdul Latif al-Qanun condemned the PA officers' violence, arguing in a statement it "confirms the PA is part of the plan to repress the resistance" to the Israeli occupation. Qanun accused PA leadership of "going against the current and against the

will of our people" with what he dubbed "outrageous behaviour" by the officers. Businesses in Palestinian cities across the West Bank shuttered in a general strike to protest the deadly Israeli raid.

It was the latest in a string of fatal military operations in the Palestinian territory, which Israel has occupied since the Six-Day War of 1967. Thousands gathered in Jenin for the funerals of the five Palestinians killed alongside Khroushah, with heavily armed masked fighters firing volleys into the air, AFP journalists said. Near the blockaded Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip, the Israeli army said an "explosive device" was set off close to troops patrolling the border barrier, without causing any injuries. The army responded to the incident with fire. "Tanks struck a military post belonging to the Hamas terrorist organisation in the southern Gaza Strip," the army said in a statement.

Medics in Gaza said two Hamas members sustained minor injuries. Overnight, a rocket was fired by militants in the Palestinian enclave but appeared to be a misfire.

The army initially said it had fallen inside Gaza, but after searches on the ground reported it "fell adjacent to the security fence in Israeli territory" without causing any injuries. The violence in the West Bank and elsewhere comes amid celebrations for the Jewish holiday of Purim and against a backdrop of rising tensions since the beginning of the year, coinciding with the tenure of Benjamin Netanyahu's hard-right government that took office in Israel in December. Some observers fear further violence particularly around Jerusalem's holy sites during the holy Muslim month of Ramadan, which begins in late March, and the Jewish holiday of Passover in April.

Since the start of the year, the conflict has claimed the lives of 71 Palestinian adults and children, including militants and civilians. Thirteen Israeli adults and children, including members of the security forces and civilians, and one Ukrainian civilian have been killed over the same period, according to an AFP tally based on official sources from both sides.

The Frontier Post

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International Women's Day and national apathy

THE world commemorated International Women's Day on March 8, and communities across the globe hailed women's contribution toward global development, social and moral progress of mankind and reaffirmed their commitments to women's empowerment, preservation of women's rights, and the greater role of the colleen in the modern world. The Pakistani nation observed this important day in a varied and utterly estranged way. During his message on International woman's day, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz expressed his government's commitment to ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women in all fields of life. The Premier appealed for joint support by the government, civil society, and media in protecting women's rights in the country. Hours after the Prime Minister's commemoration, Police lashed out at women and transgenders gathering in the heart of the national capital during the Aurat March that was observed in connection with International Women's Day. On the same day, the Police charged batons and tear gas against PTI protestors during the Save the Judiciary rally in Lahore that cost a valuable human life and injured many during the violent clash. Meanwhile, the consultation session between the ECP and governor KP regarding the election ended indecisively, the Viceroy told the electoral body that suggesting the election date in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was tremendously difficult because of the worst law and order situation in the province.

All that was about the prevailing utmost disagreement and chaos across the political spectrum, civil society, and government institutions, that every political faction and segment of the society is persistent to comprehend its objectives at all costs and is not ready to abide by the law and feel the sensitivity of the situation. In fact, the national constitution guarantees the civil rights of its citizens while the Chief Executive of the country upheld the state's responsibility but Police acted in a more regressive manner and played role in the creation of a catastrophe that might not happen if things moved in a normal manner. Similarly, the Supreme Court issued a piece of advice but governors, a few ministries, and state machinery were resisting the electoral process.

Historically, the role of public office-holders and politically influenced bureaucrats have undermined national interests and usually created a mess in national affairs due to their vested hidden interests. The majority of the leaders including the President, Provincial Governors, Speakers, and all present and past Ministers in the center and provinces blatantly violated their oaths and solely worked on political lines instead of fulfilling their constitutional obligations. Thus, the nation has witnessed the worst results of such selfish governance of the public representatives and government servants in the recent past.

Presently, the country has reached the brink of complete failure and no group has achieved its agenda through continued tussle and escalation. No single party was able to sail the nation through the prevailing crises. Apparently, national consensus and fresh elections are the only way forward at this point in time. Therefore, the coalition government must uphold the court verdict and move toward dialogue and the General Election, so a normal life could return to a crises-hit nation.

I first went to Syria at the end of March 1982. Leaving aside the old city (whose beauty, centered on the great Umayyad Mosque, endures), Damascus was a grim place. Huge and menacing posters of Hafez Assad and his brother, Rifaat, adorned most buildings. There were beggars and child hawkers on the streets. The atmosphere was fearful: It was only weeks after the destruction of Hama, the ancient city on the Orontes, where the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood's Fighting Vanguard had made its last stand.

The Brotherhood - or at least those parts of it that favored a confrontation with the Baath Party - had imagined the time was ripe for a popular uprising against the Alawite-dominated and Hezbollah-supporting government in Damascus. They were savagely crushed by Rifaat's Defense Companies. Rifaat then saw an opportunity himself. While his brother was temporarily indisposed, he sought to launch a coup. It failed. He was exiled.

Meanwhile, an equally savage civil war was raging in Lebanon. And Israeli forces under the command of Ariel Sharon were seeking to destroy the Palestine Liberation Organization and - eventually - install a compliant Maronite-dominated government. The human toll was huge, not least in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila. Elsewhere, the Iran-Iraq War was entering a phase of bloody stalemate, as Iranian forces retook Khorranshahr on the Shatt Al-Arab and pushed the Iraqi army out of the last meters of Iranian territory.

Forty years later, what has changed? Syria has been largely destroyed by a decade of brutal civil conflict. Hafez's second son is in charge this time. His opponents have been a motley crew of Islamists - the ideological and, in some cases, the actual

descendants of the Fighting Vanguard - along with old-fashioned Sunni ethnonationalists, some Druze and a lot of Kurds. There is no civil war in Lebanon. But the economy has collapsed, corruption has exploded (as have parts of Beirut port) and Hezbollah exercises an iron grip over domestic politics. Most importantly, Iran has constructed a network of allies and proxies from Iraq, through large parts of central Syria, all the way to the Mediterranean. It alone has benefited from the chaos. It is clear from the way it treats its own people that the Islamic Republic does not care about human suffering. It cares about its own survival, which it believes necessitates controlling or intimidating as many of its neighbors as possible. It illegally transfers ballistic missiles and other weapons to Tehran-aligned militias throughout this area - and indeed into Yemen - all designed to threaten not just Israel but anyone else who might stand in its way, including the states of the GCC.

It steals US dollars from the Central Bank of Iraq and through dedicated financial intermediaries and businesses across the region. With Hezbollah's support, it has enabled Syria to produce and smuggle enormous quantities of Captagon tablets, it smuggles gold and stolen cars, works hand in glove with South American narcotics gangs, and engages in human trafficking and fraud of all sorts across the globe. It kills young Iranian women and men who dare to protest. This situation is not the same as 1982. It is probably worse. But some things remain the same. If you want a unified Arab position against potential threats, you are going to need to factor Syria into the equation. Syria has borders with both Turkey and Israel and a de facto border with Iran. It also acts as the springboard for both Hezbollah and the Iran-aligned Iraqi Shiite militias such as Kata'ib Hezbollah and Asa'ib Ahl

Al-Haq. They established a position there with Iranian support after 2012 and have most recently been engaged in highly visible and self-interested relief operations after the disastrous earthquake that hit the northern regions of the country.

If Bashar Assad had been overthrown, the situation would still have been chaotic. But since he has survived, thanks to Russian and Iranian support, he is the man with whom anyone has to deal if they believe it important to take Syria seriously. He exploits this ruthlessly. This poses a set of dilemmas, both ethical and political. Assad bears a heavy responsibility for the calamities that have affected Syria over the last decade. He could have taken a different course after 2011 - as indeed he could have done during the so-called Damascus Spring of 2000/01. He could have loosened the repressive hold that the corrupt Baath Party had on the country without losing control. And he did not have to turn his goons loose upon ordinary Syrians - including children and women - who were simply protesting against brutality.

There were others involved, of course. The savagery of Daesh in its short-lived "statelet" around Raqqa and the Al-Qaeda affiliates in the northwest of Syria or Jaysh Al-Islam in parts of Damascus also contributed much to the disaster. As did the sheer fecklessness of the opposition in exile, the Syrian National Coalition, with its squabbling factions and the jockeying of its external backers as they sought to advantage the politically bankrupt Muslim Brotherhood and other clients. In August 2013, I was still the British ambassador in Riyadh and had a ringside seat. The failure of Western powers to take action after the regime's chemical weapons attack on Ghouta was, in my view, a turning point. It

Sir John Jenkins

confirmed Assad in his decision to double down. It also signaled to Moscow and Tehran that they could step into the vacuum without risk. They did so to great effect. Indeed, Russia went on to seize Crimea too. So, well done us.

And that is why there is now so much discussion within the GCC and in Egypt and Jordan about "bringing Syria back into the fold." Amman has been active along these lines for some time. Its foreign minister has visited Damascus. Jordan shares a long border with Syria and is quite reasonably concerned about the impact of the conflict on its own domestic security and stability. Egypt wants stability on its eastern flank to pursue its own project of economic rebuilding - an essential but uncertain enterprise. The speaker of its parliament was recently in Damascus and President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi phoned Assad after the earthquake to express his condolences. And the Arab states of the Gulf - some of whom have made public overtures to Damascus already, with visits by Bashar to the UAE and Oman and two visits this year by Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed to Damascus - are worried that a bigger conflict with Iran may be coming down the track fast.

Under pressure from the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Iranians have accepted new inspections of their nuclear facilities. But the recent discovery of particles enriched to 84 percent - near weapons-grade - remains unexplained. The negotiations to relaunch the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action nuclear deal ran into the sand months ago. Restrictions on Iran's ballistic missile exports expire this October. And the new government in Israel - in spite of its internal turmoil - has made it clear that Iran's enrichment activities are bringing conflict closer. The Israel

Defense Forces held joint all-domain military exercises with the US a few weeks ago. The signals are clear. So, you can hardly blame those who think that now is the time for hard-nosed pragmatism. Focusing on the chief threats to your own national security and setting lesser problems to the side has been the way of the world for centuries, whatever idealists may prefer to think. A government's first responsibility is to its own people. That was, in effect, the message of the Kingdom's foreign minister at the Munich Security Conference, where he said that the status quo on Syria was not working and a new one was needed.

But consider this too. Syria will need physical and economic reconstruction. Aleppo, Homs, parts of Damascus, the coastal strip, Idlib, Raqqa and Deir Ezzor, for example, have all suffered massive damage. Millions of Syrians are either internally displaced or are refugees in neighboring countries or farther afield. Many have had their properties seized and reallocated by the regime. What is to happen to them now? And who will pay for this? It will not be Iran or Russia, both with major economic problems of their own and whose response to the earthquake has been underwhelming.

Syria's own resources have been severely depleted. As a consequence, it has turned itself into perhaps the biggest narcotics state in the world. Its oil fields in the east are largely under the control of the US-backed Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces, whose relationships with Turkey, Russia, Iran and Damascus are complicated and often murky.

Idlib in the northwest remains under the control of Tahrir Al-Sham, a one-time Al-Qaeda-affiliate that is trying to become respectable, with Turkish support. The Turks themselves have positions inside the border in Afrin and elsewhere and see the Kurds as their main enemy.

They will want to maintain freedom of maneuver while Recep Tayyip Erdogan calculates his own electoral advantage. The US, the EU and the UK are unlikely to ease sanctions in the short term.

None of this seems easily resolvable, either by Damascus or Iran. And anyone who decides that Assad is now the best of a choice of evils will have to bear in mind that he will demand a quid pro quo. That will come with a large invoice. And he has a record of non-delivery, so there is no guarantee that reengagement by his Arab neighbors will seriously affect his two-decades-long alignment with Iran. The balance of power that his father established with Tehran is now only a memory. Particularly after the exposure of Russian weakness in Ukraine, Bashar is now wholly dependent on Ali Khamenei for his survival. Relieving the suffering of ordinary Syrians is, of course, an act of mercy. But Assad will try to exploit any assistance to suit his own purposes, as he has done before. If the wider aim is to loosen Tehran's grip, then it will be a very long game indeed. And it cannot simply involve Syria. A long-term strategy will need to address the challenges of Lebanon and Iraq. As long as Hezbollah and the Iraqi Hashd militias call the shots there, Syria will not change.

Equally, serious political reform and the emergence of a strong anti-Hezbollah bloc in Lebanon, plus a start to the genuine economic integration of Iraq into the wider Arab Gulf community - perhaps initially through the creation of an integrated energy market involving Iraq's surplus gas - would be a good start. And then, who knows what will happen within Iran itself? You can reasonably argue that small and verifiable steps are perhaps the way ahead. But we should not expect things to get better anytime soon.

Arab News

Significance of 'antisemitism' diluted in race to defend Israel

Ray Hanania

AERICAN leaders, from President Joe Biden and ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield to members of Congress, are speaking out against the rising tide of reported incidents of antisemitic rhetoric, especially on social media. Lawmakers in several American states, such as in Georgia just this week, have passed or are considering laws that define antisemitism, making it easier for prosecutors to target individuals engaged in anti-Jewish hate. However, they can also be used to silence legitimate criticism of the Israeli government's policies.

A good example is in Congress, where members like Illinois Rep. Brad Schneider are leading the charge, fueled by pro-Israel campaign donations. Schneider has defended Muslims, such as by co-

sponsoring a bill aimed at tackling Islamophobia, but he has also spoken out against criticism of Israel by pro-Palestinian groups and activists. Last month, Schneider introduced House Resolution 92, which declares that Israel is "America's legitimate and democratic ally," while condemning antisemitism, "including antisemitism masquerading as anti-Israel sentiment." Such moves might be legitimate in confronting genuine antisemitism, which is a hate-driven sickness, if in fact Schneider and many pro-Israel, anti-Palestinian groups did not include legitimate criticisms of Israel in their condemnations of antisemitism.

Schneider last month demanded, for example - in a congressional letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres that he co-signed along with 17 other members of Congress - the firing

of Francesca Albanese as the UN's special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. What did Albanese do to deserve this censure? She "repeatedly refused to condemn terrorist attacks against Israelis while continuing her condemnations of Israel." The letter accused Albanese of "strong bias against Israel" and stated that there is "deep-seated" antisemitism at the UN. The recent surge in denunciations of alleged antisemitism parallels the rise in pro-Israel political action committee money being donated to elected American officials. The pro-Israel lobby has funneled hundreds of millions of dollars into the campaign coffers of members of Congress, who then go on to suppress any voices that call out Israel's atrocities. Schneider, for example,

received \$19,460 from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee in the last campaign cycle, making it his fourth-largest donor.

His efforts to stamp out antisemitism might be genuine if only they spoke out as ferociously against the rising hatred espoused by Israeli leaders, such as Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich. He recently urged Israel to "wipe out" the Palestinian town of Huwara after it was attacked by Jewish settlers. When word got out that the Biden administration was considering barring Smotrich from entering the US, where he is scheduled to address a rabid anti-Arab audience, he issued a clarification that his remarks were "an emotional slip of the tongue." But it was far from a simple slip of the tongue.

However, Rep.

Schneider and his colleagues did not release a statement or introduce a resolution denouncing Smotrich's hateful, racist rhetoric. Smotrich constantly defends Israeli violence against Palestinians, but Schneider is silent when Palestinians and their supporters are falsely accused of antisemitism because they denounce Israeli violence. By conflating legitimate criticism of Israel with anti-Jewish hate - and by tying it into a political blindness toward Israel's atrocities against non-Jewish Palestinian civilians - Schneider and his ilk are inadvertently diluting the significance of the term "antisemitism."

Antisemitism is about pernicious hatred directed against people who are of the Jewish religion. But it has been devalued and weaponized by people like Schneider as a means to defend Israel, while they

also remain silent in the face of true incidents of hatred against others. Many pro-Israel politicians in America show that they tolerate hatred by not addressing it when it is directed against Palestinians. They only vocalize their concerns when Israeli government policies evoke criticism of that country.

Hate is hate. Everyone should speak out against all hatred, regardless of the victim's nationality, religion or culture. Clearly, however, some of those who campaign to raise awareness of antisemitism have a sinister motive and aim to undermine efforts to stop hatred against Palestinians or anyone who criticizes Israel. Instead of curtailing antisemitism, the politicization of this term blurs its meaning and creates an environment in which actual antisemites can find cover for their hate.

Race riots the latest evidence of Tunisia's malaise

Zaib M. Belbagi

WITH a cult of personality taking shape, parliament's back broken and a neutered political opposition, Kais Saied's Tunisia is a world away from the one that gave birth to the Jasmine Revolution in 2011. Home to what had once been the only successful transition of power to democracy following the wave of regional protests, Tunisia's liberals have been enveloped by an authoritarian centralization of power, while the country's economy has been deemed "bankrupt," according to the most recent rating agency reports.

As national government debt has soared to four times gross domestic product, the otherwise-welcoming and peaceful country has been host to a stark increase in racist attacks and state-sanctioned arbitrary arrests of sub-Saharan migrants - a telling trait of a society that is broken.

Despite soaring youth

unemployment, a precarious fiscal situation and looming authoritarianism, Tunisian society has miraculously retained a certain calm. However, events in recent days - typified by the frenzied plight of Tunisia's sub-Saharan African community - show the extent of the malaise across all aspects of society. Saied last month denounced undocumented sub-Saharan African immigration to Tunisia in a meeting with the National Security Council. In comments that were later published online, the president declared that the arrivals were aimed at changing Tunisia's demographic makeup. He said: "The undeclared goal of the successive waves of illegal immigration is to consider Tunisia a purely African country that has no affiliation to the Arab and Islamic nations."

Playing on recent social media campaigns that have focused on the issue, the president has arranged for a makeshift prison to detain migrants, who now also

face heavy fines and public bullying despite already dealing with the travails of the legal limbo they occupy. In the wake of the record low voter turnout (the lowest since the 2011 revolution) at the December-January parliamentary elections, Saied has stoked xenophobic tensions to divert attention from the country's impending catastrophe and his government's inability to remedy it. Though the constitutional coup that brought him to power was seen by a large block of Tunisian society as a welcome opportunity to embolden the executive to reorder the country's political and economic life, Saied no longer enjoys widespread public support.

The president's efforts to rally the population around the issue of African migrants, whose presence has, in all fairness, increased the strain on the fragile Tunisian economy, have resulted in a situation

whereby sub-Saharan Africans are facing a surge of racist acts. He is not the first authoritarian to stoke up public fear and xenophobia to shore up his position amid rising food prices, unemployment and political instability. Black Tunisians, who make up about 10 percent of the country's population, have also been mistakenly targeted in racist attacks, bringing home the cost of irresponsible populism. Last week's attacks are only the latest controversy surrounding Saied, who seized power in 2021, dissolving the country's democratically elected parliament. Amid several other authoritarian actions, Saied has accused "traitors," who have been arrested as part of the latest crackdown, of "price fixing," "market manipulation," and "hoarding." Such fifth columnist rhetoric ties into a wider narrative that has characterized the president's escalating confrontation with critics who accuse

him of a coup and who the security forces have now arrested.

Tunisia last week banned a protest by the country's main opposition coalition, the National Salvation Front, but the group pressed ahead and on Sunday demonstrated against "political arrests and violations against public and individual freedoms." The protest came as the governor of Tunis, Kamel Feki, said such marches had "not been approved as some of its leaders are suspected of plotting against state security." Last month, the president's eccentricity in regards to counter-coups and plots against him reached a new low as he accused Esther Lynch, the Irish general secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation, of making statements that "interfered with Tunisian internal affairs" when she spoke during a protest organized by the Tunisian General Labour Union. Thereafter expelled from the country,

she was spirited out in scenes reminiscent of the darkest days of Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali's police state.

Within this context, the EU and US continue to "express concern." Their reticence and Tunisia's relative economic insignificance make the situation easy to ignore. The Saied government has long rendered any semblance of democratic transition and its impending authoritarianism is drastically reducing the willingness of international partners to invest in Tunisia and, more importantly, provide the bailout the country needs. Tunisia's race riots are just the latest social disturbance caused by the country's increasing instability. To truly support the Tunisian people, international parties must condition future financial assistance on reforms and a term limit for Saied's tenure. Tunisia's powerful security apparatus should not expect foreign funding until they get behind a return to democratic rule.

King Charles could help UK recalibrate its compass on EU

Mohamed Chebaro

THE UK's King Charles III last week drew criticism from many on the right of the ruling Conservative Party for welcoming European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen at Windsor Castle. Her visit concluded a busy schedule in England, where she finalized with Prime Minister Rishi Sunak a new deal aimed at streamlining trade between Northern Ireland and the UK, dubbed the Windsor Agreement. This came after months of uncertainty, which had threatened to cause the collapse of the Good Friday Agreement, as the Northern Ireland protocol of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement that governs the UK's exit from the bloc caused political and economic friction in the province and put at stake its future status within the union.

Though Buckingham Palace defended the meeting, saying that Charles was acting on "the government's advice," it was considered by some to be "constitutionally unwise" and it angered unionist parties, as well as the euroskeptical tribe of the Conservative Party. Leading Conservative Brexititeer Jacob Rees-Mogg said it was wrong to involve the king in the "immediate political controversy" on the day Sunak signed the new agreement with the EU. If the pic-

ture of the king warmly shaking hands with Von der Leyen at Windsor, where she was offered tea and discussed Ukraine, climate change and maybe Northern Ireland, caused controversy, I will not need to wait to see what kind of reception Charles' forthcoming trip to France and Germany (his first state visits since becoming king) will get back home.

The wiser branch of the Conservatives should, in my opinion, use the clout Charles has developed over the years to help heal tensions between the UK and EU. Only a close relationship with Brussels can turbocharge the UK's recovery from its Brexit-inspired slump, which has seen the country's growth performance dwindle to levels that have left its economic prospects for this year ranked second-last in the G20, only ahead of Russia.

The king and Camilla, the queen consort, will make a six-day trip to France and Germany at the end of this month. Charles will become the first UK monarch to give a speech from France's Senate chamber and to address Germany's Bundestag. The schedules for both visits, as described by Buckingham Palace, are aimed at celebrating Britain's relationship with France and Germany, "marking our shared histories, culture and values. It is

also a chance to look forwards and show the many ways our countries are working in partnership, whether that be to tackle climate change; respond to the conflict in Ukraine; seize trade and investment opportunities or share the best of our arts and culture." Charles' schedule will include meetings with both heads of states and, aside from the ceremonies, will include engagements that can only be frowned upon by parts of the anti-EU political class in the UK, especially if he chooses to address the members of parliament and senators in Paris in French. He will surely touch on everything that unifies and puts the UK at the heart of Europe despite Brexit.

He is due to meet with members of the British community in Bordeaux, where he will inaugurate a new British consulate building. In addition, he will tour areas south of the city that were ravaged by wildfires last summer, reminding everyone of the king's long-lasting campaigns to protect the environment. In Germany, Charles is set to meet refugees recently arrived from Ukraine and hear about the support the country provides for them, while the UK itself chooses to leave it to the hospitality of its own citizens to welcome only pre-approved refugees. The UK of the past few years, led by

the Conservatives' hard-line, anti-European government, has made bashing the EU a national sport, despite the self-harm inflicted on the nation's finances and the obstacles caused by Brexit for the manufacturing, farming, fishing and financial services industries. These sectors have, for decades, served clients across the EU, helping the growth and prosperity of the UK and keeping the country in the list of the top five or six largest economies in the world.

It is not a secret in the UK that the head of state, who traditionally remains politically neutral, is a europhile who is likely to always be at odds with the advocates of "taking back control" and "Singapore-on-Thames." It is customary for the king to only meet world leaders, whether at home or abroad, if the government advises him to do so. One wishes that this government could try to recalibrate its compass and see the benefits of ensuring a smoother relationship with the countries of the bloc next door. The royal household could help in this endeavor as, for centuries, Britain has been global, European and Atlanticist. But with Brexit and the rise of the desire to close its borders to immigration and allow anti-European sentiments to flourish, the UK is risking it all and losing its way as a leading European and global force.



Western media hype 'China woes'

Jerry Grey

MUCH has been said of the slow-down in the global economy and for sure, there have been reductions by the US, European, UK and even the Australian markets as they collectively fight massive inflation, stave off recessions and experience interest rate hikes that haven't been seen in a generation. Europe has spent a winter embroiled in a war, not just for territory in Ukraine but for limited supplies of natural gas.

While China has just set a target for around 5 percent of high-quality growth, those indicators of how bad it is globally do resonate here: there's no doubt global inflation and increasing interest rates combine to cause concern for China's economy, but the real truth is not what Western media want us to believe. Despite all those global problems, "China woes" continue to dominate financial media headlines. Contrary to the expectations of Western analysts, China has set bold targets based on incredible resilience and growth. Western media, however, love to give bad news.

Investment Monitor was headlined with a question: "Why are foreign companies decreasing their dependence on Asian Giant?" And then goes on to quote statistics provided by GlobalData which admits the data for 2022 is incomplete and mysteriously shows a graph of only four years, three of which were pandemic years. According to Trading Economics, which doesn't ask analysts for opinions but sources information from China's Ministry of Commerce, the real situation with Foreign Direct Investment into China was that it grew to a record \$189.13 billion in 2022 and in January 2023 set a monthly record of \$19.02 billion.

Business Standard

begins an article: "China's exports fell further in December as global demand continued to drop off." December definitely experienced a slump in productivity as COVID-19 restrictions were eased and, for a while, it seemed that many got sick. Dismal figures were to be expected, drivers, factory and port workers were on sick leave, and shops and some restaurants even temporarily closed.

If Western media are to be believed, the downturn in economy was so swift and so brutal that factories were closing two weeks early for the New Year holidays. But that was in January. The real truth was that some did indeed close early but many people in the West just didn't realize that this was an early New Year and, despite warnings from shippers, failed to prepare for a two-week closure just after their own Christmas holiday. The real statistics show China finished 2022 with export growth over 7 percent, a record \$3.6 trillion, and a record surplus of \$78 billion for December. There was a full year trade surplus of \$878 billion which was another record. China had exceeded all expectations.

The Nikkei Asia reported similar rhetoric that Hong Kong is struggling with the biggest plunge in exports in 70 years and this may be true but, again, blames the "early arrival of Lunar New Year" as if people didn't know it was coming. In an unusual abundance of balance, it also mentions that this isn't an issue with China, it's an issue of "slower global growth" and goes on to state there is weak global demand due to high interest rates and downturn in the tech cycle. It doesn't mention that China is one of the few countries in the world with an economy so strong that it reduced interest rates

nor does it mention the real reason.

The amount of shipping through ports such as Nansha, which is in the Greater Bay Area, has grown. This is of great benefit to Hong Kong as highlighted by Chief Executive John Lee in a December press release. In other words, while Hong Kong shipping is down, its overall business isn't, while imports and exports in Hong Kong may be lower than Nikkei would like us to believe in their headline, they are balanced enough to mention that the overall economy has grown 3.5 percent and is expected to top this year at 5.5 percent. This is partly because many Hong Kong businesses are relocating to Nansha and Qianhai, both of which are at the forefront of the Greater Bay Area which China incentivises to attract international investors.

To learn what's happening in China, we need to stop listening to "experts" and media analysts, instead, take a look at what China's Ministry of Commerce has to say: China achieved a 7.7-percent rise in foreign trade in 2022 and exports rose 10.5 percent. Foreign trade by private firms in China rose by 12.9 percent and, for the first time, exceeded 50 percent of the total while China has led the world in global trade for 14 consecutive years, including the three years of pandemic. Inside of China, fixed asset investment was up, industrial output rose and online trading increased to record levels. China kept inflation at just 2.06 percent and China's interest rates didn't go up in 2022 but went down, twice, catching CNN's "experts" completely by surprise. We don't need to be economists to know that these indicators aren't leading to collapse. Western experts seem to comprise of wishful thinking designed to manipulate, rather than inform.

After the terrifying earthquakes, it's women and girls in Turkey feeling the aftershocks

Elif Shafak

IN Turkey's southern province of Hatay, one of the most ravaged cities in the recent earthquakes, 25-year-old Alev Altun, the mother of two young children, became homeless in one night, like thousands of others. Having nowhere to go, she agreed to take refuge in the house of her ex-husband, on his invitation, assuming it would be safer to stay with the father of her children than alone in a tent or in a building at risk of collapse.

While she was sleeping, her ex-husband allegedly poured scalding water all over her, shouting she should be grateful that he had not killed her. She remains in intensive care at a local hospital, with severe burns to her head, face and body. Hers is one of the many harrowing stories of women and girls in crisis zones. Women suffer disproportionately in the aftermath of disasters. While tens of thousands of people have lost homes and jobs, women continue to work ceaselessly in makeshift tents and containers set up for displaced survivors - finding food or trying to cook, washing or cleaning where water is available, constantly providing for others. In traditional, patriarchal societies, the entire burden of looking after extended families is on their shoulders. According to organisations on the ground, a large number of women were found dead - and occasionally pulled out alive - in children's rooms buried under piles of rubble. When the tremors began, they ran to save their children and babies. Unicef says the number of children who have died in the earthquake "is likely to be in the many thousands".

There are 356,000 pregnant women across the earthquake-affected areas. Of these, an estimated 39,000 are expected to

deliver babies in the coming weeks. For every affected woman and girl, but especially for pregnant women, the lack of toilets and cleaning facilities is a major source of distress. Growing up in Turkey, I have been told many times to be quiet about and ashamed of the female body, and especially menstruation. Still to this day, one of the widespread definitions of the word "dirty" (kirli) in Turkish dictionaries is "a woman who is menstruating". When I was younger, often when I bought a sanitary product from a market, I would watch the cashier immediately wrap it in some old newspaper, hiding it as if it was a scandal. Once, in Istanbul, I was scolded by a male grocer when I asked out loud in front of everyone where the period products were. He used a word I have never forgotten, ayip-shame.

In this sexist culture, female survivors of earthquakes find it very difficult to ask for sanitary pads. There is an assumption that within the broader picture of devastation and destruction, such matters are a trivial concern. They are not. Action Aid has said that the situation for women and girls and marginalised communities "is becoming increasingly alarming". In times of war and disaster, the rights and freedoms of women and minorities always become casualties to the "more important and urgent issues" of realpolitik. The humanitarian organisation Plan International has reported that, "Our experience shows that children, especially girls, women and the poorest families, are most at risk of exploitation in a disaster like an earthquake. Women and children in the disaster zone will be at risk of exploitation and abuse, should they find themselves once

again displaced." LGBTQ+ communities find the situation extremely hard. Sexual harassment and violence is a growing threat for many who remain vulnerable in homophobic and transphobic environments. There are reports from human rights organisations that it is harder to find a tent or access aid if you are a single woman. Hate speech is never far from the surface.

Wars, disasters and earthquakes also disrupt education. In Turkey and Syria, girls are much more likely to be pulled out of school. Turkey already has one of the highest rates of child marriage in Europe. Yet instead of helping women and minorities by implementing the Istanbul convention - the treaty designed to combat violence against women - the government under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has done the opposite, withdrawing from the convention and targeting both feminists and LGBTQ+ activists. Erdoğan has repeatedly said that women cannot be equal to men and gender equality is "against nature". Crisis times bring out both the best and the worst in humanity. While we have seen a profoundly moving outpouring of help and support from civil society, there is a correlation between the lack of democracy, lack of accountability and high levels of corruption and nepotism in a country and the scale of suffering in natural disasters. Turkey's AKP under Erdoğan is not only antidemocratic and authoritarian, it is also blatantly macho and misogynist.

Sadly, anti-refugee rhetoric has also proliferated in Turkey after this crisis. In Mersin, Syrians staying at a dormitory were kicked out, saying they had to make way for Turkish citizens. Refugees have been put on buses and dumped on

the streets. Even those who were trying to help with rescue efforts have been assaulted in some places. In times of distress, instead of questioning the incapacity and structural mistakes of a government, it is easier to turn to the next vulnerable group and take it out on them. Meanwhile, on the other side of Turkey's border in Iran, girls are being poisoned. In at least 26 elementary and high schools, more than 1000 girls have reportedly been targeted in chemical gas attacks. Women and girls have been the leading voice in demanding social change, equality and freedom in the country. The bravery of Iranian women is remarkable: this is why they are being targeted by the regime.

We often hear that the world is presently suffering from multiple crises and therefore relief and aid efforts cannot be expected to continue for too long in one place. It is, however, possible to look at it from a different angle. Whether in Turkey, Syria, Afghanistan, Iran or war-torn Ukraine ... as we mark International Women's Day, women and girls and minorities across the world are suffering and struggling disproportionately. Gender-based relief efforts are essential to rebuild better and fairer societies. Studies show that when women are given financial aid and psychological support, they use this leverage primarily for their families, their children and their communities. There never has been a more urgent time for global solidarity, and especially, global sisterhood. There never has been a more urgent time to say out loud that we can both dearly love and care for our own countries or our adopted countries and at the same time be citizens of the world, citizens of humankind.

The Guardian

Labour and SNP falling into Sunak's bear trap

Madeline Grant

KEIR Starmer's tactics at PMQs were quite simple - wrong-foot the Prime Minister by highlighting the shortcomings of the immigration system. Given recent events, this should have been an easy task. But somehow, Starmer spent the session flailing about - dispatching numerous heavy-handed jibes, yet rarely managing to land a blow. A total of 18,000 people were deemed ineligible for asylum last year, began the leader of the opposition. "How many of them have actually been returned?" he asked.

The PM dodged Starmer's question with the ease of a lawyer grounding a flight to Rwanda. Sir Keir, he said, was "on the side of the people-smugglers ... just another lefty lawyer standing in our way". The correct answer was 21 out of 18,000. "We all know the Honourable Gentleman's plan," crowed Sunak, buoyed by excited baying from the Tory ranks. "Open-door immigration and unlimited asylum!" Amid Tory jeers, Starmer hit back against the "lefty lawyer" slur by ... mentioning his stint as director of public prosecutions. The Speaker, in best geography master mode, tartly suggested to the noisier elements on the back benches

that continued rowdy behaviour would result in an early exit from the Chamber for "a cup of tea, probably a strong one".

Difficult as it is to imagine the Labour Party being tough on Channel migrants - like picturing Joan Collins in a tracksuit - Starmer was wise enough to focus his questioning on the Government's failure to restrict numbers of channel crossers, not the principle itself. Not so Stephen Flynn of the SNP, who asked Sunak whether his migrant policy was "taking inspiration from Nigel Farage or Enoch Powell?" Coming from the (white) SNP leader to a PM of Indian origin, this was bold enough. Given the non-existent numbers of migrants housed in Flynn's Aberdeen South constituency, it showed more of a brass neck than the Statue of Liberty. "What a load of nonsense," chuckled the PM, evidently delighted that Flynn had tramped so enthusiastically into the waiting bear trap. Everyone played to their respective galleries. Away from the Commons, crisp salesman turned BBC commentator Gary Lineker compared Tory immigration policies to 1930s Germany. Back in the Chamber Imran Hussain, of Bradford East, followed

Lineker's lead with an outburst of the "anyone who disagrees with me is Hitler" variety. The PM's plan, ranted Hussain, was "dystopian, far-Right, appeasing, anti-refugee ...". Once again, Mr Sunak suppressed a smirk. Operation "make the opposition look soft" was working.

"Graphic lessons on oral sex, how to choke your partner safely, and 72 genders," began Miriam Cates. No, this wasn't a question about the average male MP's internet search history, but about inappropriate sex education in schools. A few members of the old guard looked momentarily discomfited by this unexpected subject matter. Bill Cash glowered forbiddingly. Metaphorical monacles dropped all over the House. This being International Women's Day, a day of performative feminism and opportunistic marketing emails - "Happy #IWD ladies, have you tried this new lip filler?" - inevitably a few backbenchers hopped on the #girlboss bandwagon. Anna Firth used her parliamentary privilege to put the PM firmly on the spot with a tough question about women's football in Southend. Would the Prime Minister agree with her that sport, especially football, has the potential to empower women? Come back chauvinist grandees in top hats, all is forgiven!

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Time for the US to show Israel some tough love by barring Bezalel Smotrich

Dr. Dania Koleilat Khatib

SETTLERS on Monday wounded five Palestinians in a new attack on Hawara, only a week after their deadly rampage through the town. Israeli soldiers were even filmed dancing with the settlers as they together celebrated Purim, the Jewish holiday that commemorates the saving of the Jewish people from annihilation. This is the latest in a series of atrocities that have been conducted against Palestinians since the most right-wing government the country has ever known came to power at the end of last year.

Benjamin Netanyahu's government is becoming vocal in its persecution of Palestinians. There has been a lot of controversy around Bezalel Smotrich, the finance minister, who called for Hawara to be "wiped out." He is due to visit the US in the coming days. More and more voices are calling for him to be barred from entering the country. Though Smotrich tried to excuse himself by saying it was a slip of tongue, such slips usually reveal the real intentions of the person. Netanyahu is trying to keep the balance between pleasing his racist allies and appeasing the international community. However, the truth is so obvious, not only regarding the treatment of the Palestinians, but also when it comes to respecting any democratic norms. The government's judicial overhaul is a clear manipulation and distortion of the law to suit the interests of Netanyahu. Is that not what happens in autocratic countries? Isn't "democracy" the main reason why the US supports Israel? It is its supposed shared democratic values that

make Israel so special and so similar to the US.

However, Israel is showing that its democratic narrative does not match its daily reality, which is becoming increasingly racist. If we rewind, a major reason why the US has no credibility in the Arab and Islamic worlds is because of its biased attitude, its favoritism. Israel is treated on a different scale to everyone else. CNN's Christiane Amanpour, while interviewing Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian last week, tried to get from her guest an answer on what his own female family members think about the protests in Iran and whether they think women should have the freedom to wear the hijab or not. Amir-Abdollahian intelligently diverted the conversation by asking Amanpour if the US defended Shireen Abu Akleh, her fellow journalist, woman and Christian. He asked her if a UN resolution similar to the one issued against Iran was issued against Israel. Amanpour could not give him an answer. Why was Israel allowed to act with impunity? Why were Abu Akleh's killers not brought to justice?

No Israel advocate can defend the current government and say it is being democratic. No one can defend the demolition of homes or the pogroms like the one conducted in Hawara. If anything, the incident in Hawara reminds us of the antisemitic actions in Europe ahead of the Second World War. Israel has been able to act with impunity because it benefits from the muscle of the US in the UN Security Council.

Washington has consistently vetoed any resolution aimed at containing Israel's unbridled behavior. The only exception was during the presidency of Barack Obama. Toward the end of his second term, the US did not veto a resolution condemning the illegal settlements. He took this step as he was exiting the White House and knew that the pro-Israel lobby could not go after him. However, Israel is now becoming an embarrassment to its own supporters. The racist, Jewish supremacist ministers who are openly calling for Palestinians to be kicked out of their homes feel empowered. They know that, without them, Netanyahu would go to prison. They are no longer shy about showing their true colors. They are vocal about their real intentions. How can the US continue to justify its unconditional support for Israel? How can it veto any action in the UNSC?

The UAE last month decided against putting a draft resolution on Israel's settlement expansion plans to a vote. Instead, the UNSC issued a useless statement. We do not know what the inner workings were that led to this move, but it would have obviously been very embarrassing for the US to have to use its veto to defend Israel, especially as Russia is being criticized for using its veto power to block any resolution condemning its actions in Ukraine. Instead, the US has been going to the General Assembly to pass resolutions against Russia because Moscow can paralyze the Security Council. General Assembly resolutions are not legally binding, unlike those of the

UNSC. More and more, the US' use of its veto to defend the indefensible is looking like an abuse of power, very much similar to what Russia is doing to defend its invasion of Ukraine. Is the US getting a taste of its own medicine? It seems like it. No matter how you look at it, the US is getting squeezed into a tighter and tighter corner and its unconditional defense of Israel is becoming ever more difficult to justify.

Israel's far-right fanatics are experiencing what we call the arrogance of power. They do not feel they have to abide by anything except their blind racism and hatred of the Palestinians. However, the far right does not realize one important thing: The more it shows power, the more it is, in fact, losing power because it will be losing support. Losing the support of American Jewry is not an issue that the likes of Itamar Ben-Gvir and Smotrich should take lightly. The first step for the US to save its credibility - not only in front of the Arab and Islamic worlds but in front of its own audience, the American people - should be to deny the racist minister a visa to enter the country. The second step should be to stop using the veto to block any resolution condemning the illegal settlements. These steps would not only save America's reputation, they would also save Israel from a third intifada. The racist measures taken by the Netanyahu government will not allow Israel to get rid of Palestinians, but they will likely push the Palestinians to conduct a third intifada. Would Netanyahu want that? Would the US want that? Surely not. This is the time for the US to show Israel some tough love.



Governor inaugurates new building of SBP BSC office

F.P. Report

SIALKOT: Governor State Bank of Pakistan, Mr. Jameel Ahmad today inaugurated the new building of State Bank of Pakistan, Banking Services Corporation (BSC) in Sialkot. The inauguration of this new building will enable BSC to meet the growing needs of the stakeholders in the region for various banking and banking related technology based services.

The Governor emphasized that the prime objective of SBP BSC is to serve its stakeholders and to realize this objective, SBP BSC has been transforming itself into a technology driven

organization. He elaborated that SBP BSC's focus on technology is in line with its drive for digital banking in the country and towards this goal, the organization has been making efforts to automate its operations, including automated currency operations, use of alternative delivery channels for government receipts, end-to-end regulatory approval system for forex cases, centralization of various accounts and approval systems, e-QMS & digital systems in banking halls and extensive CCTV coverage.

He emphasized that the State Bank is fully committed to provide smooth and

efficient services to government, banks, businesses, and public at large.

The Governor also reiterated SBP's commitment to facilitate business community of Pakistan and shared various schemes and services offered by the central bank.

Managing Director SBP BSC Muhammad Ashraf Khan in his address provided the details of the initiative of constructing a purpose built new building of the BSC Sialkot office and its significance for the city and region surrounding it.

He explained that the Sialkot office is closely coordinating with businesses and banks in the region to increase the access to

financial services by exporters, SMEs, women entrepreneurs, farmers, and low-income individuals.

The ceremony was also attended by the representatives of SCCI, Cantonment Board, and Regional Heads of banks.

The new SBP BSC Sialkot office is a reflection of the Central Bank's commitment to provide efficient and modern banking services to the people of Pakistan.

On the sidelines, the Governor also met the representatives of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) and assured the SCCI full support in growth and promotion of their businesses.

Naveed urges for strengthening bilateral trade with UAE

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce, Syed Naveed Qamar here on Thursday stressed the need for enhancing bilateral trade volume between Pakistan and United Arab Emirates.

During a meeting with UAE Ambassador to Pakistan, Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al-Zaabi, the minister highlighted that there was huge potential for cooperation between the two countries in the field of renewable energy, agriculture, textile meat of bovine animals, petroleum oils, and hospitality sectors.

He also observed that trade volume between the two countries stood at just US\$ 10,033.05 million in FY-2022. The trade included US\$1369.83 million in exports to UAE and US\$ 8663.22 million in imports into the country.

He said the existing trade volume did not match the actual potential of both countries and needed to be increased.

UAE ambassador agreed with the minister's point of view and said Pakistan and UAE have religious, durable, historical, and cooperative relations which needed to be enhanced with bilateral trade.

State Life sign MOU with Karachi University



F.P. Report

KARACHI: State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan (SLIC) on Thursday signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Karachi University (KU) to offer the female cancer protection plan, Sinf-e-Ahan (Women of Steel), to all female students enrolled and teachers working in the institution. This cancer product provides substantial compensation on the development of any type of cancer in women for as little as Rs. 1 per day.

Speaking at the Breaking Barriers: Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls Conference at Karachi University, Chairman SLIC, Shoaib Javed

Hussain, said "Both female health and education inclusion are imperative for the women of our country to have equality and feel empowered. It falls upon national institutions to come together and find solutions which financially enable and support them in making key life decisions. By partnering with Karachi University we are taking the first step to provide health solutions to female students and teachers which is just the beginning of a greater partnership between the two national institutions."

Due to expensive treatments such as the increasing cost of chemotherapy sessions, many cancer patients in Pakistan lose their battle

against cancer because they cannot afford the treatment. Sinf-e-Ahan provides financial relief and support for the female population to empower them to cover their treatment cost in case of cancer. Under the basic plan which costs only Rs.300 per annum, State Life would cover the cost of treatment upon diagnoses of cancer up to Rs. 200,000.

SLIC is the largest insurance organization in Pakistan providing financial protection through its life and health insurance plans. SLIC is rapidly expanding social health insurance coverage to the entire country with a vast network of more than 1400 empanelled hospitals across Pakistan.

APCEA thanks govt over holding of Pakistan Minerals Show 2023

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: All Pakistan Commercial Exporters Association (APCEA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa thanked the government for its support in organizing a successful exhibition of precious and semi-precious stones in Islamabad hotel.

In a joint statement issued here on Thursday, Haji Mamoor Khan, Patron in chief and S.Minhajuddin Bacha, Chairman All Pakistan Commercial Exporters Association (APCEA) KP

said that if the industry like gems, jewelry and mineral will avail serious government patronage so our staunch claim that half of the country's external loans would pay off.

Besides that the advancement toward economic development would initiate in a real context and sense, the APCEA leaders said.

They said there was no shortage of natural reserves and skilled people. Day is not far away when the foreign investors and traders from different countries of

the world under the platform of All Pakistan Commercial Exporters Association will again move toward Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Pakistan.

APCEA leaders said despite the limited potentials, the gems stone sector can be proved as a game changer, but on one condition that the government should give proper support to this potential sector.

Earlier, Haji Mamoor Khan and S. Minhajuddin thanked Advisor to Prime Minister on Political Affairs, National Heritage

Engineer Amir Muqam, former chief minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao, minister for mines and mineral development Ghafar Khan, DG TDAP, federal and provincial ministers, government high officials and general public over their participation in the 3-day Pakistan Minerals Show 2023, which was held in local hotel in Islamabad.

They also lauded the organisers and APCEA for making the three-day show successful.

PSX continues with bullish trend, gains 226 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 226.61 points, a positive change of 0.55 per cent, closing at 41,358.54 points against 41,358.93 points the previous day.

A total of 229,088,710 shares were traded during the day as compared to 162,884,970 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs7.431 billion against Rs6.333 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 324 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 205 of them recorded gains and 100 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 19 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were WorldCall

Telecom with 26,617,120 shares at Rs1.31 per share; Telecard Limited with 17,051,000 shares at Rs7.64 per share and Maple Leaf with 12,410,932 shares at Rs25.94 per share. Atlas Honda Ltd witnessed a maximum increase of Rs19.59 per share price, closing at Rs280.79, whereas the runner-up was Thal Ind Corp with an Rs19.34.00 rise in its per share price to Rs288.90.

Pak Services witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs152.09 per share closing at Rs1,875.88; followed by Pak Tobacco with Rs43.57 decline to close at Rs675.10.

Rupee sheds Rs3.17 against dollar: The Pakistan rupee weakened by Rs3.17 against the dollar in the interbank trading on Thursday and closed at Rs282.29 against the previous day's closing of

Rs279.12. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs283.2 and Rs286 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs3.67 and closed at Rs297.86 against the last day's closing of Rs294.19, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese Yen increased by 04 paisa to close at Rs2.06, whereas an increase of Rs4.46 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs334.43 as compared to its last day's closing of Rs329.97.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal decreased by 87 paisa and 84 paisa to close at Rs79.86 and Rs75.19 respectively.

Shipping activity at PQ

KARACHI (APP): Six ships, namely Haj Mohammad, EM Astoria, Clemens Schulte, Dejima, Dolphin and LNGC Doha scheduled to load/offload cement, containers, wheat, LNG, berthed at Multipurpose Terminal, Qasim International Container Terminal, Grain & Fertilizer Terminal, Liquid Cargo Terminal and EngroElengy Terminal the other day.

Meanwhile, three more ships, MSC Patnaree III, Ullswater and Silver Cindy carrying containers, LPG and Mogs also arrived at the outer anchorage of the port on Wednesday morning.

A total of 8 ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them a container ship MSC Asya left the Port on Wednesday morning, while three more ships EM Astoria, World Royal and Dolphin 03 are expected to sail later today.

Staff-level agreement with IMF to be signed in few days: Dar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Finance and Revenue Ishaq Dar on Thursday said that the staff-level agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) would be signed in the next few days as all of the requirements had already been fulfilled.

"We are very close to signing the agreement with the IMF and it would be done in the next few days", he said while addressing a seminar "Reviving economic stability through strengthening of public financial management", organised by the ministry of finance here.

The minister said that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government had also completed the full programme with the Fund earlier in 2013-16 and was committed to completing it now as well despite agreeing to tough conditions by the previous government.

He said a shattered economy was handed over to the coalition government, however, it showed commitment and sincerity to the state by

acting upon all the tough conditions made by the previous government with the IMF.

Ishaq Dar regretted that petty politics was still being played over Pakistan's economy by spreading rumours about falling into default which he said was totally a nonsense attitude.

He said the bad economic crisis which the coalition government inherited was even more deeper and complex than that in 2013 and 1990s but with utmost sincerity and prudent policies of the government, the country had come out of the quagmire.

"We are now in a position to move forward with full confidence," he said, adding that Pakistan had the resilience to meet the challenges as it had huge resources to cope with the problems, but the only thing that had been lacking was lack of consistency in policies and mismanagement in the fiscal sector.

The minister informed that the country's debt-to-

GDP ratio improved from 73% to 69% in a few years which meant that there was no need to worry about the debts of the country.

He said even the developed countries such as USA and UK had high debt-to-GDP ratios of over 100%, therefore "we need not to worry about".

He said the country's foreign exchange reserves got down due to the fact that the government had been only paying back the debts and not getting new debts for the last few months.

Ishaq Dar also invited all political parties to sit together for resolving the country's long-standing economic issues by setting apart their differences.

Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Finance and Revenue Tariq Bajwa, pointing to the problem of the real estate sector, said that it had now become the most powerful group in the country. He said trillions of rupees were stuck up in the files of real estate which he called was a dead money.

He said the real sector must be reformed and taxed.

Secretary Finance Hamid Yaqoob Sheikh, in his presentation, showed measures to be taken by the government including reforms in power, pensions taxation and privatisation sectors to ensure sustainable growth of the country's economy.

Auditor General of Pakistan (AGP) Muhammad Ajmal Gondal suggested promoting industrialization to substitute the imports and reduce the trade gap. He said the government should also equally focus on increasing revenues without burdening the common man.

Deputy Governor, SBP Dr Innayat Hussain said the only solution to overcome the subsidies issue was to expedite the privatisation process. "We need to think why we have not been able to privatize even a single entity for the last several years," he said, adding that the privatisation structure and laws should be revisited to resolve this issue.

Tokyo shares close higher

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks closed higher for a fifth straight day on Thursday, with investors taking heart from recent rallies while awaiting a key US jobs report at the end of the week.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index rose 0.63 percent, or 178.96 points, to end at 28,623.15, while the broader Topix index gained 0.97 percent, or 19.88 points, to 2,071.09.

"Caution about further acceleration of rate hikes spread against the backdrop of a tight US job market," IwaiCosmo Securities said.

"But the Tokyo market was buoyed following the strong performance of US high-tech stocks, especially

chip-related shares," the brokerage added.

Wall Street stocks were mixed overnight as markets weighed recession fears while a Federal Reserve report said inflation was persisting.

On Tuesday, Fed chair Jerome Powell triggered a sell-off by saying the "ultimate level of interest rates is likely to be higher than previously anticipated".

In his subsequent address to US lawmakers on Wednesday, he said officials would look at all the available data before making a decision.

Traders are now awaiting the release of crucial US non-farm payrolls figures Friday, which will provide the latest snapshot of the world's number one economy. Analysts said a

forecast-beating number could put pressure on the Fed to ramp up rates at its next meeting.

The dollar stood at 136.68 yen, against 137.43 yen in New York on Wednesday.

Shortly before the opening bell, revised government data showed Japan's economy did not grow in October-December, coming in at 0.0 percent, against a preliminary reading of a 0.2 percent expansion.

In Tokyo trading, industrial robot maker Fanuc gained 1.07 percent to 24,475 yen and Tokyo Electron, which makes tools to build semiconductors, jumped 1.24 percent to 48,640 yen.

Toyota added 0.62 percent to 1,919.5 yen while Honda grew 0.96 percent to 3,668 yen.

Global Governance: Emerging and transforming China

China has made impressive progress in recent decades and has become a major player in the global economy and international affairs

Syed Ali Nawaz Gilani

"The rise of China is one of the most transformative global events of our time. Over the past few decades, China has emerged as a major economic power, and it is now poised to become a leading player in international affairs. This transformation has significant implications for the world, and it presents both challenges and opportunities for the international community." - Ban Ki-moon, former Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Recently held annual meetings of China's legislature and top political advisory body in Beijing which were attended by nearly 3000 delegates across China means the National People's Congress (NPC) which is China's most powerful state organ. Whereas another Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), draws its members from various sectors of society. Their debates were worth noting for emerging social and economic issues. The speeches made by Chinese President Xi Jinping and all outgoing and incoming leaders being named after the 20th CPC NPC in October 2022, formalize leadership for China. Newly appointed China's foreign minister Mr. Qin Geng, appear first time as Foreign Minister and portray the Chinese mind at Press Conference after meetings. Prior to the meetings, Mr. Guan Tao, Global Chief Economist of Bank of China's BOC International told the Global Times. "One of the most closely watched items is how China will set its growth target and relevant policies." He was of the view that officials are likely to set a "more

active tone" for the current year, given the acceleration to economic activity since the zero COVID strategy was abandoned at the end of 2022.

China has implemented various strategies to revamp its economy and improve its global position in recent years. Here are some of them.

Made in China 2025: This is a plan aimed at transforming China into a high-tech manufacturing hub. It aims to upgrade the country's manufacturing industry and move it up the value chain. The plan focuses on industries such as robotics, aerospace, high-tech shipping, and other advanced technologies.

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI): This is a massive infrastructure development project aimed at connecting China to the rest of the world through a network of land and sea routes. The BRI involves investments in over 60 countries, to improve trade and economic cooperation.

Dual Circulation Strategy: This is a new economic strategy that China has adopted, with a focus on stimulating domestic consumption while maintaining export-oriented growth. This strategy is designed to make China less reliant on exports and foreign technology, with a greater emphasis on promoting domestic innovation and development.

Digital Transformation: China is investing heavily in digital technology, to become a world leader in areas such as artificial intelligence, 5G networks, and blockchain technology. The government is also promoting e-commerce and other digital platforms to support economic growth.

Environmental Protection: China is also working to address environmental issues such as pollution and climate change. The government has implemented sev-

eral policies aimed at promoting green growth and sustainable development.

China's strategies aim to improve its economic competitiveness, reduce its dependence on foreign technology, and promote sustainable growth. These initiatives have helped China become a major player in the global economy and continue to shape its economic and political influence.

Transforming China is an ongoing process that has been underway for several decades. Since the introduction of economic reforms in 1978, China has experienced rapid economic growth and social development. However, this has come with a range of challenges and opportunities, and the government has implemented various strategies to address them.

One of the key aspects of transforming China has been the shift from a planned economy to a market-oriented one. In the early years of reform, the government introduced a series of measures aimed at decentralizing economic decision-making and promoting entrepreneurship. This led to the emergence of a vibrant private sector and the growth of the foreign investment.

Another important aspect of transforming China has been the emphasis on science and technology. China has invested heavily in research and development, with a focus on areas such as artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and renewable energy. This has helped China become a world leader in these fields and has contributed to its economic growth.

At the same time, China has also faced a range of challenges in its transformation. One of the most significant is the issue of inequality. While the overall standard of living has improved, there are still significant disparities between urban and rural areas, as well as

between different regions of the country. This has led the government to introduce policies aimed at reducing inequality, such as the poverty alleviation campaign, which has lifted millions of people out of poverty.

Another challenge that China has faced is environmental degradation. Rapid industrialization and urbanization have led to significant pollution and resource depletion. In response, the government has implemented a range of policies aimed at promoting sustainable development and reducing environmental impact. For example, China has invested heavily in renewable energy, and it has also introduced policies to reduce air and water pollution.

In recent years, China has also become more assertive in its foreign policy. The Belt and Road Initiative, for example, is a major infrastructure development project that aims to connect China with countries across Asia, Africa, and Europe. This has the potential to boost trade and economic development, but it has also raised concerns about China's geopolitical ambitions.

In addition, China has been increasingly involved in global governance. It has played an active role in international organizations such as the United Nations and has been a vocal advocate for global cooperation on issues such as climate change.

Transforming China is a complex and ongoing process that involves multiple dimensions. The government has implemented a range of policies aimed at promoting economic growth, social development, and environmental sustainability. While there are still significant challenges, China has made impressive progress in recent decades and has become a major player in the global economy and international affairs.

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Court Notice

In the Court of Abdul Halem Civil Judge V/Allaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Case No.13/12(2). Institution 16/9/2022 23/11/2022 Date of hearing. 22/3/2023. Usman Ghani VS Azam Khan. Application 12(2) Notice to No. 10. Malik Jan son of Gul Rehman.23.Shad Mohammad Khan son of Taj Mohammad Khan resident of Torwarsak thehsel Daggar district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 22/3/2023 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Court Notice

In the Court of Abdul Halem Civil Judge V/Allaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Case No. 45/1. Institution 12/11/2022. Date of hearing. 17/3/2023. Masken VS Bakhren Declaratory Suit Notice to No. 1. Bakhren son of Masken resident of Sangara in the limit of Amnawar thehsel Gagra district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendant can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendant will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 17/3/2023 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Court Notice

In the Court of Jouhar Ali Safi Civil Judge I/Allaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Case No. 56/1. Institution 14/12/2022 4/3/2023 Date of hearing. 25/3/2023. Gul Zamen VS Sher Bahadur. Notice to No. 9. Bakht Zamen Taj son of Sahib Taj resident of Matwanai thehsel Gagra district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendant can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendant will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 25/3/2023 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.



Pak-Afghan cricket series to begin from March 24

KABUL (PPI) Afghanistan Cricket Board and Pakistan Cricket Board have jointly agreed to make slight tweaks to the itinerary of Afghanistan's home three-match T20I series against Pakistan. The start of the series is brought forward by a day and will now start from March 24, with the last two games to be played on March 26 and 27 in Sharjah, UAE. The changes in itinerary are made due to the unavailability of the Hawk-Eye Technology for the previously agreed upon dates. The two boards have agreed upon the changes in itinerary to ensure all the necessary broadcast technologies are available for the inaugural T20I series between the two sides. Revised Schedule: March 24: 1st T20I, Sharjah March 26: 2nd T20I, Sharjah March 27: 3rd T20I, Sharjah

National Throwball C'ship from March 16

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Throwball Championship under the auspices of Pakistan Throwball Federation would be held in Karachi from March 16. According to Secretary Pakistan Throwball Federation Maqbool Arain, men's and women's teams from all over the country would be participating in the championship. The managers' meeting of the participating teams would be held on March 15, wherein draws and rules of the championship will be finalized. The championship would continue till March 18 and prizes would be distributed among the winning players at the closing ceremony.

Raducanu wrist injury returns before Indian Wells

INDIAN WELLS (Agencies): Emma Raducanu will "hopefully" be able to play at Indian Wells but says last year's wrist problem has returned. The 20-year-old British number one is due to play Danka Kovinic of Montenegro on Thursday in the 16,000-capacity Stadium 1. But Raducanu had strapping on both of her wrists during Wednesday's one-hour practice session with her coach Sebastian Sachs. "The same issue that I had last year has stared to flare back up," she said. Speaking to BBC Sport, she added: "I've definitely been managing my load. It's something that has just come back, so I'm trying to be as cautious as possible. I'm going to do everything I can to be there tomorrow. I think we always play through pain and it's just a matter of how much can you take - I'm looking forward to hopefully being out there tomorrow." The initial injury, which forced Raducanu to end last season early and miss the Billie Jean King Cup Finals in Glasgow, only affected her right wrist. There were not too many signs of discomfort in Wednesday's practice session, although she did take her hand off the racquet a couple of times. It was the first time Raducanu had practised since the weekend, and on Tuesday she pulled out of the Eisenhower Cup exhibition event in which she had been due to play mixed doubles with fellow Briton Cameron Norrie. Fresh concerns about her wrist follow a bout of tonsillitis, which cost Raducanu the chance to play in last week's ATX Open in Austin, Texas. "It affected me bad for the short term so I haven't prepared much. I've probably never felt so sick in my life," said Raducanu. "When it rains, it pours. This and the infection - it's obviously a challenge. My preparation hasn't been ideal. I played on the weekend and then I rested it - it's how you manage things when you aren't prepared." Raducanu - the 2021 US Open champion - has been able to play just four matches so far this season.

Fakhar, bowlers maul Islamabad in heaviest-ever PSL defeat



Fakhar Zaman hits out during his innings.

RAWALPINDI (Monitoring Desk): If Lahore Qalandars thrashing of Islamabad United the first time these sides met this season read like an aberration, Qalandars gave them another one, just for good measure. In an imperious performance that consolidates their credentials as the favourites to retain this title, United were swept aside with disdain in Rawalpindi by 119 runs. It is the heaviest defeat inflicted on any side in PSL history. Fakhar Zaman's 115 in

the first innings set them up for an imposing total - 226 is the Qalandars' second-highest score. But after Quetta Gladiators chased down an even bigger score the previous night, a chase felt very realistic. This is where Qalandars' bowlers shone, running riot through Islamabad's storied batting line-up and skittling them out for 107. In the end, Fakhar's individual score was higher than Islamabad's collected final tally, another PSL first. After 240 hadn't proved

enough for Peshawar Zalmi the previous night, Lahore's decision to bat first was intrepid, but showed the faith they place in their bowlers, even on a surface like this. The start was wobbly, though, with Abdullah Shafique squeezed down leg in the first over. Crucially, Asif Ali dropped Fakhar Zaman when he was on one, and even as early as that in the game, it was a sliding doors moment. After a tight couple of overs, Fakhar walloped

Fazalhaq Farooqi for three boundaries, before plundering 16 in Faheem Ashraf's first over. Despite Kamran Ghulam struggling for rhythm at the other end, he only needed to keep turning the strike over, and Fakhar was happy to do the damage. By the end of the powerplay, Lahore were up to 65. But they knew they needed a huge score against a batting line-up like United's, and they kept going. Fakhar took apart Shadab Khan in a seminal moment of the contest, while Ghulam came to life against Mubasir Khan. And Fakhar continued the onslaught against the United captain in a passage of play where 49 runs came off 14 balls, and the run rate ballooned. United nailed the Qalandars down after Mohammad Wasim dismissed Ghulam, and briefly even threatened to keep the target around 200. But once Fakhar survived an extremely narrow lbw call - with HawkEye deeming a delivery crashing into the stumps to have pitched fractionally outside leg - he was rejuvenated once more. Alongside Sam Billings, he

smashed Wasim for 20 runs in the 16th over, and thereafter United's death bowling fell apart. He brought up the hundred in that over, and in a blizzard of boundaries Lahore helped themselves to 72 in the final five. The notion almost seems quaint now, but on a Pindi surface that has helped batters out to the extent it has this week, the game wasn't over then. After seeing off Shaheen Afridi's first over respectfully, the United machine began to whirr, taking 27 runs off the two following overs. It was Zaman Khan who broke the game open for the Qalandars with the wicket of Rahmanullah Gurbaz, who he'd tormented through the over, before finally putting him out of his misery with a short ball. A full delivery shaping away drew the curtain on Colin Munro's innings, and from thereon it was the Rashid Khan show. Shadab Khan struck one six off him before the Afghan hit back, a top edge removing the United captain cheaply once more. The wickets were falling in clumps now: David Wiese soon got rid of Alex Hales

as he misused a slice right at the keeper. Islamabad United's own keeper, and middle order talisman Azam Khan, was unavailable following a finger injury he'd picked up in the first innings. In this kind of form, those are big shoes to fill, with the lower middle order hopelessly ill-equipped for the task against bowling of this quality. That skill was crystallised in a glorious Rashid delivery to Mubasir Khan, drifting in around middle and whooshing past the outside edge to trim the outside of off stump. Faheem Ashraf was trapped dead in front, and by now an Islamabad mauling was inevitable. Rashid made it four wickets by cleaning up Asif Ali, and finishing with 4-21 on a surface every other batter had found to be a paradise. Haris Rauf wrapped up the game with the final two wickets in a chastening evening at home for Islamabad to seal a top-two spot for his side. Both of these sides will go through to the playoffs, but on current evidence, the gap between them is a chasm.

Najmul powers Bangladesh to T20 upset over England

CHITTAGONG (APP): Najmul Hossain hit 51 off 30 balls as Bangladesh held their nerve to beat world champions England by six wickets in the first Twenty20 international in Chittagong on Thursday. Najmul's third T20I fifty guided Bangladesh to 158-4 in 18 overs after the hosts held England to 156-6, despite skipper Jos Buttler making 67 off 42 balls. Buttler put on 80 runs with Phil Salt in their opening partnership after the hosts put England in to bat first. But England crumbled after Buttler's fourth-wicket dismissal and managed just 21 runs in the last five overs. Pace bowler Hasan Mahmud, who forced Buttler to give a catch at long-on in the 16th over, finished with 2-26. Bangladesh got off to a positive start as Rony Talukdar (21) and Liton Das (12) put on 33 in the opening stand. Adil Rashid bowled Talukdar to break the stand and Jofra Archer soon removed Liton. But Najmul and debutant Towhid Hridoy added 65 runs for the third wicket to put Bangladesh in control. Moeen Ali ended their partnership by getting rid of Hridoy for 24 after Najmul raced to his fifty off 27 balls. Mark Wood bowled Najmul for some small revenge after conceding fours to the left-hander off each of his first four balls. Shakib Al Hasan denied England further momentum and drove home the win with a boundary off Chris Jordan to stay 34 not out. Afif Hossain was not out for 15 at the other end as the duo added 46 runs in their unbroken fifth wicket stand.

Our bowling was not up to mark: Babar Azam

ISLAMABAD (APP): Peshawar Zalmi Skipper Babar Azam feels not up to mark bowling cost them the game of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 8 against Quetta Gladiators. Peshawar Zalmi and Quetta Gladiators added another classic to their epic rivalry on late Wednesday as the latter chased down a towering 241-run target with eight wickets in hand and 10 balls to spare at the Pindi Stadium. In a match that saw 483 runs being scored - the highest run aggregate for an HBL Pakistan Super League match - records tumbled regularly. Some were broken in the run chase after only being made in the first innings. For example, Babar Azam's record for most fours in an HBL PSL innings (15) lasted less than two hours as Jason Roy clubbed 20 fours in the run chase. "You feel disappointed when you lose after scoring 200 runs. Jason Roy should be given the credit for his outstanding display. Our bowling was not up to the mark and we couldn't

execute the game plan as we wanted too," he said in a presser after the end of the game on late Wednesday. The prolific batter said the wicket in Rawalpindi was also a batting one. "But the wicket here also supports the bowlers. The upcoming next two matches were very crucial for us. We will try to score 280 runs in the next match." He said the team we played was the best. "You always go with the winning combination and this team has won us matches in the past. Salman Arshad performed very well for Zalmi last year but his performance was not the same in this edition. So we have to rest a player, so that he can sit back and regain his form." To a question, he said it was his wish to score a century in PSL and he did but it would have been better if Islamabad had won. About Saim Ayub who scored (74 off 34), he said the way he's playing throughout the tournament it is outstanding and he was improving his batting with every

game. "He is improving day by day and I'm keeping an eye on all performing youngsters in the league. It is good for Pakistan that many players will come up. The more they will play they would get better. Gladiators opener Jason Roy said it was his best innings in T20 cricket. "I was all the way till the end which is an incredible feeling as an opener. This innings will go on down to me as the greatest. This is my best T20 innings ever. It will definitely live long time in my memory. I'm feeling on top of the world." On Babar Azam and Saim Ayub's innings he said, "That was incredible to watch; unfortunately, it was against us. I mean, it is the sort of stuff I watch on TV loads of times, with Babar the way he plays. I think that was his eighth hundred, and to watch it first-hand, it was extremely special, and he is a beautiful player to watch. And he was helped extremely well from the other end with his opening partner (Saim), the youngster coming through."

SBP rally to create awareness about Rustam-e-Punjab Dangal

LAHORE (APP): The Sports board Punjab (SBP) took out a rally from Liberty Chowk to Main Market for creating awareness among the public about Janshan-e-Baharan Rustam-e-Punjab Dangal, here on Thursday. Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs Punjab Shahid Zaman was the chief guest at the rally. Former Rustam-e-Pakistan Mohammad Bashir Bhola Bhala Pehlwan presented a mace to secretary Sports Punjab. Assistant Commissioner Model Town Sahibzada Yousaf, Director Youth Affairs Syed Umair Hassan, Director Admin Ijaz Muneer, Divisional Sports Officer Lahore Tariq Khanzada, were also present at the largely-attended rally. Talking to the media, the secretary Sports Punjab said that dangal is the identity of Punjab and a popular sport among the youth. "Punjab Sports Department is taking all essential measures to promote Dangal across the province," he added. He said that Dangal will be held at Punjab Stadium on March 10 as part of Janshan-e-Baharan celebra-

tions. "All top wrestlers of the province will participate in the Dangal. Our talented youth should come forward and take part in traditional wrestling competitions". He further said that Punjab Sports Department will adopt all necessary measures to promote the traditional games in all parts of the province. "Janshan-e-Baharan events are being organized in a befitting manner. Marathon Race, Tour de Lahore Cycle Race, Family Race and Wheelchair Race will be organised on March 12," he said. Over 100 famous wrestlers including former Rustam-e-Pakistan Bashir Bhola Bhala Pehlwan, Sher-e-Punjab Shahid Khoey Wala Pehlwan, international referee Farid Ali and more than 80 motorcyclists also participated in the rally. Different attractive floats were also displayed during the rally to highlight the significance of the Dangal. Several sports loving youngsters also took part in bhanga dance on the melodic drumbeat at the beginning of the rally. SBP will organise Rustam-e-Punjab Dangal in

at Punjab Stadium tomorrow Friday in which as many as 30 bouts will be competed. Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs Punjab Shahid Zaman, Commissioner Lahore Ch Muhammad Ali Randhawa, Deputy Commissioner Lahore Rafia Haider, Director General Sports Punjab Muhammad Tariq Qureshi will be the guests of honour on this occasion. Top national wrestlers including Adnan Pehlwan, Malu Pehlwan, Heera Pehlwan, Gullu Pehlwan, Aftab Pehlwan, Mehboob Pehlwan, Nomi Pehlwan, Abdul Manan alias Mani Pehlwan, Chhota Malu Pehlwan, Mama Pehlwan, Ali Pehlwan, Farid Pehlwan, Sultan Pehlwan, Usman Pehlwan, Atif Pehlwan, Abbas Pehlwan, Ahmed Pehlwan, Razaq Pehlwan, Shahid Pehlwan, Yusuf Pehlwan, Shafiq Pehlwan, Sajawal Pehlwan, Goonga Pehlwan, M Yar Pehlwan, Javed Pehlwan, Qamar Pehlwan, Hameed Pehlwan, Ramzan Pehlwan and Hasan Pehlwan will participate in bouts of Janshan-e-Baharan Rustam-e-Punjab Dangal.

Khawaja century gives Australia edge over India on Day 1



AHMEDABAD (AP): Usman Khawaja struck Australia's first century of the series to edge India on a grinding first day Thursday of the fourth test. Australia was in no hurry and fought hard in amassing 255-4 by stumps with Khawaja batting through the entire day to finish unbeaten on 104 runs. He faced 251 balls. Cameron Green was also unbeaten on 49. India took two wickets before lunch and two after tea. Khawaja and Steve Smith led Australia through lunch at 75-2, in front of the countries' Prime Ministers - Narendra Modi and Anthony Albanese - and through tea at 149-2. Through the afternoon, the first wicket-less session in the four-match series, Khawaja crossed 50 for the third time this series, off 146 balls. His partnership with Smith ended after a shared 79 runs when Smith played on against spinner Ravindra Jadeja. Smith scored 38 off 135 balls. Pacer Mohammed

Shami bowled Peter Handscomb on 17 at 191-4, but Green regained the momentum for Australia by attacking the Indians. Green hit eight boundaries in racing to 49 in a stand of 85 with the patient Khawaja. Khawaja plodded safely to his 14th test hundred off 246 balls, bringing up the milestone in the day's last over when he flicked Shami to deep square for his 15th boundary. He's the first batter to bat through a day in a test in India since Sri Lanka's Dinesh Chandimal in 2017. Khawaja toured India twice previously without playing a test, and has been making up for lost chances on this tour. "There was a lot of emotion in that innings," Khawaja said. "It was a mental battle more than anything else. It has been a long journey (to score runs in India). As an Australian you always want to score runs here. It's a special feeling." Green's combative attitude against the second new ball helped Australia reap

54 runs off the last nine overs of the day. The day made an unusual start when Modi and Albanese arrived to mark 75 years of cricket between the countries. Owing to security concerns, the players couldn't make use of the ground for their morning warmups, but both prime ministers joined the teams on the field for the anthems. The lack of a warmup seemed to be reflected in the India pacers' performance. Shami and Umesh Yadav looked rusty after being made to bowl first. Openers Khawaja and Travis Head (32) took advantage and added 61 runs for the first wicket. Shami bowled Marnus Labuschagne for 3 at 72-2. But Khawaja and Smith laid the foundation for Australia's good start at Motera. India has an unassailable 2-1 lead in the series. It won the first two tests in Nagpur and Delhi, while Australia won the third in Indore.

Noor bags National Tenpin Bowling C'ship title

ISLAMABAD (APP): Noor Al Ain has won the Deaf Women's title of the National Tenpin Bowling Championship organised by the Pakistan Tenpin Bowling Federation at Leisure City Bowling Club, Jinnah Park Rawalpindi. Muaz Baig and Amna also bagged the Deaf Amateur Open and Ladies single titles respectively. The championship was inaugurated by Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaquat Ali Chhatta. President, Pakistan Tenpin Bowling Federation, Ijaz ur Rehman, General Secretary, Mohammad Hussain Chhatta and Divisional Sports Officer Rawalpindi Haji Waheed Babar were also present. On the opening day of the championship, women's competitions were held on the occasion of International Women's Day. Noor won the women's deaf category competition while Faiza Noor and Sadia won the second and third positions, respectively. Muaz Baig won the Deaf Amateur Open competition. Qasim bagged the second position. Abdul Rehman took home the third position while Shahzad Ahmed obtained the fourth position. Amna secured the ladies' single title while Maryam and Tania received second and third positions, respectively. The competitions including Men's Singles, Men's Doubles, Team Event, Amateur, Deaf (Men's and Women's) and Media categories were being played in the event. The semi-finals of the event would be held on March 11 while the final on March 12. Prize money of Rs one million has been kept for the championship.

National Open Polo C'ship for Quaid-e-Azam Gold Cup: two matches decided

LAHORE (APP): Master Paints/Newage Cables team and Master Paints team recorded victories in different styles in the Century Ventures National Open Polo Championship for Quaid-e-Azam Gold Cup 2023 here at Lahore Polo Club on Thursday. In the first match of the day, phenomenal performance of Juan Cruz Greguol powered Master Paints/Newage to a thrilling 8-7 win over Diamond Paints in the sudden death chukker. Greguol was in sublime form and played outstanding polo for his team. He contributed with four fabulous goals for Master Paints/Newage while his teammates Simon Prada (3 goals) and Raja Temur Nadeem (1 goal) played equally well. For Diamond Paints, Mir Huzafa Ahmed and Chulo Corti played brilliantly and thrashed in three goals each while the remaining one came from Nico Roberts. The first chukker of the match was played well by both the sides, who succeeded in converting one goal each to finish it 1-1. Master Paints/Newage played better polo in the second chukker as they slammed in two goals against one by

Remounts to get a slight 3-2 lead. The third chukker was identical to the second one as once against two goals were converted by Master Paints/Newage against one by Remounts to stretch their lead to 5-3. Master Paints/Newage maintained their good show in the fourth chukker as well as they banged in another brace against one goal by Remounts to enhance their lead to 7-4. Diamond Paints started the fifth chukker aggressively which paid dividend for them and they succeeded in thrashing in three back-to-back goals to equalize the score at 7-7. No more goal was scored by either side, thus the match entered the sudden death chukker. Both the sides tried hard to hammer the match winner and after a tough fight, Greguol converted the decisive goal to steer his side to a thrilling 8-7 win. Manuel Crespo's heroics helped Master Paints thump Remounts 8-4 in the second match of the day. Crespo played extremely well for Master Paints as he not only exhibited great mallet and pony prowess against Remounts but also succeeded in smashing in seven superb goals while Pelayo Berazadi scored one goal.

On the other hand, Manuel Sundblad fired in four goals for Remounts. Master Paints dominated the match right from the word go as they pumped in one goal in the first chukker and hammered a hat-trick of goals in the second chukker to take a 4-0 lead. They added one more in their tally in the third chukker to make it 5-0 while Remounts struck their first goal to reduce the margin to 1-5. Remounts made a good comeback in the highly-charged fourth chukker as they thrashed in three goals while Master Paints managed to score two goals that helped them still enjoy the 7-4 lead. The fifth and last chukker saw Master Paints scoring the only goal of the match to win the encounter by 8-4. Lahore Polo Club President Umar Sadiq, executive committee members and a large number of players and polo enthusiasts were present on this occasion to witness and enjoy the enthralling exciting matches at Lahore Polo Club. Tomorrow (Friday), two important matches will be played. The first match will be played between FG Polo and DS Polo at 2:00 pm, while the second match will be played between HN Polo and BN Polo at 4:00 pm.



In brief

IU management visits

Police Office
ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad United Cricket Team owner Ali Naqvi along with team management visited the Central Police Office and met with Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr Akbar Nasir Khan. During the meeting the other day, the Islamabad United cricket team invited the children and families of martyrs and Ghazis of Islamabad Police to watch the Pakistan Super League matches. They also paid rich tributes to the sacrifices of the officers and jawans of Islamabad Police. The owner of the Islamabad United cricket team also presented a souvenir to IGP Islamabad.

IRSA releases 87,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 87,800 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 56,500 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1440.87 feet and was 42.87 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow in the dam was recorded as 23,300 cusecs while the outflow as 50,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1104.20 feet, which was 54.20 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 17,700 cusecs and 22,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 52,300, 40,500, 33,000 and 10,500 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 7,300 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 3,000 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

Police arrest seven gamblers

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi district Police arrested seven gamblers and recovered Rs 25,600 stake money, seven mobile phones and valuables from their possession, said a police spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that R.A.Bazhar police conducted a raid and arrested seven gamblers namely Imran, Jameel, Shahid, Ali, Arslan, Imran and Jahangir who were allegedly involved in betting while playing table game. Case has been registered against the arrested accused while further investigation was underway. Superintendent of Police, Potohar Muhammad Waqas Khan said that gambling was the root cause of other evils and those involved in such crimes do not deserve any concession.

Eight kite sellers arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi district police on the directives of City Police Officer, Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani here on Thursday continued a special crackdown against kite sellers and flyers and managed to net eight. According to a police spokesman, all police stations of the district had been directed to accelerate ongoing operations against kite-flying ban violators while special teams constituted to control kite-flying under the supervision of senior police officers were conducting raids in different areas. The spokesman said that Taxila, Waris Khan, Gungmandi, and Chakri police conducted raids and recovered hundreds of kites, kite flying string rolls, two 30-bore pistols and ammunition from the possession of arrested accused identified as Zafar Iqbal, Abdul Siraj, Hamza, Ibtisam, Aqeel, Arslan, Jamshaid, and Hayat.

IT skills helpful for women to explore emerging business trends: Samina Alvi

ISLAMABAD, Mar 9 (APP): Begum Samina Alvi on Wednesday urged women to explore the field of information technology in view of its importance as the future of the economy.

Addressing the 30th convocation of Fazaia Bilquis College of Education for Women at PAF Base Nur Khan, she said universities in the country needed to focus on cyber security, Artificial Intelligence, cloud computing, and data analytics as the world needs skilled professionals in these disciplines.

Begum Alvi said more and more companies, businesses, governments, and private organizations had adopted IT tools in their daily business processes and added that in the future, even more companies would shift to digital means.

She said expertise in IT could prove a golden opportunity for Pakistan, which was struggling to

improve its economy and enhance exports.

"By investing in the IT sector, equipping the youth, especially women with relevant skills, the country can amplify the volume of its exports and get out of the financial problems," she said.

Felicitating the graduates, she said their journey in the pursuit of education did not end but was an ongoing process of learning with experiences.

She termed women an important part of the country and urged them to apply knowledge to the best of their ability in practical life.

"Enhance your knowledge, excel in your profession, and use it for the betterment of society," she told the gathering of graduates.

Begum Alvi quoted the saying of the founder of Pakistan Qaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah that "No nation can rise to the height of glory unless your

women are side by side with you".

She lauded Fazaia Bilquis College of Education for Women, which as a unique non-profit institution, was imparting high-quality education to women. She also appreciated President Pakistan Air Force Women's Association (PAFWA) for its support in promoting education among women.

Begum Alvi gave away medals among the distinguished students, while Vice Chancellor Air University Air Marshal Javed Ahmed conferred degrees on the graduates.

Principal of the college, Ayesha Khurram, said 16 research publications had been started in collaboration with the Air University. She said the institution focused on the promotion of entrepreneurship and short courses to help women excel in diverse fields.

Motorway Police to implement ITS on major motorways in two years

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) has planned to introduce the Intelligent Transport System (ITS) on motorways M1, M2, M3, and M4 in the next two years.

Talking to APP here on Thursday, an official of NHMP said that the Motorway Police had signed an agreement with the Frontier Works Organization (FWO) through the National Highway Authority to implement the ITS on various motorways including M1, M2, M3, and M4 over the next two years.

He said that with this new system, commuters would no longer be stopped unnecessarily on the motorway. He said that the Lahore-Sialkot motorway had adopted a completely

humanless system and the road users on this motorway will not be stopped for challan payment but will be required to pay the challan along with the toll tax when they exit the motorway.

The official informed that in developed countries the ITS system was designed to send challans to offenders after they have left the road, but in Pakistan, there are several hurdles to overcome. For instance, he said one vehicle was often used by multiple family members, making it difficult to identify to whom the challan should be issued to.

Additionally, he said many people use unregistered vehicles with open letters, making it hard to enforce the ITS system and send challans to their homes. The implementation of the ITS system requires a

strong database to ensure accurate and efficient enforcement, he maintained.

He affirmed that despite challenges, the ITS system marks a significant milestone in the NHMP's efforts to modernise its services. He stated that currently, road users can pay the 'challan' [ticket] along with the toll tax, and in the coming years, the ITS system was set to revolutionize the way challans are issued and enforced on Pakistan's national highways and motorways.

The official said NHMP would implement a state-of-the-art Intelligent Enforcement System, adding that the new system was aimed at minimizing inconvenience for commuters by informing them about when and where they have committed any violations on the road.

BISP registers over 0.4m households in NSER from flood affected districts

ISLAMABAD (APP): Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) has so far registered over 4,00,000 households in the recently launched dynamic National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) survey through its registration centers at Tehsil level.

Around 1,70,000 households have been registered in the NSER from the flood-affected districts so that the losses incurred by the households can be estimated to provide assistance.

According to an official source, the launch of the first ever dynamic NSER in the history of Pakistan will enhance the country's capacity to cope with disasters, pandemics and economic instability by adopting a more effective data collection mechanism for the poor households.

The NSER is a landmark achievement and is linked with National Database Registration Authority (NADRA) for data collection as well as validation and can allow swift registration of six distinct types of information for the registry which shall be validated through NADRA.

The six different types include registration of missed-out households, eligibility appeal cut-off for poor but ineligible households with widows or elderly people, roster updates for regular changes such as marital status, inclusion of new born, changes or correction in education, health, disability and employment information of household members, gauging information on households impacted by disasters and their re-registration, reassessment of ineligible households for last two years and reassessment of eligible or benefici-

ary households for last three years.

The registry provides registration and information update opportunities to all citizens. Since this registry is linked with NADRA, only NADRA-authenticated information can be registered or updated.

Besides registration centres, an app will also be launched through Google play store which will facilitate the already registered households in changing or correcting their information. While mobile registration is also planned for far-off areas which will register household information at their doorsteps.

It is pertinent to mention here that the NSER which is the scientifically based real-time data collection was launched by BISP to identify deserving families and households across Pakistan and to provide them with targeted cash assistance.

The BISP was launched in 2008 as the largest social safety net programme in the country with an aim to provide financial assistance to households living below the poverty line. While initiating the programme the foremost challenge was the unavailability of reliable data on poverty.

Although programmes like Bait-ul-Mal and Zakat were functional; however, they too did not possess any scientific data because these programmes were providing financial assistance at a very small scale.

Keeping in view that people were suffering from inflation and needed swift financial assistance, the government started targeting poor households with the help of parliamentarians. BISP also started exploring options for intro-

ducing a scientific-based targeting mechanism with the technical assistance of the World Bank.

The targeting mechanism was piloted in 16 districts in 2009 while the successful piloting was followed by a nationwide rollout in 2011. This door-to-door survey resulted in the accumulation of data from 27 million households which helped target those below the poverty line.

This information collected through a door-to-door survey formed the basis of NSER in 2011. The main objective of the NSER was not only to facilitate the targeting of poor households for BISP but also to provide a targeting platform for all social safety organizations in Pakistan.

The database formed in 2012 was becoming obsolete as a number of households could not be included in the programme while with every passing day, their socioeconomic conditions were deteriorating.

Besides there were some households who had graduated from poverty but still they were benefiting from the programme.

Another door-to-door survey was planned in the year 2016 to update the data of 2011. This survey was concluded in 2022 and as a result of this survey, data of 25 million households was collected.

Such door to door survey cost billions of rupees and cannot be re-conducted again. This resulted in a decision of designing a dynamic registry. Keeping in view all the circumstances, the BISP started working on the design of this dynamic registry which aimed at registering socioeconomic changes in real time.



RAWALPINDI: First Lady Begum Samina Alvi addressing the 30th Convocation of the Fazaia Bilquis College of Education for Women Pakistan Air Force (PAF) Nur Khan, in Rawalpind.

WAPDA to add 10,000 MW hydel electricity by 2030

ISLAMABAD (APP): Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) has embarked on an ambitious plan to double the share of low-cost, clean and green electricity to the installed capacity of the country by 2030.

Under the plan, an additional 10,000 megawatts (MW) would be added to the system during the said period, official sources told APP here. With the addition of over 10,000 MW, the generation would touch 20,000 MW from the existing 9,500 MW, they said.

The additional 10,000 MW would be added to the system through various ongoing mega projects like 4,500 MW Diamer Basha Dam, 4,200 MW Dasu Hydropower Project, 800 MW Mohmand Dam, 1,530 MW Tarbela 5th Extension and Kurram Tangi dam etc projects, they said.

They said that the capacity of Mangla Power House was also being enhanced through refurbishment and upon completion additional 300 MW would be available. The said mega projects would not only add a handsome chunk of hydel electricity to the system but also store another 12 million acre-feet (MAF) of water for agriculture purposes.

ANF seizes 28 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) has seized 28 kg drugs and 9000 intoxicated tablets in three operations conducted in different areas and arrested an accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday.

He informed that in an operation near Peshawar Haji Camp Bus Stand, ANF recovered 24 kg charras and four kg opium from a parcel being sent to Lahore.

In another raid at International Mail Office Rawalpindi, ANF recovered 242 grams weed from a parcel booked for London.

He informed that in third operation at Karachi Pakistan International Container Terminal, ANF recovered 9000 intoxicated tablets from a container being sent to Dubai. ANF also arrested an accused resident of Karachi. Separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process.

Nine injured as van overturns in Shujabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): As many as nine people were critically wounded when a speeding passenger van overturned in Shujabad, a tehsil of Multan District in Punjab province on Thursday.

As per details, the accident occurred at the Motorway M5 in Shujabad where a van turned turtle due to overspeeding. Resultantly, nine persons, including women, sustained injuries, a private news channel reported.

Police and rescue teams reached the spot after getting information and shifted the injured to a nearby hospital.

Pak-EU strengthening ties to deal with climate change: Ambassador

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of the EU to Pakistan, Dr Reena Kivinka here on Thursday said that the European Union (EU) and Pakistan were further strengthening ties to deal with challenges related to climate change, especially after the recent floods that wreaked havoc in the country, and to overcome barriers to gender equality.

Talking to a private news channel, she said the EU had expressed solidarity with the flood victims of Pakistan, saying the catastrophe was caused due to climate change. She also highlighted the steps being taken by the EU in mitigating the effects of climate change.

Observing that women were most vulnerable to such natural disasters, she said, "Around 85% of all

new EU programmes will have a special focus on bringing gender equality in Pakistan, as the overall women's participation in the decision-making process at home and community level is low."

She stressed the need to empower rural women to build their resilience to reverse the impacts of natural calamities in an effective manner. "Climate change is a global problem and needs global cooperation," she stressed.

"We believe that formulating answers to non-traditional security challenges such as climate change and promoting global cooperation is mandatory for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)", she added.

To another question, she

replied, "Climate change is our top list priority area and the joint commission was constituted for providing an opportunity to exchange views on all areas of cooperation between both countries."

Responding to a question, Dr Reena replied the EU with the collaboration of the Government of Pakistan had devised a policy for practical solutions to fulfill the needs of mothers and children in the flood-hit areas, including their educational needs.

Reiterating the EU's commitment in supporting women's rights and empowerment, she said, "Gender equality and the fight against violence against women was the core of EU policies in Europe and other partner countries."

Students of Kurram call on Federal Minister Sajid Hussain Turi

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation of students from Government Postgraduate College Parachinar and Government Degree College Sadda called on Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Sajid Hussain Turi, here on Thursday.

The delegation was led by Murtaza Hussain, Gohar Zaman, Bakht Zamin Mangal and Ifthikhar Hussain and was sponsored by the CRA-N. The delegation briefed the minister on various issues, particularly the problems of the students of the newly merged districts (former FATA). Sajid Hussain Turi told the students that his ministry had taken concrete steps to provide fully funded programs for children of working folks and overseas Pakistanis. Around millions of rupees had been released for the scholarships of students in various universities of the country. He said, "Providing better educational opportunities to children of workers and overseas Pakistanis is the government's top priority."

He said, "Schools are being opened by his ministry in all districts of the erstwhile FATA. Sajid Hussain Turi urged the students to actively participate in socioeconomic and extra-curricular activities and launch awareness campaigns regarding women's education. He advised the students to also take technical and language courses as there was a demand for the skilled Pakistani workforce, particularly in Europe. The minister appreciated and extended a warm welcome to the delegation and assured full cooperation to resolve their issues, including those related to the education and health sectors.

One more infected with Covide-19

RAWALPINDI (APP): One more person was diagnosed with fatal Coronavirus during the last 24 hours, raising the district's tally of confirmed cases to 47,773. As per the latest data released by the District Health Authority here Thursday, the infected cases included 44,126 from Rawalpindi and 3,647 from other districts.

The report added that the new case had arrived from the Rawal town area while five confirmed patients were quarantined at homes.

The report further updated that 7,006,011 people, including 44,790 health workers, had jabbed themselves against the lethal Coronavirus (COVID-19) across the district since the vaccination administering drive launched on March 10, 2021.

District Health Authority added that during the last 24 hours, 224 samples were collected, out of which 223 were declared negative, while the positivity rate was recorded at 0.45 per cent.

NHA prioritizes road safety thorough maintenance programs

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a bid to prioritize road safety, the National Highway Authority (NHA) embraces maintenance programs to ensure safe, secure and comfortable traveling for commuters.

Talking to APP here on Thursday an official of NHA informed that the authority has recently constructed a pedestrian bridge in Lahore to provide a safe crossing over the busy Canal Road.

He said that one of the most important aspects of the maintenance program is routine maintenance, which covers a 10-kilometer stage and is awarded to contractors for the entire year. He said that contractors are responsible for maintaining the roads and keeping them free of potholes and patches along with repairing roads throughout the year.

For routine maintenance, the NHA also conducts periodic maintenance schemes for roads that have completed their lifespan or require addi-

guide commuters and marks signs and warnings on the roads. He said that these signs and markings help drivers navigate the roads and avoid potential hazards.

In addition, he said that the NHA constructs pedestrian bridges to provide a safe crossing for pedestrians. He informed that the authority has recently constructed a pedestrian bridge in Lahore to provide a safe crossing over the busy Canal Road.

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For routine maintenance, the NHA also conducts periodic maintenance schemes for roads that have completed their lifespan or require addi-

tion maintenance beyond routine maintenance, the official said, adding that these sections cover an area of 15 to 20 kilometers and are part of the annual maintenance plan.

He said that once the scheme is approved, a contract is awarded and work begins. "The maintenance works include overlays such as functional overlay, structural overlay, and rehabilitation for roads that have reached the end of their lifespan", he added.

The official informed that in times of emergency, the NHA has special funds available in the budget for maintenance works and after approval from headquarters, such works are carried out in addition to routine maintenance work.

The NHA also awards contracts for tree plantation to promote a green environment and reduce the carbon footprint and the authority is committed to ensuring safety along with providing comfort to commuters through its maintenance programs.

Six projects commenced

MAIDAN WARDAK (Agencies): 6 development projects with a cost of 4.8 million Afghani with the support of the Afghanistan Social Livelihood Program were started in Maidan Wardak and Jalraiz District. The projects include road construction, cleaning of canals, and supply of drinkable water. These projects will be completed in 2 months, according to local officials work has been provided for 176 people.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Shabaan 17, 1444 — Friday, March 10, 2023

11.3b Afs gathered from Taxes

KABUL (Agencies): Finance Ministry on Thursday says that a total of 11.3 billion Afghani from the country's taxes in the past 11 months. According to the ministry, the collected taxes shows an increase of 2.1 billion Afghani upsurge compared with the past year. Lately, the Ministry said that the General Directorate of Customs for the first time before the end of the fiscal year completed its revenue target which was 105 billion Afghani.

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

Blast in Mazar-e-Sharif kills 3 including Balkh Governor

MAZAR-E-SHARIF (Khaama Press): An explosion took place in northern Mazar-e-Sharif province on Thursday morning, claiming the lives of the provincial governor and his two security guards, according to local sources.

According to sources, a brutal attack took place in the premises of the provincial governor's office around 10 am on Thursday morning, as a result of which four people including Mohammad Dawood Muzammil, the governor of Balkh province were killed.

The province's Taliban police spokesman Mohammad Asif Waziri confirmed the death of the provincial governor and his



two security guards and said that two other people were wounded in the attack.

Waziri said that the terror attack took place during an administrative meeting, and the cause of the explo-

sion was not immediately known as no one or group has claimed the responsibility so far.

This comes as another explosion occurred in provincial district five in Kabul city earlier today, with no further details about casualties and type of the explosion.

Despite the Islamic Emirate authorities have repeatedly claimed that the war is over in Afghanistan, security still remains a major challenge for the de facto regime. Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K) militant group has launched brutal attacks in the capital Kabul and other provinces, since the Taliban seized power in August 2021.

Over the past year, the militant group has targeted foreign embassies, a diplomatic mission, a Chinese-run hotel, and educational institutions in the heart of Kabul, which resulted in the death and injury of scores of innocent civilians.

Jirga solidarity held among ethnic groups

PANJSHIR (Agencies): "Jirga of unity and solidarity among ethnic groups" was held in Panjshir.

During Jirga, Mawlawi Mohammad Mohseen Hashemi, Governor of Panjshir, said, "The Islamic Emirate is the protector of the interests of all the people, no one has the right to violate the rights of the people in any capacity, he said, the people of Panjshir are apart of the Islamic Emirate adding that Panjshir people support the system.

Later, the head of the Jirga coordination of the Ministry of Border and Tribal Affairs, Mawlawi Abdul Khaliq Abid acknowledged the unity among people, said that the Islamic Emirate committed establishing unity in the country.

OIC representative meets FM Muttaqi, discusses Afghanistan



KABUL (Khaama Press): The special representative of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Tarig Ali Bakheet met with the Acting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, Amir Khan Muttaqi on Wednesday in Kandahar and discussed women's status.

During the meeting, the OIC Ambassador discussed the follow-up on the implementation of the resolution of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers on Afghanistan. Mr. Bakheet also shed light on the organization's support towards the people of Afghanistan, with particular emphasis on reviewing the decisions restricting the rights of women and girls to education and work.

The foreign ministry of Afghanistan in a statement

said the meeting also focused on the expansion of political, economic, and social relations between OIC and the Afghan interim government.

Furthermore, OIC Ambassador assured minister Muttaqi of the Islamic organization's long-lasting support for Afghanistan across different areas, be it humanitarian aid, education, healthcare, and more. "A special delegation of OIC will visit Afghanistan in the near future to assess the needs in different sectors and to provide more humanitarian aid to the people of Afghanistan during these difficult times," Mr. Bakheet said.

Meanwhile, on Wednesday, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, in

a conference at the UN headquarters in New York expressed his concern and that of the OIC regarding Afghan women and girls who have been deprived of their basic rights to education and work.

"Pakistan and other Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries express their deep disappointment at the restrictions imposed on the human rights of women and girls, especially their right to education and work, in Afghanistan," Minister Bilawal said.

Considering the existing situation, Afghan women's status remains under the international community's spotlight, with special attention on the violation of their rights to education and work.

Women's handicraft exhibition organized in Kabul



KABUL (TOLOnews): A women's handicraft exhibition was held in Kabul to support women's handicrafts in Afghanistan.

The Rah Danesh sewing

workshop organized its first exhibition with the cooperation of businesswomen.

"Today's exhibition is to support women and traders who have the skills in jew-

elry, weaving, sewing Afghan clothes, and bead embroidery.

Meanwhile, some businesswomen asked the country's citizens to support

these businesswomen and their crafts.

"We asked about a separate market for women so we do not need exhibitions and we can sell our handicrafts," said Mursal, a businesswoman.

"We want to allow these kinds of exhibitions so we can work," said Huma Rasa, a businesswoman. A number of visitors welcomed these kinds of exhibitions by women.

"The exhibition is super, and we are so happy that it's made by women, and Afghan clothes are so beautiful," said Hania, a visitor.

"We are so happy for these Afghan clothes made by women in our country," said Behishta, a visitor.

This exhibition was held for three days in the sewing workshop of Rah Danesh, which was established three months ago by a small number of women.

30 schools to be restored

BALKH (Agencies): The head of WASH organization in a meeting, with the head of Balkh education department said that the organization is ready to assist in the restoration of 30 schools in the province.

Shami shared details about the functions and activities of the WASH organization said that they have renovated 30 schools in Balkh this year, adding that scientific and hygiene seminars for teachers has been started by the organization.

The head of education in Balkh praised the cooperation and activities of the WASH organization, emphasized that these cooperations should be further expanded in the education sector.

Weapons recovered

PAKTIA (Agencies): Many weapons and ammunition have been recovered and seized by police in Paktia.

The Paktia Police say that in the past week, a large number of weapons and ammunition have been recovered and seized from the Gardiz and Jaji Aroub districts of Paktia. The discovered, weapons include two Kalashnikovs, two rifles, handcuffs, five cameras, one hundred and twenty bags, and a large number of military equipment seized, police said.

The police of Paktia say that their officers arrested 3 people on charges of weapons and weapons.

2,000 saplings to be planted

KABUL (Agencies): The Islamic Bank, Azizi Bank, and ONEX are ready to plant 2,000 saplings in Kabul.

These private institutions want to plant 2,000 saplings in Shahr Naw Park and other parts of the 4th and 10th districts of Kabul city.

Meanwhile, Kabul Municipality planted 4,000 saplings of different parts and flowers in the garden area of Kabul zoo.

Lack of female doctors in Paktika province



PAKTIKA (TOLOnews): Paktika province has a population of 1.5 million people but just has three hospitals and two women doctors.

Officials in this province said that due to the lack of female doctors, they have to appoint male doctors.

Some residents of the province come to the hospital from far-off districts and called on officials to address their problems.

Gul Bi Bi is a resident of Jhoshmand district and after traveling six hours she came to the hospital and said

that due to the lack of hospitals, many women have suffered serious problems.

"There is no doctor, and we have to come very far to the hospital," said Gul Bibi.

"If the patient is coming from a distance, some times we lose our patients on the way," said Sarwar Khan, a Paktika resident.

Some female doctors at the central hospital said that due to numbers, they cannot care for all patients.

"Across Paktika we just have two specialist doctors that are in this hospital and

we are faced with challenges," said Eqra, a doctor.

"We have a lack of medical materials," said Mohammad Yahya Weyar, head of the central hospital.

"In Paktika province we just have two specialists, in the central hospital female doctors posts are empty and we are trying to hire male doctors," said Hekmatullah Hekmat, head of the Public Health Department. Paktika Central Hospital in the past month increased to 150 beds but still is faced with a lack of female doctors.

ARCS called for OIC on children treatment with a whole heart

KABUL (Agencies): Head of the Afghan Red Crescent society, in a meeting with the special representative of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation for Afghanistan, asked for the cooperation of that organization in the treatment departments of mental patients

and children with atrial septal defect (ASD).

The head of ARCS, Mawlawi Mutiul Haq Khalis, met Tariq Ali Bakheet, the special representative of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation for Afghanistan, and Dr. Mohammad Saeed Al-Ayash, the representative of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Afghanistan.

Khalis expressed his appreciation for the cooperation of that organization with the people of Afghanistan and called the OIC in the field of cash aid for the treatment of mental patients

and the treatment of children with perforated heart disease.

The special representative of the OIC assured cooperation in the mentioned sectors and promised to cooperate in the establishment of the artificial organs manufacturing center.

Solution to Afghanistan's issues lies in regional cooperation: Iran



KABUL (Khaama Press): The ambassador of Iran in Kabul has stated that looking for a solution to Afghanistan's issues out-

side the region will not help the situation.

Hassan Kazemi Qomi, the ambassador of Iran to Afghanistan, tweeted last

night said the meeting was held in Tashkent, referring to an earlier gathering of special representatives from Afghanistan's neighbouring countries, demonstrating the significance of Afghanistan's political, security, and social developments for the region.

He said: "The Afghan caretaker administration's move towards forming an inclusive and reassuring government and protecting women's rights will be welcomed by the regional countries."

"The cooperation of the caretaker government with the region's countries and neighbours is the best way out of the bottlenecks," he added. The first meeting of special representatives on

Afghanistan's neighbouring countries was held on Tuesday in Tashkent, in which envoys from Iran, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, China, Russia, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan participated in the meeting to discuss the current situation of Afghanistan.

The Envoys spoke about the current state of affairs in Afghanistan. They emphasized the need for long-lasting peace in the country and the provision of humanitarian aid to the Afghan people.

Since the international community does not recognize the current Afghan authority, the diplomats and Taliban representatives are not invited to important international conferences.

Afghanistan severely divided by gender

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Special Representative for Afghanistan and the head of the United Nations said on Wednesday that the "Taliban claim to have united the country, but they have also severely divided it by gender."

Briefing the UN Security Council meeting, Roza Otunbayeva stated that at a moment when Afghanistan needs all of its human capital to recover from decades of war, half of the country's potential doctors, scientists, journalists, and politicians are shut in their homes, their dreams crushed their talents confiscated.

The 20th December prohibition on higher education and the 24th December restriction on women working for NGOs both have significant repercussions for the Afghan populace and the relationship between the Taliban and the international community, according to Otunbayeva.

She said that the reality is that Funding for Afghanistan is likely to drop if women were not allowed to work. Meanwhile, she added that "We understand that the Taliban have a highly different worldview than any other government, but it is

difficult to understand how any government worthy of the name can govern against the needs of half of its population."

The statement also stated that "women's rights, human rights, and girls' education" are the precise expectations of the Afghan people and that we will support them, Otunbayeva said.

Afghanistan remains the largest humanitarian crisis globally; two-thirds of the population, 28 million people, will need humanitarian assistance this year to survive.

This will cost \$4.62 billion, the single-largest

country appeal ever.

Almost half of the population, 20 million people, are experiencing crisis levels of food insecurity. Six million are one step away from famine-like conditions.

The humanitarian relief provided to the Afghan people is nevertheless disrupted by the bans on women working for NGOs because most of these organizations are run by women.

In the meantime, the envoy stated her worry that the de facto government would also ban the national women staff members who work for the UN.

Fresh produce spoiling due to delays on Salang Highway: Traders

KABUL (TOLOnews): Fruit and vegetable traders complained delays faced by transit vehicles on the Salang highway.

Traders said that in the last week more than a hundred truckloads of fruit and vegetables were spoiled due to stops on the road.

"We ask the government to make a separate lane for fruit and vegetable vehicles, so every time they can cross and not be stopped. Every trader has lost their property now," said Abdul Ghafoor Nasiry, head of the fruit and vegetable markets council.

"Some vehicles can cross without any problems, and I think that they allow some people to cross with money," said Tela Mohammad Ghafuri, a trader.

Meanwhile, the chamber



of agriculture and livestock called on the Islamic Emirate to allow fruit and vegetable transport vehicles to pass.

"We call on the government to allow fruit and vegetable cars and not to stop

them with stone and coal cars because the produce businessmen suffer a lot," said Merwis Naseeri, deputy of the Chamber of Agriculture and Livestock.

The Ministry of Public Works could not be reached

for comment. According to the Chamber of Agriculture and Livestock, more than 200,000 people, directly and indirectly, are active in the fruit and vegetable sectors in Afghanistan.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's High Commissioner-designate to Tanzania, Siraj Ahmad Khan, called on President Dr. Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

North Korea fires ballistic missile

SEOUL (Agencies): North Korea fired a short-range ballistic missile on Thursday, Seoul's military said, Pyongyang's latest show of force just days before South Korea and the United States kick off major joint military exercises.

Relations between the two Koreas are at one of their worst points in decades, with the nuclear-armed North conducting ever more provocative banned weapons tests as Seoul moved to ramp up security cooperation with Washington in response. Last year, Kim Jong Un's regime declared North Korea an "irreversible" nuclear power and vowed to exponentially increase weapons production, including tactical nuclear weapons, as the US looks to move more assets to the region to defend ally Seoul.

Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff said that it "detected the launch of one short-range ballistic missile from the North's western port city of Nampo at 6:20pm (0920 GMT)". It added it was analysing "the possibility that North Korea fired multiple short-range ballistic missiles from the same region simultaneously".

"Our military maintains a full readiness posture while closely cooperating with the US as we have strengthened surveillance and vigilance," it said. North Korea has long claimed its nuclear weapons and missile programmes are for self-defence, and has bristled over US-South Korea military exercises, describing them as rehearsals for an invasion. Earlier this week, North Korea accused the US of "intentionally" ramping up tensions, and Kim's powerful sister warned that if the US were to intercept one of Pyongyang's missile tests, it would be seen as a "clear declaration of war".

After talks between Kim and then-US president Donald Trump collapsed in 2019, diplomacy has stalled and the North has doubled down on military development. South Korea's hawkish President Yoon Suk Yeol has moved to boost diplomatic ties and security cooperation with Tokyo and Washington in response to growing threats from Pyongyang.

US President Joe Biden will host Yoon for a state visit on April 26, and the South Korean leader will also visit Tokyo next week, his office said. This month, the US and South Korean militaries will hold their largest joint drills in five years. Ahead of those exercises, named "Freedom Shield" and scheduled for at least 10 days starting March 13, the allies held air drills this week featuring a nuclear-capable US B-52 heavy bomber.

"This is likely only the beginning of a series of provocative tests by North Korea," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul. "Pyongyang is poised to respond aggressively to major US-South Korea defence exercises, as well as to President Yoon's upcoming summits with Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and US President Joe Biden," he said. "The Kim regime may order missile firings of longer ranges, attempt a spy satellite launch, demonstrate a solid-fuel engine, and perhaps even conduct a nuclear test."

North Korea has framed its missile tests and military drills as justified countermeasures following US-South Korea drills. Last week, it called on the United Nations to urge a halt to these exercises, and reiterated that its nuclear weapons ensured the balance of power in the region.

Shehbaz, Magsi discuss political situation

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Thursday held a meeting with member National Assembly Khalid Hussain Magsi.

During the meeting, they discussed the overall political situation in the country and other matters of mutual interest.

PEMRA bans content on conduct of sitting judges

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) on Thursday forbade the broadcasting and re-broadcasting of content pertaining to the conduct of sitting high court and Supreme Court judges on electronic media with immediate effect.

In the prohibition order, the regulator referred to previous directives wherein all licencees were directed to "refrain from telecasting any content against state institutions". PEMRA noted that despite repeated directives, satellite television channels were "persistently discussing the conduct of honorable judges of superior courts and orchestrating a vilification campaign through airing slanderous allegations".

The authority said airing any sort of content which prima facie referred to the conduct of judges or was against the superior judiciary was a sheer violation of the authority's laws and judgments of the apex court. Pemra also gave a reference to Article 68 of the Constitution in its order. The law states: "No discussion shall take place in [Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament)] with respect to the conduct of any Judge of the Supreme Court or of a High Court in the discharge of his duties."

"Therefore, the competent authority i.e. chairman PEMRA, in exercise of delegated powers of the authority vested in Section 27(a) of the PEMRA Ordinance 2002 as amended by PEMRA (Amendment) Act 2007, prohibits broadcast/rebroadcast of any content pertaining to conduct of Honourable sitting judges of High Court and Supreme Court, in any manner, on electronic media (news bulletins, talks shows etc.), with immediate effect," the order said. The authority also directed all satellite TV channels to ensure that an effective Time Delay Mechanism is put in place and an "impartial editorial board" is constituted.

Alvi for integrated approach to address mental health issues

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday said that mental health illness was a major challenge and it required an integrated approach by all stakeholders, including relevant Ministries, Prime Minister's Secretariat, NGOs, psychiatric associations and civil society to cater to the mental health needs of the country.

He highlighted that 24 percent population of the country was suffering from some form of mental health issues that needed immediate attention of the government, health professionals, civil society organizations, and the media. The President expressed these views while chairing a follow-up meeting on mental health, at Aiwan-e-Sadr here. Head of Prime Minister's Strategic Reforms Unit, Salman Sufi and representatives of the Pakistan Psychiatric Society and Tasken Health Initiative attended the meeting via video link. Country Director of WHO, Dr Palitha Mahipala, President of Pakistani-American Psychiatric Association of North America, Muhammad Zeeshan, Consultant at the National Commission for Human Rights, Ghulam Murtaza, representatives of Pakistan Psychological Association and senior officials of the government were present during the meeting.

The participants emphasized the need for a collaborative care model to provide services to the people suffering from mental health issues. Salman Sufi briefed the meeting about the initiatives taken by the Prime Minister's Secretariat to launch Humraaz, a platform to access mental health services and a Mental Health Helpline to assist people affected by mental health illnesses. He informed that 140 psychiatrists had been registered as yet to provide relevant mental health services and counselling to people suffering from mental health problems. He further informed that the Prime Minister would launch the Mobile App/Web portal and 1166 toll-free helpline on March 23, 2023.

Speaking on the occasion, the President underscored that all programs and initiatives with regard to mental health issues needed to be combined to help address mental issues in the country. Appreciating the initiative taken by the Prime Minister of Pakistan on mental health and well-being, the President said that coordination with the Prime Minister's Office was very important, adding that all the work should be pooled at the Prime Minister's mental health program. He also lauded the efforts made by the NGOs and Tasken Health Initiative that had done a tremendous job in this regard. Country Director of WHO praised the efforts made by the government and expressed his support for the initiative.

President for giant leap in digital technology for improved economy, service delivery: President Dr Arif Alvi also said for Pakistan, a big leap in digital technology was important to directly improve its economy and make progress in public service delivery. The president stressed that by leveraging digital technology, the country could explore advanced avenues of business in the revolutionized world.

Addressing here at a seminar on 'Digital System for public - Welfare, weaknesses and remedies', the president said Pakistan needed to make early decisions in technology and keep pace with the fast-changing world. President Alvi said the country needed a "full-throttle acceleration" on expanding digitalization in areas of public service delivery, including online banking.

Lauding the talent of the nation, he said the country was "standing on the gold mine of people". He said learning knowledge about FinTech (financial technology) and artificial intelligence could prove as a catalyst to progress. He said taking initiative in learning and getting the edge in technology was of foremost importance. In this regard, he emphasized working on intellectual ideas and early decisions on implementing digitalization strategy in diverse areas.

President Alvi, however, stressed that besides digitalization, the stakeholders needed to guide the consumers not to fall victim to online scams. He said scams could not be averted completely, however, their proportion to the delivery of services was important. He emphasized controlling online scams and frauds through continuous effort, including targeted messaging. He highlighted

how effectively the 130 million targeted cellular texts on early prevention of breast cancer successfully relayed a powerful message among the general public.

The president said the people had already adopted cell phone technology, and there was a need to guide them about the benefits of advanced technology. He said that older people were more susceptible to online fraud and needed to be educated about it. President Alvi recalled how the Covid-19 pandemic forced the nation to engage in e-learning and in various online projects.

Executive Director State Bank of Pakistan, Syed Sohail Javaad, presented a comparison of the modern banking system for the period 2012 to 2022. He informed that in 2012 only 1.4 million customers used digital banking, whereas in 2022, their number increased to 12.4 million. He said transactions worth almost Rs 11 trillion were conducted in the year 2022 and added that the number of transactions had increased from 12 million in 2012 to 141 million in 2022. He apprised that the number of ATMs had increased from 5,500 to 17,000, while the SBP had issued NOCs to five digital banks.

Banking Mohtasib of Pakistan, Muhammad Kamran Shehbaz, said despite the advancements in technology and digitalization of the banking sector, people in rural areas were deprived of digital banking services, and were not aware of digital banking frauds. He stated that customers should not share their personal banking information on telephones to avoid becoming victims of online fraud. He informed that since the establishment of the Banking Mohtasib of Pakistan, relief worth Rs 5 billion had been provided to the complainants. Secretary General Pakistan Banks Association, Tauseef Hussain said that as a tool of financial inclusion, digital banking had become an integral part of the financial sector and was altogether different from traditional banking. He said digital banking played a critical role in the existing banking system, adding that it was convenient, efficient, speedy and cost-effective. The event was attended by representatives of commercial and digital banks, media, and the business community.

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Court issues non-bailable arrest warrant for Imran

AWKU VC calls on KP CM

F.P. Report

QUETTA (Agencies): A local court in Quetta on Thursday issued a non-bailable arrest warrant for Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan in the case registered against him under multiple sections of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) and the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016 (PECA). The judicial magistrate issued the arrest warrant and directed authorities to present the former prime minister in court.

A first information report (FIR) was registered at a police station in Quetta against Khan for the comments he made against state institutions and their officers during a speech on Sunday.

Complainant Abdul Khalil Kakar had registered the complaint at the Bijli Road Police Station against the PTI chief. The FIR included Sections 153A, 124A, and 505 of the PPC and Section 20 of the PECA. Kakar had alleged that the PTI chief's statement was an attempt to destroy public peace and order.

In a speech on Sunday, the PTI chief had come down hard on the "state institutions" after a team of Islamabad police had arrived at his Zaman Park residence to arrest him in the Toshakhana case. The deposed prime minister — who was ousted from power in April last year — vented

his rage while addressing party workers and supporters at Zaman Park residence in Lahore who participated in the "Jail Bhao Tehreek" (voluntary arrest movement).

In his fiery speech, the PTI chairman said that he had neither kneeled before any institution or person nor would let the nation do so. Khan said it does not matter if the government places his name on the exit control list (ECL) as he has no intention of leaving the country. Taking a dig at the leadership of the ruling Pakistan Democratic PDM alliance, he said that their legs start shaking if their "names are put on the no-fly list".

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan was called on by the Vice Chancellor Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Professor Dr. Zahoorul Haq here on Thursday.

The Vice Chancellor presented a cheque worth Rs 1.6 million to the Chief Minister for earthquake victims of Turkiye which will be deposited in the Chief Minister's Relief Fund established for the earthquake victims of Turkiye and Syria. The amount has been donated by the employees of the University.

The Caretaker Chief Minister appreciated the generosity of the administration and all the staff of Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan for extending financial support to the earthquake victims of Turkiye and termed it as highly commendable and exemplary step for other higher education institutions. He said that the earthquake affectees of Turkiye and Syria were passing through a difficult situation adding that it is our moral responsibility to help them in this testing time.

The Chief Minister said that the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and caretaker provincial government were committed to extend every possible support for the earthquake affectees. It may well be recalled here that CM had appealed to the well off segment of society, educational institutions and non-governmental organizations of the province to donate generously to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund established for the earthquake victims of Turkiye and Syria.



WEST BANK: Israeli forces trying to hit Palestinians during clash in Al-Khalil city.

Imran says he doesn't 'need' establishment

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): PTI Chairman Imran Khan said on Thursday that he doesn't "need the establishment", adding that he was willing to talk with everyone except "thieves". In an interview with BBC Urdu, the premier said that he only wanted elections to be held in the country as per the law and the Constitution, adding that he was willing to speak to anyone in this regard but did not need "crutches".

"I was asked if I would speak to the establishment if they wanted to talk. I said I'm a political person, I will talk to everyone except thieves," Imran said, an apparent reference to the coalition government. The publication reported the PTI chairman as saying that he never invited Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir or Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to sit down for talks. "A statement has been circulating that I want to talk to the army chief [but] I don't need the establishment."

Imran further said that a political party that enjoyed the support of the people did not need "crutches". Asked whether the establishment's attitude towards him had changed after the change in the military com-

mand, the ex-premier told the publication that "it didn't make any difference to us." He said that cases against the PTI were made during the tenure of former army chief General (retired) Qamar Javed Bajwa. "Prior to this, such custodial torture was never inflicted on senior people."

"We had thought it would change when the new army chief would come but there has been no change and [our difficulties] have increased," he said. Imran's remarks comes days after PTI's Fawad Chaudhry clarified that the ex-premier had never made any request to meet with COAS Munir, terming "speculations in this regard as baseless". The statement was issued after senior journalist Kamran Khan tweeted about Gen Munir telling the country's business community that he had sent a message to Imran through President Dr Arif Alvi for meeting the prime minister which the PTI chairman did not agree to.

Kamran, however, claimed that Imran did desire a meeting with the army chief which the latter denied, saying he was not ready to interfere in the political process. It is pertinent to mention that earlier

this month, Imran said he was ready to talk to Gen Munir "for the betterment of the country", stressing he had "no quarrel with the establishment". In a wide-ranging discussion with reporters at his Zaman Park residence in Lahore, he had touched upon politics, his ties with the military, his frustration with ex-army chief Bajwa and why he chose not to fly to Islamabad for court hearings.

When asked why he was not speaking to the "establishment" — a euphemism for the military — he had said he never had a quarrel with the establishment, and it was Gen Bajwa that "stabbed me in the back". According to BBC Urdu, the PTI chief also touched on election and noted that the Supreme Court had ordered to hold polls in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab within 90 days. He further said that the president had also made an announcement in this regard. But "the police comes when we take out an election rally," he said, in an apparent reference to yesterday's police crackdown on PTI workers in Lahore following the imposition of Section 144 in which a party worker was killed.

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Sindh cabinet decides to launch joint operation against dacoits

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The provincial cabinet, after thorough discussion and deliberations, on Thursday decided to launch a joint, well-planned, and decisive operation cleanup against dacoits in katcha areas of the province in which the police of Punjab and Balochistan, Rangers, and Pak Army would participate.

The cabinet authorized the Inspector General of Police Ghulam Nabi Memon to coordinate with his counterparts of Balochistan and Punjab so that an operation could be planned in the katcha areas for which an amount of Rs2.79 billion was approved for the procurement of sophisticated Military-Grade Field and surveillance weapons.

The meeting was presided over by Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah here at CM House on Thursday. Provincial ministers, advisors, special assistants, Chief Secretary Sohail Rajput, Chairman P&D Hassan Naqvi, PSCM Fayaz Jatui, and other concerned secretaries and offers

attended the meeting. Procurement of field weapons: The Home department and Inspector General of Police briefing the cabinet said that a joint operation in the katcha area of Sindh, Balochistan, and Punjab has been planned as per government decision for which procurement of sophisticated field weapons and surveillance equipment would be required.

The IGP said that the matter for the purchase of Military Grade Weapons and Surveillance Systems was discussed in the 28th Provincial Apex Committee meeting held under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Sindh on 5th January 2023. The meeting had approved the proposal. The IGP told the cabinet that the weapons and surveillance system was required to control hardened criminals/gangs, operating in the Katcha area of District Kashmir, Shikarpur, and Ghotki, equipped with sophisticated weapons.

The cabinet was told that funds amounting to Rs. 2,796.184 million were required for the procurement of sophisticated/military-grade weapons

to start a joint operation in which the police of three provinces, Sindh, Balochistan, and Punjab would launch the operation with the support of Rangers and Pak Army. The cabinet approved the proposal of the operation and also sanctioned the amount of Rs2.7 billion and directed the Home department to seek NOC from the Ministry of Interior for the purchase of the said weapons.

Upgradation of IT-related cadres: The Finance dept told the cabinet that the government has already upgraded 3871 IT-related posts and still 3,264 posts from grade BPS-5 to BS-16 were left over. The computer operators/lab attendants, Hardware, and other posts have been upgraded. The annual financial impact of the upgradation of the 3,264 IT-related posts on pay amounts to Rs.243,706/- million. The cabinet approved the upgradation.

Coronavirus fund closed: The provincial cabinet was told that the Coronavirus Emergency Fund was created on March 18, 2020, under the chief secretary with the secretary

finance, secretary health, Dr. Abdul Bari, Faisal Edhi, and Mushtaq Chhapra as its members. Right from the creation of the fund, 17 meetings were held.

During the period from March 18, 2020, to March 3, 2023, Rs. 3,312.93 million was donated from government entities, which includes Rs. 1,300 million transferred from the Sindh Social Relief Fund, Rs. 1,495 million, and Rs. 517.19 million donated through salaries deductions of Sindh govt Employees. Further, Rs.254.701 million was also donated from private entities and individuals. Foreign Donations received in CEF amount to Rs. 16,522 million including Rs. 16,268 million received through a Non-Profit Organization, M/s. I-Care Foundation, whereas Rs. 114.95 million was earned through profit on the saving account of CEF.

The CEF Committee has already recommended the closure of the Coronavirus Emergency Fund after clearing all financial and legal formalities. The cabinet decided to close the fund and the fund balance

amounting to Rs. 35,734,486 would be spent on the construction of houses for the flood-affected people. DHQ Dadu given to LUMHS: The provincial cabinet on the proposal of the health dept decided to hand over District Headquarters (DHQ) Dadu to Liaquat University of Medical & Health Sciences (LUMHS), Jamshoro along with administrative and financial control and SNE.

The cabinet directed the health department to ensure the provision of health facilities to the people of the area properly. The cabinet approved the release of funds amounting to Rs1.2 billion to the hospital so that it could start properly functioning.

In order to implement price control during the holy month of Ramadan, 2023, the Sindh Essential Commodities Price Control and Prevention of Profiteering and Hoarding Act, 2005 the cabinet approved the conferment of powers of Inspector Prices to Bureau of Supply & Prices officers throughout the province. The officers given powers to control price, include Director

General on the Sindh level, Additional Commissioner-I, and II (Divisional level), Director, BSP, (Provincial level), Deputy Directors, BSP, Sindh (Divisional level), Assistant Directors, BSP, Sindh (District level), Deputy Director /Additional Director Agriculture Extension, AFCs, DFCs Food Department, Assistant Director /DD Labour Department.

The district administration has already been given the powers and instructions to control the prices. The cabinet approved some appointments such as Minister Energy Intiaz Shaikh as Chairman Sindh Petroleum (Pvt) Ltd, a body part of the Energy dept, Minister Irrigation as Chairman Sindh Irrigation & Drainage Authority, Iqbal Detho as Chairman Sindh Human Rights Commission and granted an extension to Niaz Soomro, as Project Director Malir Expressway till the completion of the project. The cabinet also decided to appoint Aijaz Khanzada and Mohammad Arif Mithani as members of Drug Courts.