

Khurram meets Iranian Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Power Khurram Dastgir on Sunday met with his Iranian counterpart Ali Akbar Mehrabian at Tehran. During the meeting, mutual areas of interest were discussed, said a press release. The Iranian Minister appreciated the authorities of Pakistan for the construction of transmission line to import electricity from Iran to Gwadar on fast pace.

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Ameer Muqam calls on PM; briefs on political situation in KPK

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif paid tribute to PML-N Provincial President of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Engineer Ameer Muqam for keeping the party alive during difficult times. While appreciating the performance of the advisor, the Prime Minister declared him a valuable asset of the party.

Engineer Ameer Muqam had a detailed one-on-one meeting with the Prime Minister at Model Town, Lahore today. In the meeting, the overall situation of the country, especially the political scenario of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was discussed.

The adviser briefed the Prime Minister on the organizational issues of the party and strategy for the upcoming elections. The Prime Minister appreciated the advisor's hard work and praised him for his

consistent performance.

The Prime Minister directed the adviser to expedite the public outreach campaign and emphasized the importance of digital communication in the process.

The adviser said that he is fully aware of the current situation and the problems faced by the public, but all these hardships are the fruits of seed sown by Imran Khan. He added that we will soon overcome the deteriorated situation through consistent and better performance.

Minister for Railways, Aviation calls on PM: Minister for Railways and Aviation Khawaja Saad Rafique on Sunday called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

During the meeting, the issues related to Pakistan Railways and aviation and the overall political situation of the country were discussed, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

PML-N to start issuing tickets for Punjab elections from Mar 15

ISLAMABAD (APP):The Parliamentary Board of Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N) will start issuing tickets to suitable candidates in Punjab for the provincial election from March 15.

Pakistan Muslim League -Nawaz (PML-N) Punjab President Rana Sanaullah Khan has directed all divisional and district organizations of the party to ensure active interaction with the public.

He said that all regional organizations should ensure the submission of nomination papers of the best, most competent and people-friendly candidates in provincial constituencies.

Rana Sanaullah Khan said that candidates aspiring for party tickets should submit their applications to the party office.

Pakistan Muslim League -Nawaz (PML-N) Punjab President Rana Sanaullah Khan asked all regional organizations to make public communication campaigns more active.

Being a popular party, PML-N is always ready to go to the people, he said, adding that the politics of 'fita Khan' will be eliminated through the power of the vote.

ECP to review PTI's petition

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja (CEC) has summoned a meeting of the commission on Monday to discuss a petition filed by two Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders, Dr. Babar Awan and Dr. Yasmin Rashid, regarding the imposition of Section 144 in Lahore and the ban on election rallies in Punjab.

According to spokesperson for the ECP, the crucial meeting of the commission would be held on Monday at 10:30 a.m. to deliberate on the PTI's appeal.

Meanwhile, the petitioner Dr Yasmin Rashid asserts that the ban on election rallies is a violation of fundamental rights, including the right to freedom of speech and assembly.

The ban, imposed under Section 144, has been deemed "illegal" by the PTI, who argue that it violates a Supreme Court order stating that campaigning is a constitutional right.

The interim Punjab government had imposed the ban on election rallies citing security concerns.



LAHORE: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political Affairs, National Heritage and Culture Engineer Ameer Maqam calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Imran postpones rally in Lahore for a day after imposition of Section 144

LAHORE (NNI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman and former premier Imran Khan Sunday called off his election rally in Lahore till tomorrow (Monday) after the Punjab interim government imposed Section 144 in the provincial capital.

Taking to Twitter, the PTI chief said: "It seems again that Section 144 has been imposed illegally solely on the PTI election campaign as all other public activities are ongoing in Lahore." "Only Zaman Park has been surrounded by containers and heavy police contingent. Clearly, like 8 March, Punjab Chief Minister and police want to provoke clashes to file more sham FIRs against PTI leadership and workers and to use as pretext for postponing elections," said the former prime minister.

"Election schedule has been announced so how can Sec 144 be imposed on pol activity? I am telling all PTI workers not to fall into this trap. Hence we have postponed the rally till tomorrow," Imran Khan added. Talking to media outside Zaman Park, PTI senior leader Shah Mahmood Qureshi said that the party has decided to hold election rally in Lahore tomorrow (Monday). He also urged ECP to hear PTI's petition on an urgent basis and order caretaker govt to lift "illegal" Section 144 in

Imran hails restoration of Iran-Saudi Arabia ties

LAHORE (PPI) Former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan on Sunday welcomed the normalisation of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran in a landmark development facilitated by China.

Taking to Twitter, the former premier shared a news story of British publication regarding the restoration of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, welcoming the development.

Imran Khan noted that his government had taken an initiative to bring Riyadh and Tehran together for dia-

logue "as part of our policy of wider engagement for peace and unity of the Ummah". The PTI Chairman also appreciated the role of China in the diplomatic breakthrough.

Earlier on March 10, Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed to re-establish relations after seven years of hostility which had threatened stability and security in the Gulf and helped fuel conflicts in the Middle East from Yemen to Syria. The deal was announced after four days of previously undisclosed talks in Beijing between top security officials from the two rival Middle East powers.

Lahore. "The rally could be held either tomorrow or day after tomorrow," PTI leader Hammad Azhar said while addressing media in the provincial capital.

The decision comes after PTI challenged the Section 144 imposed by the Punjab government in Lahore in the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) ahead of its election rally in the provincial capital.

Earlier, the Punjab government

imposed Section 144 in Lahore ahead of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's rally announced to be held today to avoid any untoward incident.

Interim Minister for Sports Amir Mir requested the PTI to forward its rally date, lamenting that the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf has once again announced holding a rally on an important day when Lahore is hosting the Pakistan Super League (PSL) match today.

Imran wants unrest in country to achieve his agenda: Marriyum

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Sunday that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan wanted to create unrest and instability just to achieve his agenda as he had nothing to do with the country's economy and progress.

Addressing a press conference at Model Town here, she said Imran Khan was doing politics over the bodies of his workers. Now people were asking questions from Imran Khan about his long marches, politics over the death of party workers, cypher conspiracy, money laundering, Toshakhana, Tyrian White case and others, she said and added that three-time former prime minister Nawaz Sharif had always

appeared before courts in cases registered against him and always respected the judiciary. He never talked of creating chaos and anarchy in the country, she added. The other PML-N leaders had also appeared before the courts always. The PML-N never used their workers and followers for the sake of politics as it did not believe in such politics, she added.

Marriyum said that whenever the courts summoned Imran Khan, he used various tactics to evade appearance and maligned the judiciary and system. A murder case was registered against Imran Khan by the Punjab police on the basis of evidence including video footage, adding that Imran Khan was the only beneficiary of death of Zille Shah. The

PML-N and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif had never indulged in politics of revenge, but Imran Khan, during his tenure, used every tactics to victimise his political opponents, particularly the PML-N leadership.

She said PTI worker Zille Shah's body was shifted to a hospital in a PTI leader Raja Shakeel's vehicle and the police and Rescue 1122 were not approached for the purpose. She said that the Punjab police had solved the case through footage and other evidence, and revealed all facts and figures. If Imran Khan was aggrieved over the death of Zille Shah, why he preferred to stay at home for hatching a conspiracy, aiming to blame the government over the death.

Cargo plane carrying relief goods for Turkiye

LAHORE (APP): National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Sunday dispatched the 2nd special cargo flight carrying relief goods to Turkiye for earthquake victims.

The cargo flight took off from Allama Iqbal International Airport for Turkiye. Special Assistant to the Prime Minister, Khawaja Ahmad Hassan saw off the cargo plane, which contains large family-sized tents and blankets, generators, dry ration, medicines and clothing for victims of earthquake.

The SAPM said that another 70,000 waterproof and fire resistant tents, 95,000 blankets and medicines would be sent in the next phase of the relief and rescue operation through dedicated cargo flights which would continue till March 23.

Khawaja Ahmad Hassan said that promoting humanitarian passion and Islamic brotherhood was a religious and moral obligation, adding

that Turkiye had always helped Pakistan in difficult times. Now, it was Pakistan's turn to stand with Turkiye and Syria in their time of need and play role in their rehabilitation, he added.

Every sector of the country actively participated in the relief activities, he said and lauded the efforts of NDMA and National Logistic Cell (NLC) for their sincere efforts to help the people of Turkiye and Syria after the devastating earthquakes.

The Frontier Post

5.3 magnitude quake jolts KP

PESHAWAR (APP): An earthquake measuring 5.3 magnitude on the International Richter Scale jolted most of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa districts at around 4:34 p.m. on Sunday, Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) informed. The tremors were felt in Peshawar, Mardan, Swabi, Charsadda and other districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The PMD shared the details of the earthquake Depth: 154 km, Latitude: 36.53 N, Longitude: 70.96 E.



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Excise dept collects Rs 67,470,635

KARACHI (APP): A total of 52,990 vehicles were checked till the end of the 21st day of the road-checking campaign by the Sindh Excise Department here on Sunday. The tax was collected from the owners of tax-defaulting vehicles.

Due to various reasons, 4,064 vehicles were impounded while documents of 4,460 were seized. Till the 21st day of the road-checking campaign, a tax of about Rs 67,470,635 was collected. During the campaign, 13,059 vehicles in Karachi, 18,587 in Hyderabad, 5,996 in Sukkur, 6,741 in Mirpurkhas, 5,276 in Larkana, and 3,331 in Shaheed Benazirabad were checked.

SIEHS demands apology

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh Integrated Emergency Health Services (SIEHS) on Sunday condemned the negative behaviour of a senior PTI leader and demanded an apology. According to a communiqué issued here, the SIEHS claimed that PTI MPA Sindh Khurram Sherzaman barged into the parking area in Makli civil hospital with his social media team and began filming ambulances in spite of requests by the staff to obtain prior permission.

As a result, he and his team began misbehaving and verbally abusing the staff. He directed his team to portray the Sindh Health Department in a negative way on social media. He and his team eventually left the premises.

The communiqué further said that the Sindh government was working eagerly for the expansion of the Sindh Emergency Service, Rescue 1122, in all districts of Sindh within this year.

The Sindh government had already given SIEHS 57 modern ambulances to operate 10 vehicles in Ghotki, 17 in Mitpurkhas, 10 in Kashmore Kundkot, five in Shikarpur, 10 in Shaheed Banazirabad, and five in Jacobabad.

Work was being done to register these vehicles as well as to provide extensive training to the paramedics, who would be onboard these ambulances to serve the people of Sindh. Simultaneously, the station leasehold work was underway. In the relevant districts, these stations would serve as the service hub.

Police seize huge cache of weapons near Burhan

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Motorway Police, in a successful operation on Sunday, foiled an attempt to smuggle a large cache of weapons near Motorway M1, Burhan.

The recovered arms included 81 pistols of 30 bore, 72 pistols of 9mm, an M-14 rifle, 2,700 live rounds of SMG, 9,700 live rounds of 30 bore, and 165 magazines. The accused were believed to be bringing the weapons from Peshawar. According to the Motorway Police, a suspicious vehicle was signalled to stop near Burhan.

There is no ban on political activities in Lahore: CM Naqvi

LAHORE (PPI) Punjab Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi has declared that there was no ban on political activities in the province particularly in Lahore.

In a tweet uploaded on Sunday, the Punjab chief minister maintained that all the political parties are allowed to run their election campaigns freely.

He, however, states that the government has restricted rallies and political activities only for today (Sunday) due to PSL matches. The chief minister further said "There are PSL cricket matches being played, there is movement of teams, and a marathon is also being taken place in Lahore which were all planned and announced much in advance."

It may be mentioned there that the provincial government has imposed Section 144 in Lahore.

Punjab Caretaker Minister for Sports Amir Mir requested the PTI to forward its rally date, lamenting that the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf has once again announced holding a rally on an important day when Lahore is hosting the Pakistan Super League (PSL) matches.

"Lahore is hosting the PSL matches. There is also a 40-kilometre-long

marathon and cycle race in the city today," the minister said.

Police team of Zille Shah murder case meets CM: The police team tracing the 8th March murder case of the deceased political worker Zille Shah on Sunday met with the Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi. Those meeting comprised SSP Imran Kishwar, Inspector Muhammad Ali Butt, Inspector Nabi Baksh, sub inspector Amir Shehzad, sub inspector Zubair, head constable Khurram Shehzad and constable Muhammad Tayyab. Chief Secretary, Inspector General of Police and CCPO were also present on the occasion. Caretaker CM Mohsin Naqvi lauded the performance of the police team and appreciated them as well.

He remarked that all the police officers traced the blind case in a dedicated and professional manner and in a very short period of time. Mohsin Naqvi said that the Punjab government duly acknowledged their performance, adding that it was our collective responsibility to provide justice to the heirs of the deceased citizen.

Mohsin Naqvi said that the police officers fulfilled all the requirements of justice earlier and would do so in future as well.

Book launching ceremony held



F.P. Report

WARAH: A book named (Aadarshi ain Mukhlus Insan) -(Idealist and Sincere Human) launching ceremony was held on the personality and political struggle of Muhammad Murad Chandio, the late leader of PPP (Shaheed Bhutto) in which, famous personalities of the region belong to different walk of life spoke in the event.

Central leader of PPP SB, Inayat Omrani, leader of Awami Jhamoori Party Harif Chando, Muhammad Salah Chando, book compiler and publisher Dr. Shah Murad Chandio, Awami Tehreek leader Comrade Sartaj Chandio, Junior Janan Chan, GSTA leader Abdul Hadi Choliyani,

President of Warah Press Club Ayaz Chandio, PPP leader Bashir Choliyani, District Liaison Secretary of Sindh Literary Society (Sindhi Adbi Sangat) Najib Chandio, Dur Muhammad Buriro, Central Leader of National People's Movement Inayat Lashari, SUP Leader Waqar Raza, PPP SB Bhutto Leader Niaz Haidari, Asghar Merasi, JSMM Leader Ghafar Mirjat, Writer Irfan Manan and Others said that Murad Chandio was a true, tolerant and principled political leader who not only followed the ideology of Shaheed Mir Murtaza Bhutto till the end, but also fought hard against the oppressors.

He has passion and true spirit for his fellow companions and look after

them for their collective good.

They said that political workers are a great hope and a source for the people. Murad Chandio was a source for his organization workers and citizens throughout his life.

His struggle will never be forgotten and he will always be remembered. Speakers in the ceremony declared him as Mir Murtaza Bhutto of Warah. Ameer Bux Chandio, Moharram Chandio, Zulfiqar Sahibani, Muhammad Jan Brohi, Hakeem Bilani, Wahab Chhutto, Moharram Sahibani and local political and social workers and people belong to different walk of life participated in the book launching ceremony.

15 killed, 1,272 injured in 1,208 accidents in Punjab

LAHORE (APP): At least 15 people were killed while 1,272 injured in 1,208 road traffic accidents in Punjab during last 24 hours.

Out of the total injured, 661 people were seriously injured who were shifted to different hospitals, whereas, 611 minor injured victims were treated at the incident site by rescue medical teams, said a spokesman for Rescue 1122 here on Sunday.

The analysis showed that 636 drivers, 29 underage drivers, 169 pedestrians, and 482 passengers were among

the victims of these road traffic crashes.

The statistics showed that 263 accidents were reported in Lahore which affected 271 persons placing the provincial capital at top of the list followed by 71 in Gujranwala with 71 victims and at third Islamabad with 67 accidents and 67 victims.

As many as, 1014 motorcycles, 92 rickshaws, 147 cars, 26 vans, 11 buses, 31 trucks and 107 other vehicles and slow-moving carts were involved in the traffic accidents.



SEHWAN: Women Devotees attending 771st Urs celebration at shrine of Hazrat Lal Shahbaz Qalandar.

IGP issues orders to resolve people's complaints

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar on Sunday visited the 1787 Complaint Centre and after listening to the calls received from the citizens, issued orders to provide immediate relief.

On the call from Sheikhupura, IG Punjab ordered RPO Sheikhupura to solve the citizen's problem under personal supervision.

IG Punjab directed the RPOs Multan and Faisalabad to resolve the complaints of the citizens under their supervision and provide relief.

He directed that all the districts should regularly send him detailed reports of actions taken on the cases referred from the Central Police Office. He said that all the DPOs should self-monitor the

action on the calls referred from the 1787 complaint center.

He warned that the supervisory officers who showed irresponsibility in resolving the complaints of the citizens should be removed from the field posting.

He expressed these views while giving instructions to the officers on the occasion of visiting 1787 Complaint Center at the Central Police Office.

IG Punjab ordered to solve the problems of the citizens on the calls received from different districts and gave immediate relief.

Dr. Usman Anwar while talking to the wife of the Special Branch official who passed away during service assured to resolve the case of the deceased's pension as soon as possible.

Dr. Usman Anwar sent the said

case to Additional IG Special Branch. He said that the case would be dealt with as soon as possible and all possible relief would be given to the family of the deceased official and the children of the deceased official would be given the best education, job on family quota and other facilities, he added.

IG Punjab said that he was personally monitoring all the ongoing measures for the welfare of police personnel and was in touch with the families of martyrs and Ghazis.

IG Punjab said that the 1787 complaint system has been made more active for solving the problems of the citizens and for the welfare of the force, so if any citizen, policeman or his family has any problem, they can directly contact me through 1787.

Security measures for PSL match reviewed

LAHORE (APP): Capital City Police Officer Lahore Additional IG Bilal Siddique Kamyana, on Sunday visited Qaddafi Stadium and inspected the security as well as traffic arrangements for the 30th T-20 cricket match of the Pakistan Super League Season 8, being played between the teams of Lahore Qalandars and Karachi Kings.

DIG Operations Afzaal Ahmad Kausar, SP Model Town Dr Ammara Sherazi and other senior police officers accompanied him. Bilal Siddique Kamyana reviewed the security arrangements at routers of teams, entrance gates, parking areas, other sensitive points of Qaddafi Stadium, vantage points and different enclosures. Bilal Siddique Kamyana directed the deputied police personnel to remain highly alert and vigilant and do not let any person enter without proper checking.

Lahore police has been providing complete protection to the visiting national

and international players, officials as well as spectators of the Eighth Edition of World class Pakistan Super League T-20 cricket series played at provincial capital with an even more elaborate and improved security plan than the previous ones, Bilal Siddique Kamyana said. Lahore Police had chalked out a comprehensive security plan for the matches of PSL Eight T-20 cricket series played Lahore from at Gaddafi Stadium Lahore.

According to the security plan, more than 8,000 police personnel including 11 SPs, 35 DSPs, 443 Upper Subordinates, 162 lady police officers and officials, 43 teams of Elite Force, 107 teams of Dolphins squad and 58 teams of Police Response Unit have been deployed during the matches to ensure foolproof security of the event along with smooth flow of traffic.

CCTV cameras of Punjab Safe Cities Authority and district administration at the routes around Gaddafi

Stadium and parking areas have been made fully operational during the PSL matches. Bilal Siddique Kamyana said that maximum efforts have been made to least disturb the routine activities of the citizens, traders and businessmen during the matches as zero route has been provided to the teams to ensure their security by containing traffic only during the movements of teams from their residential places to the stadium and vice versa.

Three layers of security has been ensured to the citizens who would only be allowed to enter the stadium after the complete checking process. Additional IG Bilal Siddique Kamyana said that Lahore Police had earlier provided foolproof security to all the national and international sports events being held in the provincial metropolis and would further ensure complete implementation on SOPs adopted earlier regarding the security plan to conduct the remaining matches of PSL-8 in a safe and peaceful atmosphere.

ANF recovers over 3.6 kg drugs; arrests 4

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in three operations managed to recover over 3.6 kg of drugs and arrested four accused including a woman, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Sunday.

He informed that ANF in an operation near Islamabad Motorway Toll Plaza managed to recover 3.6 kg opium from a passenger bus and arrested two accused including a woman. In another operation at Islamabad International Airport, the ANF recovered 45 heroin-filled capsules and a caffeine-filled capsule from the possession of a Sharjah-bound passenger resident of Lower Dir. Acting on a tip-off, he said, ANF conducted a raid in Karachi Saddar Area and arrested an accused resident of the same city on the recovery of 75 intoxicated tablets.

He said that separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process.

IRVI starts edutourism in Capital for exploring subcontinent's architecture

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River Valley Institute (IRVI) has initiated edutourism based on exposure visits and architecture exploration in federal capital for debunking colonial history of the subcontinent that is home to the world's unique culture, traditions, heritage, arts and linguistics.

The IRVI has adopted a unique stratagem to transform a mundane activity into an exciting learning experience through travelling to archaic heritage sites, map reading, drawing, sitting in natural environment without any chair and layers with bare feet to redevelop a connection with the ancient buildings not merely a structure of stones and bricks rather the heritage of their ancestors lost after the advent of British colonial rule.

Founder, IRVI, Zain Mustafa told APP that there was no clear definition to the term "Cultural Diversity of Pakistan" because no one ever dared to dig out the history beyond Mughals and British. The region of the subcontinent where Pakistan existed today was one of the most diverse, culturally rich area as it was the custodian of Indus Valley and Mehrgarh Civilizations that existed along the mighty Indus River and there only purpose was to guard the waters, he added.

Over the past 4,000-5,000 years, numerous dynasties emerged and wiped out from the scene with the region tasting colours of different languages, arts, customs and science that shaped this area into a different

region with every passing century, Zain Mustafa said.

The IRVI Founder regretted that unfortunately, the 7,000 years old cultural diversity has been submerged and suppressed by various historians to paint a bleak picture of the region and its people as inferior and culturally illiterate people.

The Institute is Pakistan's first culture, heritage and identity think tank to reclaim the lost roots to our ancestors who passed through the Indus River Valley or settled there over millennia. Mustafa added that the technique to decolonise and debunk myths of shared and overlapping histories bringing them onto one united, holistic platform from the regional stories of the Silk Road, The Indus river watershed & delta, The China connection & KKH, Kabul, Afghanistan & Peshawar, Persia; Darius the Great, Greeks, Kalash & Alexander the Great, Mohammad bin Qasim, the Arabs and Thatta, Central Asia & the Mughals, Southern Russia & the Indo Scythians, The Indus valley civilization, Mesopotamia and Egypt, Gandhara and Buddhism into India, Sikhism and Ranjit Singh.

He added that the vision of IRVI was of a self-sustaining institution to further the discourse that was started by him through his journey tracing and revealing Pakistan's broader 7,000 year old cultural identity and its inter-connectivity to the Silk Road in conjunction with the Indus River valley bioregion.

"We nurture dialogues and conver-

sations between Pakistan's provincial archaeological & cultural departments in association with similar intellectual environments of other relevant countries. From China to Portugal, Russia to Africa all their colonial & lost histories will be rebrided with Pakistan as the pivotal junction between them as it always was. This national repository of material generated by the think tank will leave a legacy for our future generations to learn from and build on".

Zain Mustafa informed that his Think Tank develops material based on research and documentation (created and curated), publication (print reports, blogs & Youtube virtual video tours), heritage site Community engagement & training/Skill development of guides, quarterly Webinars & Annual International conferences and educational on-site pop-up classrooms (present Edutours).

He mentioned that his target audience was historians, anthropologists, earth architects and artists, archaeologists, contemporary crafts designers, writers on above content, film makers, performing artists, heritage architecture conservation experts, govt & Pvt sector above, policy & strategy writers, students of any related programs or heritage enthusiasts, organic farmers or builders with earth (Biotope), folk music documentation experts, culinary artists and revival food chefs, contemporary designers working with the traditional arts and craftsman and organizations working with heritage & traditional arts.



LAHORE: A vendor busy in preparing ice-lolly for customers at his hand cart setup.

Mayor expresses anger over poor condition of play grounds

PESHAWAR (APP): Mayor Peshawar Zubair Ali has visited Warsak Road Civil Colony and Irrigation Colony and expressed his anger over the dilapidated condition of football ground and directed the concerned quarters to immediately make the ground playable.

During his visit to the Warsak Road Civil and Irrigation Colonies, Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair also inspected the cricket grounds as well.

Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair expressed his anger on seeing the condition of the ground and called the relevant officers on the occasion and issued orders to solve all the problems of the ground as soon as possible, including the beauty of the ground.

He also directed them to



make a Jogging track on the sides of the cricket and football grounds so that people can jog there.

He said the four walls should be made beautiful as well as the renovation of the four walls of the ground.

Installation of tiles on the walls, along with the main official gate and ground for traffic in and out

of the ground were also announced by Mayor Peshawar.

The walls will be printed with sports photos, and new grass will be developed to make the grounds more beautiful besides tree plantation so that our youth and families of the two colonies can enjoy it and take part in their study with peace and security.



PESHAWAR: Provincial president Peoples Labour Bureau KP Shah Zulfarnain talking media. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza

History of Bagh Madrassah, Tirah

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Bagh Madrassah has a long and storied history in the Tirah region of Pakistan. Originally established during the British campaigns in the area, the Bagh Jamat served as a center of activity for the local community. In 1980, the status of the Bagh Jamat was elevated to that of a seminary and all affiliated tribes contributed to the construction of the building.



The present structure of the madrassah was built in 2008, and it has remained a hub of activity for the affiliated tribes ever since. However, in recent years, the building has been at the center of conflict between various terrorist groups. Ansar Ul Islam (AUI), led by Qari Mehboob Ul Haq, established its headquarters against Lashker-e-Islam (LI) and operated an FM radio station from the here. In March 2013, the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)

and LI attacked Tirah and captured the entire valley, including the building.

It remained an active hub for the internationally banned Terrorists organisations for their acts of brutal terrorism in Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Middle East during that period. The presence of these groups in Tirah has caused a lot of migration and in 2013 the Pakistan Security forces launched an operation against the terrorists in Tirah.

After numerous sacrifices, State Forces were eventually able to evict the terrorists from the madrassah. Given the historical significance of the Madrassah as a terrorists hub, the Pakistani government decided to keep it under protected patronage.

This move by the government is a significant step towards countering terrorism, as such places have been used by extremist groups to radicalize young people and recruit them for violent activities.

QWP to fully participate in elections, says Dr Faiza

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial vice chairperson, Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Dr Faiza Rasheed has said that the party will fully participate in elections and not leave the field free for anyone.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, she said that the stance of their party on mid-term polls is their constitutional and democratic right and participating in the polls while utilizing that right.

She said party workers have been issued directives for participation and electioneering for the party candidates. She added that party would utilize all energies and resources for achieving historic success in the elections.

Dr Faiza Rasheed said that the party under the leadership of Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao and Sikandar Hayat Khan Sherpao is busy in making all-out efforts for progress and development of the country and that is reason behind the massive attraction of the people towards their party and the day is not far away when QWP would emerge as largest and popular political party of the country.

5.3 magnitude quake jolts KP

PESHAWAR (APP): An earthquake measuring 5.3 on the International Richter Scale jolted most of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa districts at around 4:34 p.m. on Sunday, Pakistan Meteorological Department informed.

The tremors were felt in Peshawar, Mardan, Swabi, Charsadda and other districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

PMD shared the details of the earthquake Depth: 154 km, Latitude: 36.53 N, Longitude: 70.96 E

The epicenter of the earthquake was in the mountainous range of Koh-e-Hindukush Afghanistan. No casualty was reported till the filling of the news.

Police arrest 38 suspects

PESHAWAR (APP): The district police here on Sunday launched a crackdown against anti-social elements and arrested 38 suspects involved in street crimes. Talking to journalists, District Police Officer Shehzada Umar Abbas Babar said that the district police have made blockades on all the entry and exit points of the city under the supervision of SDPOs concerned.

He said that police also recovered 10 pistols, four kilograms of hashish and dozens of cartridges from the possessions of the arrested accused. Similarly, the patrol squad had seized 40 unregistered and without number plates vehicles for investigation during checking at various places.



PESHAWAR: Former provincial minister Arshad Abdullah meeting Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali.

FS&HFA launches operation against adulteration mafia

PESHAWAR (APP): The inspection teams of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority continued operations in Kohat and Dera Ismail Khan on Sunday, an official of the Food Department KP said here.

The Food safety inspection teams of Kohat and Dera Ismail Khan are active

against adulteration mafia in various markets with two production units have been sealed and fined for poor sanitation and production of substandard food items in Dera Ismail Khan, the official informed.

He disclosed that the Food Safety team of Kohat inspected bakeries, production units and ice cream

factories with four bakery shops and an ice cream factory have been sealed for poor sanitation and use of non-food grade items.

Large quantities of non-standard food items were destroyed, and a fine was also imposed, the official of the Food Authority told media men. He said that on the instruction of the

Director General Food Authority Shah Rukh Ali Khan, the inspection teams have speeded up operations in Kohat and Dera Ismail Khan in order to ensure good food to the common people.

He said the Director General Food Authority also appealed to the Citizens that they should also bring into the notice of the food officials about such businesses involved in sales of substandard items. The DG Shah Rukh Ali Khan, he said, directed the Food safety inspection teams to take timely action against those who violate the law.

Fake medicines recovered

PESHAWAR (APP): The drug control team of Directorate General Drug Control and Pharmacy Services here on Sunday raided a house located in Gulberg area and recovered fake medicines, labels, empty bottles, unit cartons and printing machinery.

Drug Control Team led by Drug Inspectors Khushal Khan, Muhammad Zeeshan, Ziaur Rehman, Madina Anjum, Imranul Haq raided the house of Mohammad Niaz Qureshi Al-Noor street and recovered fake medicines worth around Rs6 million and machinery used in the manufacture of fake drugs.

The team recovered fake medicines Ondansetron, Ceph, Esomeprazole, B-Mark Injection, Neurox, Genrox, Dancol 800, Fisurid, Diaflex, Capro, Sofner, Eptilex, Trmpr, Marflox, Ignis, Lacos, Ignis, Onactum, Itcan, Nohist, Biowel, Mogrell, Garvis, Somet, Rosicar, Zonactum including empty bottles, printing machines, labels, unit cartons and other materials were seized.

The drug control team took samples of the drugs for laboratory analysis and seized all other drugs, labels, bottles, unit cartons and other machinery under the Drugs Act.

A case has been registered against the accused under the Drug Act.

Police seizes smuggled petrol

PESHAWAR (APP): The district police recovered 400 litres of Iranian petrol, 1,250 gram hashish and arrested four persons in the limits of Daraban police station.

According to the police spokesman, the police team led by Daraban SHO Abdul Ghaffar Khan stopped a double-cabin at a blockade and recovered 11 cans containing 400 litres of smuggled Iranian petrol.

The police arrested the driver, Dad Mir Khan Shirani resident of Darazinda area.

In another action, the police arrested three accused drug peddlers including Jahanzeb son of Muhammad Nawaz resident of Daraban with 515 gram hashish; Muhammad Adnan son of Sahibzada Abdul Salam resident of Darazinda with 350 gram hashish and Umar Khan son of Allah Nawaz resident of Daraban with 385 gram hashish.

Writer's delegation visits Fort Balahisar

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A delegation consisting of top Writers, Poets and columnists from across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa visited Fort Balahisar.

During interaction, the delegation was briefed about Frontier Corps endeavors in Security, Capability enhancement of police/CTD, Social uplift of marginalized communities along the border belt and Aid of Civ Power.

During the interaction, Inspector General Frontier Corps North highlighted the importance of propagating hope while upholding truth and countering hostile elements within the literary domain.

He urged the writers to play their part in maintaining peace and directing the youth towards a progressive nation.

The participants vowed



to emphasize their efforts for peace and socio-economic development in their columns and writings.

They also emphasized the need for such events to be held on a regular basis in the future.

DPO directs tightening security of census teams

PESHAWAR (APP): District Police Officer (DPO) North Waziristan, Saleem Khan has directed district police for tightening the security of population and housing census teams and crackdown against criminals especially drugs peddlers. He issued these directives during his surprise visit to Police Station Datakhel and various check posts on Sunday. During the visit, he checked the lockups, residential barracks, arms store and record of other sections including crime statement and registers.



PESHAWAR: Amjad Khan Khalil Advocate addressing gathering.

PMNAP brings positive changes in lives of tribesmen of merged districts

PESHAWAR (APP): The government's livestock and poultry projects launched under the Prime Minister's National Agriculture Programme (PMNAP) has started bringing positive changes in lives of poor tribal people of the newly merged districts.

Sahib Noor (43), a poor farmer of Bajaur tribal district was living below the poverty line unless he took advantage of the government's livestock and dairy farm project that turned his life prosperous.

Hailing from Khar tehsil of district Bajaur, Sahib Noor wakes up early in the morning, give water and fodder to his five imported cows before supporting his assistant in cows' milking and washing the four-kanal livestock shed farm, established with the financial support of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa livestock and dairy development department.

"Prior to the government's package, I was living below poverty line with serious problems of depression, anxiety and was under the burden of huge loans

due to loss of my buffaloes and poultry birds in the last year devastated floods," said Sahib Noor whom family also support him in the livestock farming while talking to APP.

Appreciating the government's dairy farm and livestock project launched for assistance of poor and flood affected farmers in merged districts, the motivated farmer said that he received five imported purebred cows of purebred under the project while bearing 20 percent cost and 80 percent covered by the government.

"Each cow gives about 17-20 kilogram milk a day which he sells in the market and support his family besides paying electricity bills, wages to his labours and meeting other expenses," he said, adding like him scores of other farmers in his home district were taking benefit from the government's dairy and livestock farming project.

KP livestock department's officials told APP that 160 model and livestock farms out of 300 farms were established in

all seven merged tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, adding work on 20 more livestock farms were in pipeline on which work would soon start to engage more poor farmers and flood hit livestock owners.

"The estimated cost of establishment of a model livestock farm is Rs3.5 million out of which 80 percent was provided by the government and 20 percent shared by the beneficiary registered farmer," he said, adding the business and jobs oriented projects have started positive changes in lives of tribesmen.

He said it was mandatory for each farmer to run the poultry farm for at least five years and properly look after animals provided by the government in a bid to increase milk and meat production besides increasing farmers' income in KP.

"One farm provides jobs to 900 people in merged areas," he said, adding the government also provides milking machines imported from Turkey to registered farmers to avoid waste of milk and ensure its quality.

Keeping in view of an availability of vast land in seven merged tribal districts suitable for livestock and dairy farming, the KP government has launched another project i.e revival of existing poultry farms in merged areas under which free feed, medicines and vaccination services were being provided to the registered farmers by the DVM doctors.

The objectives of these projects are to conserve livestock and dairy wealth by trying to improve the productive capabilities of livestock and poultry through effective animal health coverage and artificial insemination services, feed and fodder for benefits of tribal people.

To take advantage of the poultry farms project, the farmer was required to have a day old chicks while medicines and feed services were the responsibility of the livestock department. At least 45 model dairy farms with 3,000 poultry birds were established last year in merged areas.

The government is supporting farmers in construc-

tion of model semi-environmentally controlled sheds and farms in merged areas for which Rs seven million would be provided by farmers and 10 million to 15 million by the government, he said adding the government would help registered farmers in solarization of farms. "Each farm would have at least 30,000 poultry birds," he said, adding the project would change the destiny of tribal people.

The government, under poverty alleviation through enhancement of milk and meat value chain services in merged areas, was financially supporting farmers who have at least 20 animals and a model cattle farms, he said, adding 20 farms were already established under this initiative.

"The interest of tribal people in these projects was overwhelming and the department would consider extending the desired project for facilitation of more underprivileged farmers and poultry breeders."

Besides merged areas, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

government was constructing 107 model farms in settled districts of the province to provide poultry and livestock meat to consumers at affordable rates. Approximately, 13.6 million litres of milk and Rs1,360 million profit would be achieved from these farms in KP.

The trickled down positive effects of the government's three mega livestock and poultry projects worth Rs3,214 million under the national emergency agriculture programme worth over Rs309.7 billion to alleviate poverty, increase meat and milk production have started visible at the grassroots level in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The three gigantic projects including 'poverty alleviation through development of rural poultry' amounting Rs834 million, save the calf worth Rs1,554 million and feedlot fattening programme of Rs826 million have provided much-needed relief to price-hike stricken people, women, persons with disabilities and underprivileged segments of society

in the country.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, around 30-35 million rural populations were engaged in livestock raising, having household holdings of 2-3 cattle and buffalo besides 5-6 sheep and goats per family, which helped them to drive 30-40% of their income from livestock. The poultry meat also contributes 28.5% of the total meat production in Pakistan.

The basic concept of the milk village project was procurement, processing and distribution of milk aimed at boosting economic wellbeing of rural milk producers and helping urban consumers get quality milk at a reasonable price. The department was trying to take various steps for increasing milk production by organizing dairy cooperative societies at village and tehsil level.

The official said these projects after completion would significantly reduce prices of meat and poultry in the open market besides generating employment opportunities for hundreds of thousands of poor farmers.



In brief

Gilani hails lawyers' role

MULTAN (APP): Former prime minister and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) central leader Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani hailed the services of lawyers for the promotion of democracy, here on Sunday. Talking to a delegation of lawyers led by High Court Bar Association President Rana Asif Saeed and People Lawyers Forum Shiekh Ghias Ul Haq, Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani said if the lawyers had not extended sacrifices, then there would have been another shape of democracy. He said that the Pakistan Peoples Party gave the Constitution to the country. Similarly, he restored the Constitution to its original shape. Gilani maintained that he was jailed for 15 years but he did not become part of any deal. He stated that opponents could not bear jail hardships for even one week. The High Court Bar Association's delegation also extolled the services of Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani for democracy. Gilani also appreciated matchless uplift work done during Gilani's tenure.

Three of a family die

DADU (INP): A man, his wife and a daughter were killed and two of his children were injured seriously when a speeding passenger van ploughed into a motorcycle on Mehran Highway near Nawabshah. The deceased identified as Raza Mohammad Solangi, his wife Rubina Solangi and baby girl Nisa and the injured Kamran Solangi and Rani Solangi were brought to Nawabshah hospital. According to police, the family members were going to their native village in Naushahro Feroze on a motorcycle when the speeding van hit them.

Police arrest 3 drug peddlers

WAH CANTT (APP): The Wah Sadder Police on Sunday arrested three drug peddlers and recovered 200 bottles of locally made liquor from their possession. Police sources said that acting on a tip-off, a police party raided at liquor supply den and recovered 200 bottles of locally made liquor. Those who were arrested were identified as Sajjad, Nasir and Sajid Khan. Police have registered a case. Further probe was underway.

School teacher abducted

WAH CANTT (APP): A woman teacher of a private school was abducted on her way to school in the limits of Taxila Police station. Masood Ahmed filed a complaint with the police that his 30-year-old daughter left her home for a local school in Gulshan Anwar, but she was abducted by unknown persons on her way. Taxila Police registered a case and launched further investigation.

Six held with weapons

SARGODHA (APP): Bhulwal Police claimed on Sunday to have arrested six gangsters and recovered illegal weapons from their possession. The accused were identified as Husnain, Usman, Imran Ali, Ejaz, Waqas and another. The police recovered two pistols, three guns and 300 bullets from their possession.

Welfare shop set up

B A H A W A L P U R (APP): A welfare shop has been established at Bahawalpur Police Lines to facilitate consumers from Police Department. Under the supervision of RPO Babar Saeed and DPO Syed Muhammad Abbas, a welfare shop has been established at Bahawalpur Police Lines.

NA Speaker opens Working Folk's Grammer School

F.P. Report

BANNU: Deputy Speaker of National Assembly Zahid Akram Durrani said Sunday said that a protectorate of emigrant office would be opened at Bannu to facilitate the people of southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in visa processing.

Addressing an inauguration ceremony of the newly constructed Working Folk's Grammer School for Males and Females here, he said a number of people of southern districts were working abroad and they had to travel to Peshawar for having a visa protector.

In this regard, he expressed gratitude to the Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Sajid Hussain Turi who he said had always supported the development-oriented initiatives

for the uplift of the southern districts, was convinced to make the facility of protector available for overseas Pakistani workers of the area.

He said since education was key to development that was why the government was giving priority to promoting quality education.

As part of such efforts. He said institutions like Working Folk's Grammer School played a great role in equipping the children with quality education to meet the challenges.

Earlier, the deputy speakers were briefed about the project and informed that the school building had been completed at Rs285.585 million spreading over 100 kanal of land at Azmat Shahbaz Azmat Khel Road.

It is also having residences for the principal and Allied staff besides other facilities including multi-

purpose halls, it was briefed.

Speaking on the occasion, Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Sajid Hussain Turi said that southern districts of KP were far behind in terms of development and deserved to have better schools and hospitals but Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) did not pay heed to its development despite being in power in the province as well as the center.

He said that the party's chairman Bilawal Bhutto believed in the development of tribal merged districts and southern districts of KP and in this regard all-out efforts would be made.

He said the problems of teachers of Working Folk's Grammer Schools would be resolved while pursuing pro-worker policies and one would be rendered jobless.

DG Khan devotees tragedy:

Search for another firing missing bodies in progress

DG KHAN (APP): Rescue 1122 recovered 14 dead bodies and another five missing bodies were still being searched in DG Khan canal as a tractor trolley loaded with 46 devotees skidded off and fell into the canal on Friday, near Ramdani Chowk, airport road in DG Khan.

According to Rescue 1122, the tractor-trolley, loded with devotees, was heading to Sakhi Sarwar when it fell in the canal and all the 46 devotees, mostly

women and kids, drowned.

Local people rushed to the site and recovered 24 persons safely. Rescue 1122 officials also reached the site and started Rescue operation. It recovered and shifted three injured people to hospital. However, on Friday, Rescue 1122 recovered five dead bodies. The search was stopped due to darkness.

However, on the second day (Saturday), Rescue 1122 resumed the search operation and it recovered

another five persons including three women and two kids. Similarly, on Sunday (third day of incident) four bodies of devotees were recovered during the operation. So far, another five bodies are still missing and search operation is in progress. As per google earth death satellite, the canal is 15 to 20 feet deep and its width is 254.30 feet. A total of 120 Rescuers with help of boats and other equipment are continuing the search operation.

Policemen abducted near Khandkot

KANDHKOT (INP): Dacoits attacked a police check-post and kidnapped almost two policemen in Katcha area of Durrani Mehr near Sindh's Kandhkot tehsil. According to details, two policemen Sajjad Jakhri and Ghaffar were kidnapped on Saturday when dacoits attacked a police check-post in Katcha area of Durrani Mehr.

The dacoits had uploaded a video showing

the two men in their custody, demanding release of a 13-year-old suspect Wajid who was earlier arrested by police.

Earlier in March, Sindh Cabinet approved funds for military-grade weapons to launch an anti-bandit operation in Katcha area.

Secretary home department and the I.G. Police Sindh in a briefing to the cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister of Sindh Murad

Ali Shah, said that the police will require military-grade arms to launch an effective operation against bandits in Katcha area (riverine forest along the Indus River).

The cabinet session was briefed that the January 05 session of the apex committee had recommended procurement of military-grade weapons, which requires 2.7 billion rupees funds.



SWAT: Caretaker provincial minister Muhammad Ali Shah addressing oath taking ceremony.

Research on cotton nurseries in progress

MULTAN (APP): Agriculture Secretariat South Punjab is working on introducing a cotton nursery to check impacts of climate changes, aimed at getting maximum production of cotton.

The early sown cotton usually remains more successful in terms of production if compared to routine or late sowing.

At time of routine or late sowing, the crop undergoes climate changes during the germination stage.

The stress at this stage affects the crop, said secretary agriculture south Punjab Saqib Ateeel while talking to APP here.

Saqib Ateeel stated that there were three stages vital for cotton including germination, flowering and fruiting. During past experiments, the early sown crops gave high yield compared to the yield taken from late sowing.

He added, now the south Punjab secretariat is introducing cotton nursery and it will shift germinated plants

to the fields. The nurseries are being developed from March 8, 15 and April 1 at Cotton Research Institute Punjab, said Saqib.

He added that the farmers could not sow cotton early due to wheat. At time of germination, there is much heat and it affects the germination of cotton plants. The plants in the nursery will avail some growth and then will be shifted to the field. These plants will be capable of

combating the heat wave or other climate changes.

In our country, the cotton lint production is very low which is nearly 750kg/hectare. In China and America, it is 3000/hectare and 2000 kg/hectare respectively.

The nurseries are being developed at three Kanals. To a query about the number of plants per acre, the secretary agriculture informed that 17000 plants were being installed per acre.

DC inaugurates anti-polio drive

SIALKOT (APP): Deputy Commissioner Adnan Mahmood Awan on Sunday inaugurated a five-day anti-polio drive at Primary Health Centre Muradpur by administering polio vaccine to children.

Speaking on the occasion, he said, formally the drive would start from March 13 to 17, during which 772,000 children under five years of age would be administered polio vaccine. He said that for this purpose, 2676 mobile, 133 fixed and 69 transit teams had been constituted. A total of 6288 Human Resources members would serve in the campaign, he added.

The Deputy Commissioner said that assistant commissioners would review the polio campaign in their respective tehsils on daily basis.



BANNU: Deputy Speaker of National Assembly Zahid Akram Durrani with others offering dua during inauguration ceremony of newly constructed Working Folk's Grammer School.

Education key for uplift

Shafiullah

MINGORA: Tje Commissioner Pakistan Boys Scouts Association Sardar Waqar Shahzad along with Haji Shahzad and Sardar Waqar Shahzad (National Commissioner of Pakistan Boys Scouts), has met with Dr. Hassan Sher, Vice Chancellor of Swat University.

Teachers has a great role to play in nation building, and so does universities. Sardar Waqar and Dr. Hassan Sher, discussed topics of mutual interest, meanwhile Sardar Waqar proposed that Pakistani Universities need to give world class, gender balanced graduates, with courses of practical and commercial importance keeping in mind our local economic sectors.

Swat need high class graduates in hospitality, tourism, forestry, food processing and preparation, fishery, mining, gym cutting, marketing, flood prevention and control, and traffic management, health, finance etc.

We need to have Indonesian and other international universities as Sister University with Swat university to encourage knowledge transfer and international exposure.

3 proclaimed offenders booked

ATTOCK (INP): District Attock Police on Sunday booked three proclaimed offenders during a crack-down launched on the directives of District Police Officer Attock Dr. Ghias Gul Khan within the purview of sensitive territory of inter provincial bordering district Attock.

Police said, Basal Police on a tip conducted surprise raid and arrested a notorious proclaimed offender identified as Hafadat Ali son of Javed Ali out the outskirts Dhok Khadri tehsil Jand who was escaping from the law enforcement agencies for the last eight years.

Meanwhile, Pindigheb police find the clue of proclaimed offender known as Mir Zaman wanted under section 396-A/376-II of case number 427 dated 29.12.2020. Hazro police intercepted a proclaimed offender near link road of Motorway Chach Interchange. He was involved in the murder of his younger sister. Later on, cases were registered by the respective police and started further investigation before filing their complete challan in the courts, accordingly.

DC: Arrangements begin for Punjab Assembly's election

MULTAN (APP): Deputy Commissioner/District Returning Officer (DRO) Omar Jehangir here on Sunday said that arrangements had been started in the district regarding Punjab Assembly elections on the directions of the Election Commission of Pakistan.

The deputy commissioner has been appointed as DRO while district officials appointed as the assistant Returning Officers in the district.

He expressed these views while administering the oath of his subordinate returning officers and assistant returning officers.

Deputy Commissioner Omar Jehangir said that there would be elections in 13 constituencies of Punjab Assembly in the district.

Candidates of PP 211 could obtain nomination papers from the office of Director Colleges Farid

Sharif while candidates of PP 212 could obtain papers from Additional Commissioner Revenue Arshad Gopang's office and others from various offices.

Nomination papers could be submitted from 12 to 14 March.

Omar Jehangir said that the mechanism of giving nomination papers to the candidates in the offices would be improved as making the election transparent and impartial was their prime responsibility.

There will be no compromise regarding the code of conduct and transparent conduct of elections.

Foolproof security arrangements being ensured at churches: CPO

The City Police Officer (CPO) Mansoor-ul-Haq Rana said that foolproof security arrangements were being ensured at churches to avoid any

untoward incident.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, he said that best security arrangements had been made at churches to provide a peaceful environment for the Christian community to perform their religious activities. He said that walk-through gates have been installed at entry points of the churches while lady police officials had also been deployed.

The city police officer added that all SDPOs and SHOs were monitoring the arrangements at churches in their respective areas, however, he himself was monitoring the security arrangements.

He directed police officials to remain alert while performing security duty at churches. He urged them to keep a vigil on suspicious persons and activities in the surroundings of the churches.

3000 free plants distributed among students on Green Day at Chitral University

CHITRAL (APP): Around 3000 free plants were distributed among the students of Chitral University during the Green Day in a simple but impressive ceremony held at the University auditorium on Sunday.

Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zahir Shah was the chief guest at the event, while Assistant Commissioner Chitral Dr. Muhammad Atif Jalib, Heads of Forest Department, Agriculture Department, Water and Soil Conservation Department and other departments of the Varsity also participated in the ceremony.

Addressing on the occasion, experts said that since Chitral was a dry region where the mountains were often barren due to the lack of monsoon rains, therefore the people of Chitral had more responsibility to plant trees everywhere to control the lack of forests.

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed the guests and said that plants were not only essential for the survival of the humanity, but also fulfill all the needs of life from human beings to animals. He urged the participants to plant as many trees as possible to avoid the negative effects of climate change and make them successful.

Divisional Forest Officer Asif Ali Shah also highlighted the importance of plants and trees and said

that natural disasters could not be prevented until we control the deforestation. These trees and plants not only provide us fresh Oxygen, but also act as natural check dams to reduce the speed of flash floods, he added.

Director Admin Prof. Dr. Muhammad Nadeem thanked all the participants and urged all the stakeholders, especially the students, to convey these useful messages to their family members and neighborhoods and also create awareness among the people about the importance of forests.

Later, all the participants including the Vice Chancellor also planted saplings in the lawn of the Chitral University.

On this occasion, 3,000 plants were distributed among the students free of cost including 2,000 fruit plants and 1,000 wild plants.

Later twihle alking to APP, the Vice Chancellor said that after the disastrous flood last year, it was recognized on the international level that more forests could save such disasters. The whole world has seen the negative effects of climate change and due to this devastating flood, more than 50 billion \$ dollars was lost in the homeland and many people died and many people were displaced.

Students of the University said that plants were very important for their life because plants were not only a tree but were also a new life. They said that most of the forests were being cut in Chitral and people were forced to do so because they burn these firewoods for cooking and heating purposes as there was no alternative fuel here.

Dr. Nadeem said that whenever the natural calamity was happened, many lives were lost and property worth billions of rupees was also damaged. If the people are provided electricity at subsidized rates or cheap gas as an alternative fuel, then they will not burn wood. The natural calamities can be avoided by reducing the burden on forests, they expressed.

Lecturer of Botany Department Hafeezullah said we should plant more saplings as a charity campaign because the more saplings we plant, the more we can avoid the negative effects of the environment and climate change.

A large number of students of Chitral University, teachers, administration officers, representatives of Forest Department, Police, Water Conservation and other departments also participated in the tree-plantation drive.

Police to install search lights, CCTV cameras to prevent crime: DPO

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): District Police Officer (DPO) Raza Safdar Kazmi said that police would install CCTV cameras and search lights at Munda Chowk to prevent rising street crimes at the Chowk and suburban areas.

Holding an open court at Khangarh police station on Sunday, the DPO said that protection and public lives and properties were top priority of police and all possible resources were being

utilized for this purpose.

He said that various citizens have identified Munda Chowk where the incidents of crimes and robberies were being reported on daily basis.

Taking serious notice of the complaints, it has been decided to install search lights and CCTV cameras at the chowk. He directed Station House Officer (SHO) Khangarh to ensure strict patrolling in the area to prevent crime.

He urged masses to cooperate with the police department by giving information regarding crime and criminals in the areas.

School staff suspended District Education Officer Elementary has suspended all staff of government boys primary school Basti Chaman over poor performance.

Deputy DEO Education had used to submit the report that he visited the school and found the over-

all performance of the school teachers poor, teachers also found guilty of misconduct while the system of the school was also not better.

On which the action was taken by the authority and all staff was suspended from service and notification issued in this regard.

The suspended staff included PST Abdul Basit, Ayub Raja, Muzaffar Saeed, Muhammad Jamshaid and Rafi-ul-Zaman.



Monday, March 13, 2023

Iran confirms death sentence for Swedish-Iranian dissident

TEHRAN (AFP/APP): Iran's judiciary on Sunday confirmed a death sentence for a Swedish-Iranian dissident for "terrorism" over two years since his disappearance at an airport in Turkey, the judiciary's Mizan Online website reported.

Habib Chaab has been held in Iran since October 2020 after he vanished during a visit to Turkey and was put on trial in Tehran -- which does not recognise dual nationality.

Chaab, who was found guilty on charges of "corruption on earth" and the formation of a rebel group, was sentenced to death on December 6.

On Sunday, it was confirmed that Iran's Supreme Court had upheld the ruling. "The death sentence of Habib Farajollah Chaab on charges of cor-

ruption on earth through the formation, management and leadership of a rebel group called Harakat al-Nidal, and the design and execution of numerous terrorist operations in Khuzestan province, was approved by the Supreme Court," Mizan Online reported.

Iran has accused Harakat al-Nidal of "cooperation with other terrorist groups" including in a 2018 attack on a military parade in Ahvaz in the southwestern Khuzestan region that authorities said killed 25 and wounded almost 250.

Chaab is the latest person to be sentenced to death after being found guilty of being a member of Harakat al-Nidal, which Tehran calls a "terrorist group".

Last week, a court in Ahvaz sentenced to death six men over attacks who had "carried out the orders of their European leaders".

They were found guilty of "armed operations" between 2017 and 2019 that killed four people, including a soldier and two members of Iran's Basij paramilitary force, the report said. The Islamic Republic of Iran executes more people every year than any other nation except China, according to rights groups including Amnesty International. Last month, Iran's judiciary put to death a Kurdish militant who had been convicted of killing a police officer, a move condemned by rights groups who called him a political prisoner.

Latest California storm leaves at least two dead, breaks levee

PAJARO, United States (AFP/APP): Another powerful storm pummeled California overnight into Saturday, forcing thousands to evacuate and resulting in at least two deaths, while causing a levee to give way in coastal Monterey County.

"We were hoping to avoid and prevent this situation, but the worst case scenario has arrived with the Pajaro River overtopping and levee breaching at about midnight," Luis Alejo, a Monterey County supervisor, said Saturday on Twitter.

Residents told that they were alerted by local fire officials in the middle of the night that they needed to evacuate.

"Just the noise of the fire department -- their sirens and all -- woke us up," said Moses, a resident of the area for around 20 years who preferred to give only his first name.

He said officials later came and knocked on his door multiple times, but that he decided to wait until 5:00 AM to make a decision. After returning home from surveying the flooding, Moses said water was beginning to cover his street. "That's when I told my wife, 'hey, we got to get out of here,'" he said.

Thousands rally in London to show solidarity with health care workers

LONDON (AA/APP): A large crowd in London demonstrated Saturday in solidarity with Britain's health care workers.

The demonstration by SOS NHS (National Health Service) -- a coalition of campaign groups and trade unions -- demanded the government make fair pay hikes for health care workers in the face of increasing living costs.

Thousands chanted to voice support for health care workers while carrying banners that read: "End the NHS crisis" and "NHS staff deserve fair pay."

Main opposition Labour party MPs attended along with doctors, nurses and representatives from unions. Junior doctors in England will begin a three-day strike action Monday because of an ongoing dispute concerning a pay hike.

Health Secretary Steve Barclay announced early Saturday that he urged the junior doctors union, BMA, to have formal pay talks and call off the upcoming industrial action.

"Let's have a constructive dialogue to make the NHS a better place to work and ensure we deliver the care patients need," he wrote on Twitter.

Russia to launch e-visas and payment cards for foreigners

ST. PETERSBURG (Xinhua/APP): Foreign tourists may have a chance to apply for an electronic visa to enter Russia and receive a payment card in 2023, Tatyana Sharshavitskaya, head of the Russian Department of Tourism Development of the Ministry of Economic Development, said.

She made the notice at the Fifth Congress of Travel Agencies organized by the Russian Union of Travel Industry. To solve payment problems associated with the departure of Visa and MasterCard from the Russian market, a special payment tool named the "Tourist Card" will be introduced, Russian news agency Interfax quoted her as saying.

In July 2020, a law was adopted allowing citizens of more than 50 countries, including EU states, to apply for an electronic visa to enter Russia. According to the document, the electronic visa is valid for 60 days and allows foreigners to enter for tourism and business purposes.

In January 2021, the Russian government delayed the implementation of e-visas due to COVID-19. According to Interfax, 5 million foreign tourists visited Russia in 2019. The number later dropped sharply owing to the pandemic. In 2022, slightly more than 200,000 foreign tourists visited the country.

Israel sees one of its biggest-ever protests

TEL AVIV (BBC): Hundreds of thousands of Israelis rallied against the government's judicial plans in what organisers said were the biggest street protests in Israel's history.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says the changes - which would curb the power of courts - will restore balance between the branches of government. Opponents say they threaten democracy. At one of Saturday's rallies, opposition leader Yair Lapid said this was Israel's "greatest crisis".

In a separate development, Israeli troops shot dead three armed Palestinians near the West Bank city of Nablus on Sunday, the Israeli army said. It said the gunmen had fired at an Israeli army post. Palestinian officials have not commented on the incident.

There has been a marked surge in violence between Palestinians and Israel in recent months.

On Saturday, protest organisers said as many as 500,000 demonstrators took to the streets across Israel for the 10th consecutive week, in what the Haaretz newspaper called "the largest demonstration in the country's history".

About 200,000 people turned up in Tel Aviv - many carrying Israel's national flag - to rally against planned reforms by Mr Netanyahu's hardline government. A BBC producer in the city described the protests as the busiest yet, with a non-stop flow of demonstrators packing the streets until late into the night.

In remarkable scenes, crowds applauded Tel Aviv police chief Amichai Eshed as he walked in uniform through the rally.

On Thursday, National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir had said he was transferring Mr Eshed to head a training division, preventing a repeat of the unequal COVID-19 vaccine rollout, saying this led to at least 1.3 million preventable deaths.

In 2021, a WHO-led team spent weeks in and around Wuhan, China where the first human cases were reported and said in a joint report that the virus had probably been transmitted from bats to humans through another animal, but further research was needed. China has said no more visits are needed.

Since then, the WHO has set up a scientific advisory group on dangerous pathogens but it has not yet reached any conclusions on how the pandemic began, saying key pieces of data are missing.

category, 187 in the low-risk "yellow" category and 235 in the normal "blue" category.

Iran was among the first countries in the Middle East to report the novel coronavirus in February 2020 after two deaths in the central city of Qom, followed by Tehran.

The region's worst-hit country grappled with at least seven waves of the virus, mostly fueled by highly-transmissible variants such as delta and omicron, before cases subsided.

The situation was complicated by the slow pace of vaccination, which gained momentum after a new government took control in Tehran in late 2019.

In June last year, after

amid reports the ultra-nationalist politician accused the commander of being too soft on protesters, whom he calls "anarchists".

But Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara later overruled Mr Ben-Gvir, saying the decision was being frozen, while national police chief Kobi Shabtai on Saturday said he had "made a mistake" in dismissing Eshed.

The clash over the commander's position is significant. It comes amid predictions of a possible constitutional crisis, involving Israel's civil service and security forces being unable to take orders from the government, if no compromise is reached on the planned reforms, says the BBC's Tom Bateman in Jerusalem. Speaking at the demonstrations in Tel Aviv, former Israel police chief Moshe Karadi described Mr Ben-Gvir's control of the force as an unprecedented danger.

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At San Francisco expo, AI 'sorry' for destroying humanity

SAN FRANCISCO (AFP/APP): Advances in artificial intelligence are coming so hard and fast that a museum in San Francisco, the beating heart of the tech revolution, has imagined a memorial to the demise of humanity.

"Sorry for killing most of humanity person with smile cap and mustache," says a monitor welcoming a visitor to the "Misalignment Museum," a new exhibit on the controversial technology.

The pieces in this temporary show mix the disturbing with the comic, and this first display has AI disburthy observations to the visitors that cross into its line of vision.

"The concept of the museum is that we are in a post-apocalyptic world where artificial general intelligence has already destroyed most of humanity," said Audrey Kim, the show's curator.

"But then the AI realizes that was bad and creates a type of memorial to the human, so our show's tagline is 'sorry for killing most of humanity,'" she said. Artificial General

Intelligence is a concept that is even more nebulous than the simple AI that is cascading into everyday life, as seen in the fast emergence of apps such as ChatGPT or Bing's chatbot and all the hype surrounding them. AGI is "artificial intelligence that is able to do anything that a human would be able to do," integrating human cognitive capacities into machines.

All around San Francisco, and down the peninsula in Silicon Valley, startups are hot on the trail of the AGI holy grail.

Sam Altman, the founder of ChatGPT creator OpenAI, has said AGI, done right, can "elevate humanity" and change the "limits of possibilities."

But Kim wants to trigger a reflection on the dangers of going too far, too quickly. "There have been lots of conversations about the safety of AI in pretty niche intellectual tech circles on Twitter and I think that's very important," she said.

But those conversations are not as easily accessible to the general public as concepts that you can see or feel, she added.

Kim is particularly fond of a sculpture called "Paperclip Embrace": two busts of humans holding each other, made entirely of paperclips.

The work refers to a metaphor by philosopher Nick Bostrom, who in the 2000s imagined what would happen if artificial intelligence was programmed to create paper clips.

"It could become more and more powerful, and constantly optimize itself to achieve its one and only goal, to the point of destroying all of humanity in order to flood the world with paper clips," Kim said.

Weighing the pros and cons of AI is a subject that became close to Kim's heart in an earlier job working for Cruise, an autonomous vehicle company. There she worked on an "incredible" technology, which "could reduce the number of accidents due to human error," but also presented risks, she said.

The exhibit occupies a small space in a street corner building in San Francisco's hip Mission neighborhood.

Turkey earthquake: Istanbul residents fear homes will collapse

ANKARA (BBC): The crack in Mesut Muttaliboglu's bedroom wall is so wide, he can fit a car key into it.

He turns it sideways, and with a flick of his wrist, a large chunk of plaster flies off the wall and crashes to the ground.

It's why he and his family are moving out of the flat they've lived in for the last 15 years. The whole building has been condemned after failing an earthquake safety test. There's a very high chance that a tremor would bring this whole block crashing to the ground. Here in Istanbul, fear is growing.

The two powerful earthquakes in Turkey's south that claimed almost 50,000 lives have brought a new urgency to its biggest city. Home to 15 million people, it sits on the North Anatolian fault line, and experts predict it's due its own major earthquake before 2030.

Around 70% of the city's buildings were built before rule changes that enforced stricter construction standards in 1999, and so are considered potentially unsafe. Just three months ago, a study said a quake here could kill up to 90,000 people. Now, the race is on to get the city ready.

Mesut knows all too well the devastation a quake can cause. He's just returned from the epicentre in the southern city of Kahramanmaraş, where he lost relatives. As we talked in his now-empty flat, he described the moment he found out.

"It happened at 04:17, a

relative called and we all woke up screaming." Mesut's face crumples into tears and he turns away to compose himself. "It's a horrible situation. We couldn't get [to Kahramanmaraş] for three days because of snow, and when we reached the rubble it was so hard. I can't describe it. I hope God doesn't make anyone else experience this."

When Mesut returned to Istanbul, the authorities had shut off power and water to his flat. "I asked for them back again just so we could move. They gave me two more days."

"The municipality had sent us written warning about it, but the situation wasn't resolved due to rejections from the neighbours. We knew that our utilities were going to be shut off, and we were ready to leave here, but then the quake happened and it all became a shambles."

Since the earthquakes in the south, there've been more than 100,000 new applications to the Istanbul municipality for building safety checks. The waiting list for one shot up to three months, then four, and it keeps rising.

Tenants as well as landlords can now apply, but some still don't because of the financial implications. The compensation to help those who need to move out of condemned buildings is low. There are no official numbers showing how many flat the test.

The city's mayor, Ekrem Imamoglu, has promised more training for rescue

teams, and preparation of temporary shelters that could house up to 4.5 million people in the aftermath of a quake. But many fear it still isn't enough.

A walk down an average Istanbul street tells you why. Many of the buildings have particular design features that can make them collapse if they're put under pressure during a quake.

Dr Kurtulus Atasever, a structural and earthquake engineer, met me to point some of them out. We stood on an empty patch of ground, strewn with rocks, that used to be the foundations of a building. When a magnitude 5.8 quake hit Istanbul in 2019, it was so badly damaged it had to be knocked down. Up and down the street, its neighbours have many of the same flaws.

Good quality concrete is vital, he tells me. And the architecture is crucial. "We have some overhangs here. In this type of building we have some weak or soft storeys. There are short columns too, they are actually all typical building problems."

In very simple terms, each of them weakens a building at ground level, meaning it struggles to hold up the floors above if there's an earthquake. An overhang makes the rest of the building wider than the footprint.

Soft storeys are where the ground floor is taller than the floors above it. Short columns don't have enough length compared to their diameter.

They can be done safely, Dr Atasever points out, but

only if proper thought and planning has gone into the design. In old buildings especially, that's rare.

We're standing in the shadow of Yasemin Suleymanoglu's house, and I ask if she's concerned about the apartment block it's in. She holds her daughter's hand and looks up at the face of the building. "I don't feel safe here," she says. "Our building shook a lot during the 2019 earthquake, and the columns of the one across the street cracked. I've been feeling restless since that sound, and with this latest quake we are really scared. We're losing our sleep because it may hit us any time. And I think we're at risk because our building is old."

The next step is the development of a 50km (31-mile) long fibre-optic based early warning system. But for a city so huge, it's hard to know where people would go to seek shelter, even if they had notice that a quake was coming.

As pictures of the devastation in the south continue to fill Turkish TV screens, these concerns are now front-of-mind for a huge slice of Istanbul's population. And just two months away from important presidential and parliamentary elections, that really matters. Overnight, the earthquake and its aftermath have joined Turkey's economic crisis as a key issue for voters.

Many aren't happy with the government's handling of either. The aftershocks here aren't just physical, they're political too.

Journalists work under cloud of fear amid Modi's media crackdown: Kashmiri paper's head

NEW YORK (APP): The owner of a sealed newspaper in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK) says Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "repressive media policies are destroying Kashmiri journalism, intimidating media outlets into serving as government mouthpieces and creating an information vacuum in our region of about 13 million people," as India descends into authoritarianism.

In an opinion piece published in The New York Times on Saturday, Anuradha Bhasin, executive editor of The Kashmir Times, whose offices in Srinagar were sealed by the occupation authorities three years ago, wrote that Modi was taking steps that could replicate this disturbing model on a national scale.

"His Hindu-chauvinist movement, which has normalized intolerance and violence against Indian Muslims, has already put severe pressure on India's once-rambunctious press, with journalists surveilled and jailed, and the government using strong-arm tactics against media outlets to ensure favourable coverage," Ms. Bhasin wrote in her piece titled: Modi's Final Assault on India's Press Freedom Has Begun.

But in January, she

pointed out that draft amendments to digital media guidelines were introduced that would essentially allow the government to block any content it doesn't like.

"In other words, the rest of India may end up looking a lot like Kashmir," Ms. Bhasin remarked.

In 2019, Modi's government abruptly revoked Kashmir's autonomous status without public input from the territory's people, sent in thousands of troops and shut down internet access, it was pointed out.

The shutdown lasted nearly six months, forcing hundreds of journalists to line up for hours to file their stories via a single designated site that had internet access. Each had 15 minutes to do so. Internet speeds have been excruciatingly slow since.

The next year new rules were introduced that empowered officials to label media content in Kashmir as "fake news, plagiarism and unethical or anti-national" and to punish journalists and publications.

"The rules stated -- ironically -- that the goal was to 'promote the highest standard of journalism'."

"Journalists are routinely summoned by the police, interrogated and threatened with charges

such as income tax violations or terrorism or separatism," Ms. Bhasin said, noting that several prominent journalists have been detained or sentenced to jail terms. At least 19 journalists were killed in Kashmir between 1990 and 2018.

"We work under a cloud of fear," she said.

"An information vacuum hangs over Kashmir, with the public underinformed -- or misinformed -- about what's going on in the region. Important news is suppressed, downplayed or twisted to suit government ends."

When Syed Ali Shah Geelani, a towering Kashmiri figure, died in 2021, the news was either blacked out in Kashmir or mentioned only briefly, according to the article. Last month, the government began a drive to bulldoze thousands of homes that authorities said were illegally built on state land.

A leading Kashmir outlet portrayed it as a bold stroke against unnamed "influential land-grabbers."

There was no word about the poor Kashmiris suddenly left homeless or residents who claim to have valid documents proving ownership.

"An ignorant public and a government free of scrutiny and accountability are threats to democra-

cy," Ms. Bhasin wrote. "But Mr. Modi appears intent on replicating this across India."

The proposed amendments to national guidelines for digital media that were unveiled in January are strikingly similar to those imposed on Kashmir, empowering government fact-checkers to label online content as 'fake or false.' Days after those changes were announced, the government ordered online platforms to block links to "India: The Modi Question," a BBC documentary critical of the prime minister. Indian tax agents later raided the British broadcaster's offices in India. Such raids have been used repeatedly to pressure critical voices in the media.

"Since he took power in 2014, Mr. Modi has systematically debased India's democratic ideals, bending courts and other government machinery to his will," she wrote.

"The media stands as one of the last remaining institutions capable of preventing India's descent into authoritarianism."

But if Mr. Modi succeeds in introducing the Kashmir model of information control to the rest of the country, it won't just press freedom that is at risk, but Indian democracy itself."

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Politics of hate, party versus state

In a hurriedly organized press conference, the caretaker Chief Minister of Punjab and Inspector General Police rubbished PTI's claims that the PTI worker was tortured and killed in Police Custody after the Police clash with PTI workers on Friday. Provincial top brass categorically told the media that Bilal Shah alias Zille Shah died in a car accident. Later, the PTI leadership managed to brand it as a Police atrocity by dropping the dead body in a Hospital emergency in a suspicious and criminal manner. Meanwhile, PTI's social media outbroke an online defamation campaign against the Punjab caretaker setup, Police, and other national institutions leading to uncertainty and suspicions regarding the upcoming elections in the province.

Politics is becoming more selfish, highly aggressive, and reckless as the fire-brand political leaders are determined to promote their politics through all foul and unfair means without caring about social and moral values and the legal implications of their misadventures. Apparently, there is acute filth, moral decay, and feculence behind all glitter and gold, while no group feels remorse and tender apology over twisting facts, using deaths, destruction, and violence for political gains. Although, crime and feudal politics had a strong link in politics in Pakistan and the entire South Asian region throughout history but the use of violence, hate speech, and corpses for political gains and intimidation of opponents is a highly deplorable action of the political elite who claims high values but acts egomania and putridness.

In fact, treasury and opposition, likewise triumph and defeat are parts of politics and those situations are not everlasting for any political group and evolve with the passage of time. Therefore, the treasury is not reserved for any politician as many other political parties that have significant public approval are persistently lobbying to reach high offices. Hence, political groups should try to deliver to the public while being in the government and seek constructive and positive criticism when lost power instead of resorting to a useless bullfight.

Unfortunately, the Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has employed the politics of clash, blame game, and accusations after its ouster from power through a no-confidence motion under a laid down constitutional and legal process in the country. The PTI Chairman not only accused the opposition and government institutions of a foreign-funded conspiracy against his government but also plugged in sensitive foreign policy matters in a domestic political dogfight. Likewise, all national institutions including the police, judiciary, military, Election Commission, and all those PTI leaders who contradict the party's policy remained at the gunpoint of PTI leadership and its social media trolls in the past year. In fact, prophecying bloodshed, preaching hate, and advertising the dead bodies of innocent and blind believers are not the need of a sane and patriotic leader.

Realistically, Pakistani politicians had always promoted their politics and compromised national prestige for personal gains in the past. Awfully, the political elite once again compromised economic sovereignty and endangered the nation's survival with its egoistic politics and lust for power. The murder/accidental death of a political worker and PTI's accusation against the sitting government for alleged involvement in crime is a serious issue while Police revelations regarding the deliberate politicization of the accidental death of the PTI worker are also important, that merit a thorough and impartial investigation under a judicial commission to ascertain the facts and ultimate penalty to the perpetrators of this conspiracy if any. Pakistan does not afford such a kind of governance and politics delivered by the treasury and opposition respectively. The leaders must revisit their politics otherwise public will prosecute them and no one remembers them with a good name in the future.

7 years of estrangement and bitter rivalry between Saudia, Iran come to an abrupt end

Dr. Mohammed Al-Sulami

Saudi Arabia and Iran have agreed to resume diplomatic ties and reopen embassies, according to a joint statement released following talks in Beijing. The statement released on Friday reiterated that the two sides agreed to respect mutual sovereignty and noninterference in each other's affairs.

According to the statement, both countries agreed to reopen embassies within two months, while Saudi and Iranian foreign ministers also will hold meetings to implement the agreement, exchange ambassadors and discuss ways to strengthen relations.

The agreement is significant since it was signed by the two major powers in the Middle East after endless disputes and seven years of diplomatic freeze. The Kingdom and Iran have been locked in a bitter rivalry, with the former defending the Arab world against Iranian interference carried out via its proxy actors, which have significant clout in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen.

Saudi Arabia has always sought peace, and it was only when the Iran-backed Houthis toppled President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi in Yemen that Riyadh took a firm stand, deciding to intervene to protect the legitimate government. There are no Saudi proxy actors in the region. Over the past two years, there have been five rounds of talks between the Kingdom and Iran.

Talks that began under former Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi touched on ways to ease tensions between the two countries, resume diplomatic relations, and settle disputes arising from Iran's role in Yemen, Syria and Lebanon. Thus, all the previous rounds of discussions were primarily of a security nature. So, the recent agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and the joint statement the two countries issued along with China, marks a shift from a security to a diplomatic dialogue. This is another step forward.

The reasons behind

such a breakthrough are diverse, but the primary factor is that Saudi Arabia is pursuing a foreign policy approach based mainly on easing tensions, ending disputes and restoring stability. This foreign policy approach is part of the broader vision for the country and the region. The Kingdom favors peace over war and dialogue over severing relations, as well as channeling the region's massive resources to achieve prosperity and development, rather than financing militias and the production of weapons.

This is a theme that Saudi officials have repeated in recent years. Immediately after the joint statement was released, Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan wrote on Twitter: "The resumption of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran is based on the Kingdom's vision favoring political resolution and dialogue and keenness to foster this orientation in the region. All the region's countries have a shared

destiny and common denominations, which make it necessary for us to share the model of prosperity and stability for our peoples to enjoy it."

This tweet epitomizes Saudi foreign policy and vision for the region. It is not the first of its kind. The Saudi foreign minister has reiterated the Kingdom's readiness for dialogue on several occasions. On Jan. 17, 2023, he told a Davos forum session that dialogue is the best way to resolve differences in the region. "We are trying to create dialogue with all parties. And our main focus is on development."

By emphasizing development, rather than geopolitical issues, he alluded to Iran and others, signaling that there are other trajectories through which countries can achieve shared prosperity.

It is worth noting that this agreement is a litmus test — for Iran. The two countries agreed to reopen embassies within two months. This time frame is

important. Both countries are shifting from focusing on security to political issues. The problem with Iran is not dialogue, but goodwill. Saudi Arabia has never rejected dialogue with Iran. However, the Kingdom has also asserted that its neighbor must show goodwill in order for this dialogue to move forward.

There is a deep divide and total distrust between Riyadh and Tehran. Repairing damaged ties requires a transitional period and the restoring of confidence. The remarks, as well as the agreement signed between the two sides, must yield material results.

If Iran has sincere intentions to ease tensions and end disputes in the region, perhaps these will become evident in Yemen. Saudi Arabia does not want war in Yemen. It is keen to reach a peaceful resolution, while at the same time ending the subversive Iranian role via the Houthis at the expense of the legitimate government.

The question that arises is, why China? Beijing is a

close friend of both Saudi Arabia and Iran. It is the main trading partner for each, but the most important customer of Iranian products, despite the US and global economic sanctions against Tehran. Therefore, China will be the guarantor of Iran fulfilling the agreement — and if Iran cheats, it will lose out.

International reactions to the Saudi Arabia-Iran thaw will vary, depending on each country's own interests. China has welcomed the agreement and described it as a victory for peace. However, Israel may not be pleased. It has deep concerns about Iran's nuclear and missile programs, and wants an end to the nuclear dispute, even via military means. Iran's proxy actors in Syria — once deployed at the closest point to its borders — are a headache that Israel also wants to tackle. To achieve this, Israel wants regional and global mobilization against Tehran. It may view the agreement between Riyadh and Tehran as a threat to its interests.

The Lebanon contagion: Record debt levels are intensifying the region's challenges

Hafed Al-Ghwel

In the past decade alone, there have been repeated warnings about the cascading risks of massive borrowing across the Arab region, which have resulted in the swift accumulation of high levels of foreign debt. For a number of countries, that debt is now close to becoming unsustainable even as their economies remain overwhelmed by the quick succession of unprecedented crises and their debilitating impacts.

Combined with additional shocks in the past few years, notably the COVID-19 pandemic, volatile oil prices and the war in Ukraine, leading indicators suggest that record debt levels are further intensifying the region's challenges, sparking fears of a "Lebanon contagion" in countries such as Tunisia, Egypt and — to a lesser extent — Morocco and Jordan.

COVID-19, in particular, left an indelible mark that saw the region's combined GDP shrink by close to \$400 billion — a consequence of reduced economic activity worsened by a sharp decline in remittances. As a result, a few of the region's net oil importers saw public revenues and foreign reserves fall sharply, impacting exchange rates and widening budget gaps. With little fiscal space left, that necessitated turning to borrowing excessively to sustain the costs of expanding critical safety nets as well as fix balance-of-payments deficits, without resorting to austerity measures at such an inopportune time.

By the end of last year, the Arab region's cumulative debt stood at a whopping \$1.5 trillion, and given the adverse impact of the war in Ukraine as well as the shaky global economy, that figure could grow even larger still.

The sustainability of debt is one of the key anchors of credible fiscal

policy given its impact on any one country's long-term development and ability to maintain its overall competitiveness. Looking outwards for sources of finance to fuel economic growth and sustainably develop societies allows countries to invest

governments must maintain or increase spending to, for instance, deal with rising food inflation given the Ukraine war's impact on grain imports. Without serious interventions or commitments, Egypt and

largest grain importer. Should that happen, the price of food staples will keep soaring.

In Tunisia, on the other hand, even though headlines fixate on the disturbing crackdowns on sub-

In Egypt, food and beverage inflation reportedly stands at a staggering 62 percent as the currency devaluations mandated by the International Monetary Fund continue to wreak havoc on import costs, endangering as many as 40 million Egyptians who now require targeted cash transfers just to get by. Even that, however, may not be enough as speculation is rife about a looming devaluation in the world's largest grain importer. Should that happen, the price of food staples will keep soaring. In Tunisia, on the other hand, even though headlines fixate on the disturbing crackdowns on sub-Saharan Africans, the North African country is still struggling to import basic staples. Despite securing a deal with the IMF, Tunisia's embattled government will find it near impossible to implement wage and subsidy cuts that will likely worsen poverty rates. Furthermore, even if reforms are designed to curb public expenditures, they are fiercely opposed by the country's most powerful trade union, the Union Generale Tunisienne du Travail.

in the prosperity of current and future generations, provided any debt is kept at sustainable levels.

However, when countries that are already fragile become unable to repay their obligations and default, as happened with Lebanon in 2020, it not only sets back development, it also ushers in additional risks that can potentially destabilize a sub-region due to spillovers from governance failures, persistent inability and even violent conflict.

Currently, countries such as Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia all owe more than 90 percent of GDP at a time when their respective

Tunisia in particular could end up like Lebanon, which not only defaulted but is yet to tackle the restructuring of a debt pile so massive it dwarfs the size of its shrinking economy.

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Furthermore, even if reforms are designed to curb public expenditures, they are fiercely opposed by the country's most powerful trade union, the Union Generale Tunisienne du Travail.

It is expected that widespread unrest will intensify in the coming months as an enraged public resists being coerced into compli-

ance by a desperate hyper-presidency quickly running out of scapegoats.

Debt risks and the inability to solve them are not issues unique to fragile, low-income Arab states alone. The UN estimates that there are at least 52 countries around the

ranging from climate change, a pandemic, a sluggish global economy and the war in Ukraine.

It is also impossible to dismiss the impact of an especially strong US dollar, which is approaching heights not seen in close to four decades as the Federal Reserve continues raising interest rates to combat inflation. Unfortunately, "the rest of the world" ends up saddled with soaring costs to service dollar-denominated debts, in addition to combatting the inflationary pressures from rising import costs, which are unavoidable among import-dependent Arab countries.

The mix of massive debt combined with fiscal and current account deficits will likely unleash a flood of fiscal fatigue — i.e., when governments approach the limits beyond which the trajectory of debt becomes unsustainable and careful adjustments become increasingly difficult to make. That recipe also creates a few more developing countries following Lebanon and Sri Lanka, defaulting on foreign debt and then muddling through in hopes of securing bailouts from the international community.

That debt will be a dominant issue this year across the region and the rest of the world is no mere hyperbole. Several countries will have to look to the IMF for relief even though that external support will not extricate debt-addicted countries from a self-imposed trap — a by-product of economic mismanagement and the fear of what some Arab countries need most — reform.

This year and the next few to come will also be about unavoidable austerity to "rationalize" budgets, even amid shortages of basic commodities and intensifying hardships for tens of millions of Arabs.

Exponential growth in investment in Middle East over next 10 years

Dr. Bashayer Al-Majed

Economies have been slowly recovering despite the impact of pandemics, but strict lockdowns in China following a return of COVID-19, continuing high inflation and the conflict in Ukraine have negatively influenced global GDPs more than anticipated, with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development releasing global annual growth forecasts of 2.2 percent.

Some GDPs, such as the UK's, are predicted to at best flatten. Germany and Russia, unsurprisingly, are negative. However, the Middle East, India, China and Indonesia do show reasonable growth. Saudi Arabia is, according to the OECD, projected to grow its GDP by 6 percent.

Anthony Scaramucci, previously of Goldman Sachs and briefly director

of communications under the Trump administration, agrees with this positive view of recovery in the East. In an interview with Arab News' "Frankly Speaking," he sees this as a positive time for the Middle East. His assessment is that while the macro-economic situation has slowed, the enthusiasm for investment, particularly from US investors in the Middle East, is short-term and over the next 10 to 15 years there will continue to be exponential growth in global investment in the region. When speaking of the UAE, he said that it "was an important crossroads of capital and an epicenter of innovation."

Scaramucci highlighted the US Federal Reserve's rapid rate increase of 500 basis points over 21 months, which the Fed

chairman claims will end at 5.1 percent by December, lowering to 3.1 percent by 2025. In addition to this, uncertainty has made investors cautious. However, they are willing to invest as they see some safe returns, so a 3.5-4.5 percent return with no risk is favorable to a risk of investment collapse. But this has meant smaller, close-to-home investments. However, with the higher price of oil during the current conflict and with the proactive innovations that the GCC is taking while the rest of the world is recovering financially, the Middle East is likely to come out of this situation in a strong position and be ripe for investment.

Scaramucci is obviously well versed in the

Middle East and each country's strategies to build and reform their economies. As well as speaking of the positive legal reforms, both social and environmental, he spoke with great interest and affirmation about the new focus on tourism and the showcasing of the wonderful cultural history of Saudi Arabia and the Middle East.

Saudi Arabia is putting a lot of investment into restoration of its art, culture and history — in 2019 the Kingdom committed \$25 million to UNESCO to gain World Heritage site status and contribute toward the UN's sustainability goals. This is part of a general move by the UN among the G20 to encourage "more sustainable societies and

economies" to re-establish tourism following the pandemic. Scaramucci sees how the Middle East is opening up to the world and also sees the value of schemes such as Shareek, which was activated at the start of this month, whereby the government actively supports the private sector to aid innovation and investment as a boost to the economy and to encourage economic diversification.

Scaramucci's insight was that the best governments implement a simple model: Low taxation, an effective strategy to enable private enterprise, encouraging investment and innovation, and abiding by and enforcing the law. This provides a safe environment for foreign investors in which their investments are both encouraged and protected.

Regarding the tensions between the US and the GCC, he reminded the audience that governments need to put aside this recently acquired sense of "tribalism" and polarised thinking.

Our countries do indeed have a lot to share and gain from one another. For the past 80 plus years we have worked together, liaising on intelligence, the economy and defense. In the long-term, we thrive better under a "spirit of cooperation (and are) more prosperous together."

The Middle East has a strong chance to build and develop with international investment.

By becoming both a business hub and an advanced, modern tourist hub, centrally located between Asia, Europe and Africa, it could ride this economic downturn well.

Support for a two-state solution is declining, but what is the alternative?

In the present circumstances it might seem peculiar, maybe even laughable, to be discussing peace between Israel and the Palestinians, and even more so to talk about peace based on a two-state solution. But is it?

The opposite should be argued. This is because by any objective indicator, relations between the two peoples are edging ever closer to an all-out confrontation, and while both societies are in internal disarray it is paramount to look for a peaceful solution that serves both peoples and is also sustainable.

Focusing only on the present situation, as worrying as it is, without looking constructively and realistically for a future solution might well perpetuate the current state of affairs and lead to something even worse.

Later this year marks the 30th anniversary of the Oslo Accords, which brought with them a hope of reaching a breakthrough in the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict that would lead to a peace agreement based on a two-state solution. It could never have been a perfect agreement that was fair to all and satisfied everyone, but under very complex circumstances it aimed to meet the minimum requirements of most in both communities.

Thirty years later this dream appears to be lying in tatters, with no one in sight to revive it. But has pronouncing the two-state solution dead been premature?

Those who believe that the demise of the two-state solution is permanent have failed to offer a better, convincing alternative, and those who make the case for its revival haven't produced a blueprint for it to happen. In the meantime, a recent survey by the Ramallah-based Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, reveals a sharp decline in support for the two-state solution among both Palestinians and Israeli Jews, from 43 percent in September 2020 to a current 33 percent among the Palestinians and 34 percent among Israeli Jews.

This represents a low point in support for what not that long ago seemed to be the most sensible route

to peace. The alternative to recognizing the right of both nations to self-determination is either to maintain the current situation and let it take its course in the more or less predictable direction of allowing the occupation to continue, the settlements to expand and with Israel's creeping annexation of the West Bank and the incremental

As much as the two-state solution looks like yesterday's news, particularly in the way it was envisaged by the architects of the Oslo Accords, a more sophisticated variant is not out of the question, and on the balance of probability, more achievable than the alternatives. Most worrying, if unsurprising, of the figures coming out of this survey are the levels of distrust between the two sides, which are almost equal with 86 percent of Palestinians and 85 percent of Israeli Jews who "believe the other side is not trustworthy." Regardless of which side has better reason to distrust the other, no peace agreement, especially one which requires concessions that are perceived as painful and risky, can be reached with this level of distrust. Worse, we can only expect that the new Israeli government's behavior will only deepen the Palestinians' distrust of Israel, and as President Mahmoud Abbas of the failing PA is in his twilight days, the confidence of either side in Palestinian politics will remain low. Tragically, the legacy of the years that have elapsed since 1993 has seen more mutual suspicion than ever, and without addressing the variety of reasons for this with sensitivity and attentiveness, especially in light of recent events, such mutual distrust will only be exacerbated.

deprivation of Palestinians' human and political rights.

There are also two other alternatives, which are: A single state in which equal rights are granted and guaranteed to everyone, or a single unequal state. Both of these have support in both communities, and most worryingly, among Israeli Jews for the first time there is more support, albeit by a small margin, for a single, unequal, non-democratic state rather than a two-state solution.

Yet, the aggregate figure of two states and one democratic state with equality for all is still considerably bigger, at 54 percent

Yossi Mekelberg

against the undemocratic trend, which is supported by 37 percent. Figures among Palestinians are not that different, although a two-state solution remains the favorite at 33 percent and an aggregate figure of 56 percent with those who support one democratic state, compared to 30 per-

cent support for a single non-democratic state. This suggests that there is majority support for equal rights and self-determination for all, which could materialize in a two-state solution, prevailing in a one-state reality.

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of recent events, such mutual distrust will only be exacerbated.

It takes only a quick glance at a map of the West Bank to reveal the most tangible reason for Palestinians, but also for some Israelis, to give up on a two-state solution. The nearly 250 Israeli settlements and outposts in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which house about 680,000 Jewish settlers, compromise a future viable Palestinian state. There is no easy solution to that, but since neither of the one-state options is realistic, and neither is desired, for completely different reasons, by the majority, and while the current status quo is a recipe for continuing bloodshed and violations of Palestinians' rights, adapting the two-state solution to the one-state reality with minimum movement of population remains the most viable option. It is just a question of whether both sides will return to this option before or after another major round of violence.

It would need a painstaking and creative effort with much active external persuasion to create a fresh, revised two-state model, that recognizes both people's right to self-determination, that has Jerusalem as the capital of both, that can guarantee that everyone between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea lives in security, and that ensures that the refugee issue is resolved in a fair and just manner so that no one remains stateless or uncompensated for their loss.

As well as these more tangible issues, it will require dealing with what many will regard as "boring" ones, but which are crucial to building support for such an agreement: Developing trust between both peoples, and investing in programs that advance joint educational, cultural and economic programs, in a spirit of equality and inclusiveness among all those involved. Right now, this might look like a mere fantasy, but making peace between peoples needs plenty of creative thinking, goodwill and the sense not to discard credible options because of bad experiences in the past, but instead to learn from them.



Preparing the SDF for tomorrow's fight and today's needs

Michael Macarthur Bosack

One of the core challenges for any defense force or military is balancing between preparations for the war that might come in the future and the operations it will most likely execute today.

Lately, the news surrounding Japan's Self-Defense Forces has focused on the government's decision to pursue counterstrike capabilities and double the defense budget to be ready for potential conflict in the region. But the anniversary of the triple disaster on 3/11 serves as a reminder that the SDF has another essential role.

When the Great East Japan Earthquake struck, approximately 100,000 SDF personnel deployed as part of "Joint Task Force Tohoku." There, they conducted rescue, relief and reconstruction efforts. A few years later in April 2016, they again deployed tens of thousands of troops as part of JTF Chinzei in response to the Kumamoto earthquake. Every year, the SDF averages upwards of 500 small scale disaster relief operations following landslides, floods, earthquakes and blizzards, among other things.

None of those operations require the types of capabilities that the Liberal Democratic Party-led government is touting today. After all, no amount of Tomahawk cruise missiles will stop a typhoon or prevent an earthquake.

This begets the question: How does the SDF balance between posturing for the combat operations of tomorrow and the disaster relief missions of today?

Some may question whether the SDF should be accomplishing disaster relief operations at all — especially to the scale that it does. Countries with comparatively large militaries do not typically maintain humanitarian assistance and disaster relief as a primary responsibility. Instead, those roles tend to reside with civilian law enforcement, disaster response and firefighting units.

This is where Japan has a slightly unique system in place. Unlike the United States which has both an active duty military and a National Guard (the latter of which takes precedence for stateside disaster relief), Japan does not have an equivalent dichotomy in its defense forces.

Moreover, Japanese law enforcement and prefectural disaster response units are simply not equipped to handle operations that require large scale mobilization and execution. Thus, there are structural and practical reasons why the SDF maintains this essential responsibility.

Beyond those practical factors is one related to the public consciousness: The relationship between the SDF and its disaster relief mission runs deep. In other words, the Japanese public sees the SDF functioning more for response to natural disasters than it does for repulsing armed attacks. A recent government poll illustrated this when asking the question, "What kind of role do you expect of the SDF?" An overwhelming 88.3% of respondents selected "disaster relief" — well above conventional military-type functions like "response to ballistic missile attacks" or "ensuring national security."

While that point will not affect government decision making, it has important implications for the SDF in terms of recruitment. The pool of potential enlistees is already shrinking and many of those who signed up after 1995 joined because they saw Japan's defense personnel saving lives in the wake of the Great Hanshin earthquake and other major natural disasters. An increased focus on combat roles rather than disaster relief could dissuade Japan's youth from signing up to wear the uniform while also affecting retention of those already in service.

Further, there is no comparison in the likelihood of the SDF deploying for disaster relief operations against being called upon to go into combat. The former is guaranteed while the latter has not happened since the SDF's formation in 1954. That is not to say that combat capabilities are unnecessary (because they are), but for a country with as many natural disasters as Japan, how does the government balance budget allocation, recruitment issues and training prioritization?

The political desire will be to alter the public consciousness while pumping most of the expanded budget to new weapon systems and munitions. The operative notion for the LDP-led government is that the sense of crisis in the region will get the Japanese people to come around to these new security policy designs eventually.

Alternatively, Japanese defense officials could focus on operations and capabilities that are applicable in both disaster and combat scenarios. Disaster relief calls for personnel recovery, evacuation of civilian populations, establishment of contingency shelters and hospitals and emergency reconstruction efforts. So does every militarized conflict, which in effect is little more than a man-made disaster.

How might that work in

practice? Right now, the SDF has critical shortfalls in terms of airlift and sealift capabilities that would be equally useful for rescuing people from an outlying Japanese island as it would be in transporting internally displaced persons from a conflict zone. The same concept applies for surveillance aircraft. Having different types of sensors (e.g., high resolution, thermal or hyperspectral cameras) on remotely piloted aircraft has utility in combat as well as search and rescue. The list goes on.

Focusing on these sort of multiuse capabilities would also enable the SDF to expand its role in overseas operations. The SDF recently dispatched an aircraft to Turkey to transport a civilian Japan Disaster Relief Team, but there could have been an opportunity for uniformed units to do more. Especially as the SDF has drawn down its peacekeeping operations mission in South Sudan, there is potential for its personnel to expand their presence in the many areas of the world affected by disaster. Such a function could be fitting for further normalizing the SDF's place in global operations.

There is also the potential for the SDF to contribute to overseas coalitions with these capabilities. While there are constitutional limitations to what SDF personnel can do in support of combat operations, those legal restrictions would not apply to disaster relief-esque functions in noncombat areas. The other militaries that are flush with offensive power will likely be lacking in the functions that the SDF does best; thus, top-tier supplementary capabilities make the SDF a more viable partner on the global stage than complementary capabilities that the SDF cannot actually use based on constitutional restrictions.

As the Japanese government considers how it will proceed with implementation of its new security strategy, it behooves them to think of its disaster relief mission not as a distraction from its core defense objectives but an opportunity. It may not be attractive for defense officials who would prefer to have the shiniest (and deadliest) toys, but the political reality is that they will have to make difficult choices with how to proceed in implementing Japan's security strategy and spending its expanding defense budget.

Ultimately, keeping the SDF's disaster relief responsibilities in mind is not only essential for addressing the requirements of today, but for maximizing the security outcomes of tomorrow.

Political concern grows over UK's lost 'green economy' edge

In the wake of the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow in 2021, Boris Johnson's UK government claimed that the nation was at the forefront of the global green technology and investment race.

Fast forward to 2023, however, and that proclamation is looking hollower by the day as the government fails to capitalize on the global green economy edge that it may once have had. This is not just a tragedy for the planet but also for the UK economy, as the chancellor prepares his annual budget statement ahead of Wednesday.

At the time of writing, there is a huge new incentive for the UK to up its game and drive this agenda forward. This is because, following the US Inflation Reduction Act and anticipated new counter subsidies from the EU's Green Deal Industrial Plan for the Net-Zero Age, there are growing concerns from UK business that the nation could miss out on a rising tide of green investment as the global economy grows from about \$90 trillion today to a forecast \$190

trillion by the mid-21st century when the world may hit net-zero emissions.

It is not just political opponents of the government that are raising concerns. Take the example of the Confederation of British Industry, the self-styled voice of UK big business, which warned in stark terms in January that "the United Kingdom is falling behind rapidly — to the Americans and the Europeans, who are outspending and outsmarting us. We're behind the Germans on heat pumps, insulation and building retrofits, the French on EV charging infrastructure, and the United States on operational carbon capture and storage projects — despite the UK's North Sea advantage. We're lagging all three on hydrogen funding. This is stunning to many who rightly felt clean energy was ours to own. But it has changed in the past two years with lost UK market share in green tech, equivalent to the potential value of £4.3 billion by 2030."

Other UK industry bodies such as EnergyUK and RenewablesUK have

Andrew Hammond

sounded alarm bells too. Yet perhaps the clearest warning came from the government's very own Skidmore Net-Zero Review, released in January, which highlights that the UK risks losing out on more green investment because of factors including inconsistent decision-making at the top of government and delays to crucial planning decisions at a local level.

These warnings are a far cry from the bold pledges of COP26 when the government proclaimed its intent to be a world leader in carbon emissions reduction. Just before the big summit, a new net-zero strategy was released aiming for a decarbonized economy by 2050.

In so doing, the government aims to provide high-skilled jobs, transition from fossil fuels, secure the UK's energy supply and use green technology to drive economic growth. For instance, the strategy hopes to create up to 190,000 jobs by 2025, up to 440,000 jobs by 2030, and leverage up to

£90 billion of private investment by 2030.

It is this promised vision that is now under threat unless the UK government can step up to the plate. If not, the tragedy is that the full potential of existing investments in recent years may not be realized.

Take the example of wind energy where the high level of wind-power generation capacity already installed means that the UK could be a great proving ground for innovation in power distribution infrastructure, large-scale storage, etc., to balance and manage the intermittent nature of wind power. This may lead to the emergence of differentiated UK-based technology.

However, significant challenges remain and the National Audit Office this week released a major new report warning that the newly formed UK Department of Energy Security and Net-Zero is behind schedule in mapping out how to achieve a rapid expansion of offshore wind.

The government is targeting a more-than-tripling

of offshore wind capacity to 50GW by 2030 as part of its energy security strategy. The challenge often cited is that the cost of developing wind farms has risen as the price of commodities such as steel and copper has jumped so the next licensing auctions are likely to see higher prices.

Business has many concerns, but with the right ambition and policies, the situation could yet be turned around. The UK's key strengths in the green economy agenda include flexibility and depth of its financial industry, via the City of London.

The energy transition requires much capital and many countries could learn from UK best practice. For instance, the UK also has a good track record in using fintech to support development of innovative green technologies.

In what might be a "last chance saloon" for international climate action, the UK government now needs to step up to the plate and deliver. If it does not, it will not only be letting the UK public down, but also the world at large.

Saudi Arabia, the magnet of peace

Hassan Bin Youssef Yassin

others. Saudi Arabia may also be the only country in the world that can, at a week's notice, gather all Arab and Muslim leaders in Makkah to promote world peace.

It is no coincidence that all three monotheistic religions have their origins in our region, with a succession of prophets spreading the message of peace across our lands and indeed the world.

Our region has also sadly suffered many devastating wars. From the ashes of war, though, there rises the dove of peace with its olive branch. She focuses a galaxy of light on humani-

ty, flying wherever she may with no fear of being shot out of the sky, for behind it endless more doves of peace will rise. We are one of these doves of peace, fulfilling our mission to mend fences with those we have been in disagreement with, while also showing others the way. Whether we are addressing Iranians or Israelis, we light a candle in the darkness that continues to shine even when we are all asleep.

These galaxies of light illuminate the world, just as our prophets once did.

Saudi officials have been conspicuously engaged in new efforts for peace in recent weeks, with Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Faisal bin Farhan visiting both Kyiv and Moscow to offer the Kingdom's help to mediate an end to the war in Ukraine. Meanwhile, National Security Adviser Dr. Musaed bin Mohammed Al-Aiban visited China to bring about the return of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Six years of disputes and turbulence in the Middle East were thereby put behind us, allowing for new approach-

es to peace, not only in the region but worldwide.

Saudi Arabia has long stood for peace, putting its trusted international standing to use by offering mediation between parties to end disputes. The long civil war in Lebanon only came to an end thanks to tireless Saudi mediation. The region's most ambitious peace plan was initiated by Saudi Arabia through the Arab League in 2002, offering Israel peace and fully normalized relations with all Arab countries in exchange for a viable Palestinian state. We are a country that seeks to mend fences, for us and for

oxygen of that example today. With our eyes open and the strong message of our prophets, Saudi Arabia takes pride in working on the side of peace. We want to help others and, most of all, we want to preserve the environment that sustains us all.

The reaction worldwide to Saudi Arabia's latest initiatives has been very positive, for the world is hungry for initiatives of peace. The promise of once again feeling the blanket of hope, seeing a galaxy of light shine for peace in every language, is what drives us, especially today for Ukraine and Russia. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has taken to heart Pablo Picasso's words that "action is the foundational

key to all success." Big applause has met this new leadership and the flying doves of peace, as we recognize that the promotion of peace has become a part of our Saudi DNA.

Let the doves of peace fly, let the light of peace shine, and may Saudi Arabia continue to carry its mission for peace to help illuminate the world.

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Saudi Aramco reports ‘record’ \$161 billion profit for 2022

RIYADH (AFP/APP): Saudi Aramco said on Sunday it achieved “record” profits totalling \$161.1 billion last year, drawing an outraged response from activists warning about the ravages of climate change.

The mostly state-owned energy giant, the world’s second most valuable company behind Apple, said in a filing with the Saudi stock market that net income for 2022 was up 46 percent from \$110 billion in 2021.

The results -- the strongest since Aramco became a listed company in 2019 -- were “predominantly due to the impact of higher crude oil prices and volumes sold, and stronger refining margins,” it said.

Global energy prices surged after Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

“It is shocking for a company to make a profit of more than \$161 billion in a single year through the sale of fossil fuel -- the single largest driver of the climate crisis,” Agnes Callamard, secretary-general of Amnesty International, said in a statement.

“It is all the more shocking because this surplus was amassed during a global cost-of-living crisis and aided by the increase in energy prices resulting

from Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine.”

Amnesty described Aramco’s profits as “the most ever disclosed by a company in a single year” and said they “should be used to fund a human rights-based transition to renewable energy”.

‘Risks of underinvestment’

Aramco’s gains are consistent with record profits for 2022 reported by the five oil majors Shell, Chevron, ExxonMobil, BP and TotalEnergies, which in total surpassed \$150 billion and would have been closer to \$200 billion without costly withdrawals from Russia.

“Aramco rode the wave of high energy prices in 2022. It’s what the company is geared to do,” said Robert Mogielnicki, of the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington. “It would have been difficult for Aramco not to perform strongly in 2022.”

Saudi Arabia has pledged to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2060, drawing scepticism from environmental campaigners.

Officials are simultaneously championing further investments in fossil fuels to ensure energy security and stave off inflation and other economic woes.

“Given that we anticipate oil and gas will remain essential for the foreseeable future, the risks of underinvestment in our industry are real -- including contributing to higher energy prices,” Aramco CEO Amin Nasser said on Sunday.

Aramco has pledged to achieve “operational net-zero” carbon emissions by 2050.

That applies to emissions that are produced directly by Aramco’s industrial sites, but not the CO2 produced when clients burn Saudi oil in their cars, power plants and furnaces.

Growth ‘driver’

The company’s yearly net income figure is nearly double the \$88.2 billion the firm pulled in in 2019, before the coronavirus pandemic.

The profits fuelled overall economic growth in Saudi Arabia, the world’s biggest crude exporter, which officials put at 8.7 percent in 2022, the highest rate in the G20.

Under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the kingdom’s de facto ruler, Saudi Arabia has sought both to open up and diversify its oil-reliant economy, spending heavily on much-hyped projects like a futuristic megacity known as NEOM.

Officials have touted

growth in non-oil activities, which increased 6.2 percent in the fourth quarter of 2022 over the same period in 2021, according to data published on Thursday by the national statistics authority.

Yet government spending “is a major driver for this growth” and that “will always be to some extent linked to oil revenue”, underscoring Aramco’s central role in the economy, said Justin Alexander, director of the consultancy Khalij Economics.

Energy prices are expected to stay elevated in 2023, in part because of production cuts approved last October by the OPEC+ cartel that Riyadh co-leads with Moscow -- a move harshly criticised by Washington.

Aramco’s facilities have in the past suffered drone and missile attacks claimed by Yemen’s Iran-backed Huthi rebels, most recently about a year ago. But a surprise deal announced on Friday between Riyadh and Tehran to restore diplomatic ties severed in 2016 could mitigate the risk in the months to come.

Aramco floated 1.7 percent of its shares on the Saudi bourse in December 2019, generating \$29.4 billion in the world’s biggest initial public offering.



ISLAMABAD: People purchasing vegetables from vendors at Sunday Bazaar.

Solid fuels exports witness 100% increase

ISLAMABAD (APP): Solid fuels exports, during the first seven months of the fiscal year of 2022-23, increased by 100 percent as compared to the exports of the commodity during the corresponding period of last year. During the period from July 22-Jan 23, solid fuels worth US\$ 5,000 were exported as compared to the nil exports the same period of last year.

According to the data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the exports of petroleum products (Excl) increased by 26.41%, worth US\$ 27,677,000 as compared to exports of US\$ 21,894,000 during the same period last year.

Meanwhile, the petroleum group and coal exports also increased by 9.33 percent as the exports recorded during the current fiscal year were US\$ 169,735,000 as compared to the exports during the same period of last year which were US\$ 155,250,000.

During the period under review, the petroleum crude exports increased by 6.52 percent, worth US\$ 142,053,000 in the current fiscal year, as compared to the exports of US\$ 133,356,000 during the same period of last year.

China remains world’s largest logistics market

BEIJING (APP): China maintained its position as the world’s largest logistics market for the seventh consecutive year in 2022, industry data showed.

Total revenue of the country’s logistics sector came in at 12.7 trillion yuan (about 1.82 trillion US dollars) last year, according to the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing.

Social logistics expanded to 347.6 trillion yuan in 2022, the data revealed.

China’s top 50 logistics companies raked in about 2 trillion yuan in revenue last year, the federation noted, saying that a batch of internationally competitive enterprises have started to emerge in the market.

To build a modern logistics system, China should work on the digital transformation of its logistics infrastructure, including railways and ports, and promote the integration of resources in the sector, the federation said.

US investors keen to invest in furniture industry: Chairman

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq on Sunday said the United States investors have shown keen interest in joint ventures with the private sector in the furniture industry of Pakistan.

A high-level delegation of PFC led by its CEO is currently on a week-long visit to explore new markets and further strengthen bilateral trade ties with their counterparts.

According to a message received here, CEO said PFC is holding successful results-oriented meetings

with their counterparts and they are interested to visit Pakistan and invest in the furniture industry.

He said there is vast scope to increase furniture export volume due to an upward trend, as the demand for furniture and wooden products are on the rise in the US and European markets along with the domestic consumers, he said.

Kashif said, “We are making special efforts to increase furniture export catering to the rising global demand.”

He said the delegation is also studying about the latest products and technologies in their fields. Such business-oriented tours could play a pivotal role for Pakistani furniture manufacturers in achieving the export target of more than \$1 billion annually in the international furniture markets, the PFC chief executive said.

Pakistan’s major buyers of wooden furniture are the UK, the US, Sri Lanka and Gulf countries such as the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Kuwait, he said, adding that the US buys mostly bedroom furniture.

The UK and Gulf countries import kitchen and office furniture.

Minerals identification:

Geological mapping of 50 Balochistan toposheets in progress

ISLAMABAD (APP): The government is utilizing funds amounting to Rs100 million, during the current fiscal year, to advance an ongoing project of the Petroleum Division for the geological mapping of 50 Toposheets of ‘outcrop area’ to identify minerals’ potential in Balochistan province.

Last year, an amount of Rs 30 million had been allocated for the project under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP 2021-22).

“Under the project, 50 geological mappings of Toposheets of Outcrop Area, out of 354 unmapped Toposheets of Balochistan, are being carried out. The geological maps provide a bird’s eye view of the surface and (subsurface) distribution of various types of rocks and economic minerals that are found in a particular region,” according to an official document available with APP.

Through the mapping, the Geological Survey of Pakistan (GSP) wanted to maintain a database for future exploration of the occurrences of metallic and non-metallic minerals

potential, dimension stones, aggregates and limestone reserves for the industry.

“These maps are essential for all future detailed geological works including, minerals’ exploration, civil engineering, soil surveys, land use, town planning, groundwater, earthquake hazards; environmental geology and soil conservation projects,” the GSP said in the project detail.

Worldwide experience suggests that geological maps of 1:50,000 scale provide the most useful information and meet the basic requirements of the majority of the demands, involving research in ‘stratigraphy’, structure & tectonics, sample collection for laboratory studies, mineral evaluation and identification of promising areas for further exploration of natural resources.

According to the document, the total outcrop area of Balochistan is 335,360 square kilometer (524 Toposheets) out of which 108,800 sq. km (170 Toposheets) have been mapped and published on a 1:50,000 scale and the maps are available.

The promising mineral

potential outcrop area would be mapped under this project, following which its gained experience would be used in mapping the rest of the outcrop area.

“This project will help map the outcrop area in detail on 1:50,000 scale and maintain a database for future exploration of the occurrences of metallic and non-metallic mineral potential, dimension stones, aggregates and limestone reserves for the industry in targeted potential areas of Balochistan,” the GSP said in the document.

The information collected after geological mapping and laboratory testing of rock samples would generate a database for interpretation to lead the individual occurrences of mineral reserves and other natural resources.

The studies would provide a platform for the exploration of mineral resources by using other geoscientific investigations like geophysical surveys and geochemical studies followed by drilling operations and contribute considerably towards the development of the mineral industry and mining sector.

Business community calls for charter of economy

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman and Chairman of Kyrgyzstan Trade House Meher Kashif Younis on Sunday stressed the urgent need for evolving a charter of the economy, a charter of democracy and enforcing them effectively studied with a jewel of good governance.

Speaking at a seminar on the “Charter of Economy” organised under the aegis of Gold Ring Economic Forum, a strategic think tank, he said initiatives such as diversifying sources of raising domestic finances for investment in the prioritised productive sector and encouraging capital spending on the energy sector to eliminate foreign crutches will take a bit longer. However, these steps will not be enough for the turnaround of the economy and sustained and

inclusive growth, he added.

He said that faced with an acute shortage of dollars and spiralling inflation, anecdotal evidence suggests that the market is beginning to adjust to changing ground realities.

For example, he said, one can see a marked shift in investment from the greenback to gold. He said it was reported that \$6.5 billion worth of gold (up by 34 pc to 13 tonnes in quantity) was purchased mainly by investors in the first quarter of the current fiscal year which was sold by middle-income groups selling their jewellery to cope with the rising costs of living.

Meher Kashif Younis said, “We urgently need an emergency economic stabilisation program with three components: external debt sustainability framework, fiscal stability plan

and structural reforms.”

He said there is no other way out to bring back IMF. By allowing microfinance banks and specialised primary dealers to open investors’ portfolio securities account services more than 85 million branchless and mobile banking users will be enabled to take advantage of attractive returns offered by government securities,” he added.

Referring to ongoing political polarisation in the country, he urged the politicians to talk and discuss all contentious matters to take the country out of the current financial crunch and the quagmire of polarisation.

Democracies worldwide have to reinvent themselves to become more responsive to the needs of their people and cooperate to find people-centric solutions, he concluded.

PIA inks code-sharing agreement

KARACHI (PPI): Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) and Malaysia Airlines have entered into a code-sharing agreement whereby 11 international sectors have been included in the air operations of both the countries, it emerged Sunday.

According to details, PIA passengers will be able to travel seamlessly to Manila, Sydney, Perth, Melbourne, Adelaide, Auckland, Singapore, Bangkok, Phuket, Jakarta, and Ho Chi Minh via Kuala Lumpur under the code-sharing partnership.

E-commerce logistics reports strong expansion

BEIJING (APP): China’s e-commerce logistics activities further boomed in February as enterprises and businesses accelerated recovery, industry data shows.

The index tracking e-commerce logistics activities reached 107.2 points in the period, up 2.6 points from the previous month, higher than the 1.8-point growth in January, according to a survey jointly conducted by the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing and e-commerce giant JD.com.

All the nine major sub-indices measuring e-commerce logistics activities in different fields recorded growth last month, with those for business volume and rural business up 2.6 points and 1.8 points, respectively, from January.

The survey predicts that the index will continue to rise in March, stressing the strong potential for the growth of demand in the future.

3-day Solar Pakistan Exhibition concludes

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan’s largest 12th International Solar Pakistan Exhibition and 5th Electric City Pakistan Exhibition concluded here at Expo Centre on Sunday.

The three-day event was organized by FACT Exhibitions. On this occasion, caretaker Provincial Minister for Industries and Commerce SM Tanveer inaugurated the PV Plus Journal of the Solar Industry.

The Provincial Minister said that the with promo-

tion of solar energy, the country’s oil import bill would not only reduce substantially but also reduce the industrial production cost, thus making Pakistani exportable products more competitive in the global market.

He added that the country could no more afford the costly electricity generated through imported furnace oil.

He said that solar energy was environment friendly and inexpensive source that could help overcome the

energy crisis as well as financial constraints.

Chief Executive Officer of Fact Exhibitions and Chief Organizer of Solar Pakistan Exhibition, Salim Khan Tanoli, said that apart from Pakistan, more than 120 companies from ten countries including China, France and Japan had set up their stalls and introduced the latest technology to the participants.

He said that more than 12,000 people participated in the exhibition.

LKMWT signs contract with Paymob



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Latif Kapadia Memorial Welfare Trust (LKMWT), a welfare trust providing health care to the underprivileged in Karachi, announced that they have secured the services of Paymob, a digital gateway for convenient payment

processes.

Raza, Head of Enterprise Business at Paymob, Head of Operations Latif Kapadia Memorial Welfare Trust (LKMWT) Farman Ahmed Khan, and Ms. Nigarish Raihan, Manager Partnerships and Communications at LKMWT shook hands to

officially announce the onboarding.

This ease in payment method will provide a hassle-free experience for donors who are looking to donate for a good cause and helping Latif Kapadia Memorial Welfare Trust (LKMWT) in ensuring a healthier community.

OGDCL spuds 4 wells, makes 3 discoveries in 1st half of FY 2022-23

ISLAMABAD (APP): Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) has drilled four exploratory wells and made three discoveries with an expected production potential of 3,007 BPD oil and 2.7 MMCFD gas during the first half of the current fiscal year, ending on December 31, 2022.

“OGDCL has spud 4 wells including 3 exploratory wells; Shahpurabad-1, Chak 20-1 and Gaja Wah-1 and 1 development well; Chanda-

7, and it discovered three oil and gas reserves in Toot Deep-1 in district Attock, Punjab province and Chak

5 Dim South-3 and Kot Nawab-1 in district Sanghar of Sindh province,” according to the company’s first-half financial report for the year 2022-23 available with APP.

Moreover, the company completed the drilling and testing of six wells pertaining to previous fiscal years.

During the period under review, OGDCL produced around 33,061 BOPD, 772 MMCFD gas and 730 TDP LPG.

The production witnessed a little decline as compared to 36,788 Barrel per Day (BPD) oil, 827 Metric Million Cubic Feet per Day (MMCFD) gas,

and 814 Tons per Day (TPD) Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) during the same period of the year 2021-22 due to certain reasons.

The company said it, being the national flagship of the country’s Exploration and Production (E&P) sector, was making all-out efforts to play a pivotal role in enhancing the energy security of Pakistan.

“In this context, the company during July 2022 to December 2022 contributed around 46 percent, 29 percent and 37 percent towards the country’s total oil, natural gas and LPG production respectively,” it said.

Sarhad Cigarette Industries (PVT) Ltd				
The following revise rates of our brands of cigarettes are applicable with effect from 03/03/2023.				
Brand Name	Packing	Retail Price	S.Tax 18%	Total Price
Style KSF	20's	137-00	24.66	161.66
Boss SC	20's	137-00	24.66	161.66
Silver Gold KSF	20's	137-00	24.66	161.66
Omega KSF	20's	137-00	24.66	161.66
Big boss KSF	20's	137-00	24.66	161.66
Ch-5 KSF	20's	137-00	24.66	161.66
Dollar KSF	20's	137-00	24.66	161.66
Euro KSF	20's	137-00	24.66	161.66
Relax KSF	20's	137-00	24.66	161.66
Globe KSF	20's	137-00	24.66	161.66
Canton KSF	20's	137-00	24.66	161.66
Manhattan KSF	20's	137-00	24.66	161.66
Captain KSF	20's	137-00	24.66	161.66
Super KSF	20's	137-00	24.66	161.66
Boss KSF	20's	137-00	24.66	161.66



In brief

Aleem, Shabbir bag men's title

ISLAMABAD (APP): Aleem Agha and Shabbir Lashkarwala clinched the men's doubles title of the National Tenpin Bowling Championship at Leisure City Bowling Club, Jinnah Park, Rawalpindi. In the men's doubles event, Aleem Agha and Shabbir Lashkarwala won the men's doubles title with 1547 points. Afzaal Akhtar and Sikander Hayat stood second with 1484 points while Ali Suri and Danyal Shah secured the third position with 1468 points.

Pakistan Green wins Kabaddi Takra

FAISALABAD (APP): Pakistan Green team won 'Kabaddi Takra', organised under the aegis of the district administration, in connection with Jashan-e-Baharan (spring festival), at Iqbal Stadium, here on Sunday. Pakistan Green scored 50 points while its rival team obtained 46 points.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Faisalabad Ali Annan Qamar witnessed the event as chief guest and later he also awarded cash prize of Rs 300,000 to winner team and Rs 200,000 to the runners-up. Additional Deputy Commissioner Kashif Raza Awan, Additional Deputy Commissioner General/Focal Person spring festival Faisal Sultan, Divisional Kabaddi Association President Imran Ali and others were also present.

Pakistani secures second place

KARACHI (PPI): Pakistan's women's golf team has made their country proud by clinching the runners up position in the ladies' event of the 36th Bangladesh Amateur Golf Championship 2023 at the Kurmitola Golf Club in Dhaka. According to a statement issued on Sunday, Suneyah Osama, the talented Pakistani golfer, was awarded the runners-up position in the individual event, while the Pakistan duo comprising Suneyah and Abiha Hamin Syed secured the runners-up position in the team event. The Pakistan High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Mr. Imran Ahmed Siddiqui, expressed his appreciation for the Pakistan women team's outstanding performance in the championship. He congratulated them on their success and hoped that such sports events between the two countries would continue to promote the bonds of friendship and goodwill among the people of Pakistan and Bangladesh. The Pakistan High Commissioner also hosted the Pakistani golfer participating in the event at the Pakistan House in Dhaka where they were showered with praise and admiration for their performance and making Pakistan proud in the Orion 36th Bangladesh Amateur Golf Championship.

'King Kohli' gets Test ton

NEW DELHI (INP): Indian superstar Virat Kohli hit his first Test century in over three years on Sunday, ending his long drought and sparking raucous celebrations at the world's biggest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad. "King Kohli", one of cricket's biggest names, admitted last year to mental health struggles as his magic with the bat deserted him. He also lost the Indian captaincy, one of the most high-pressure jobs in world sport. But on Sunday, having already returned to form with ODI and T20 centuries in recent months, the long wait for his 28th Test ton ended in the fourth Test against Australia.

Zalmi edge out United to set up rematch in Eliminator

RAWALPINDI (Monitoring Desk): Quetta Gladiators' defeat on Saturday night confirmed this game would be little more than a warm-up for when these two sides meet in the Eliminator on Thursday. And it was Peshawar Zalmi who made the more consequential statement, stifling United's batting line-up for the second game in succession, edging them out by 13 runs.

Mohammad Harris' scorching knock, a curating 79 off 39, set Zalmi up before the lower order collapsed to post a seemingly below-par 179 on another extremely accommodating Rawalpindi pitch. No one from United, however, was able to respond in kind, frittering away their wickets after relatively inconsequential cameos in the face of an extremely disciplined bowling line-up. Sufiyan Muqem led the way, while Khurram Shahzad, Aamer Jamal and James Neesham also found themselves among the wickets as United found the target a bridge too far, despite a late flurry from Faheem Ashraf.

United won the toss and inserted Zalmi, making the best possible start when Fazalhaq Farooqi cleaned up Saim Ayub for a duck. But Harris was unfazed at the other end, getting the ball rolling by clobbering Hasan Ali the following over. Farooqi wasn't spared the following over, smoked for another 14 at Harris' hands. Rajapaksa joined in from the other end, walloping Faheem Ashraf for 17 in the final powerplay over as Zalmi overcame the early dismissal to post 69 in the first six.

The pair barely noticed that the field had been spread out. Rajapaksa smashed Shadab for a six



off his third ball before Harris gave the United captain a hiding in his second over, bringing up a 26-ball 50, as well as Zalmi's hundred in the ninth over. By the halfway mark, they had posted 116, well on course to put up yet another score in excess of 200 at this bowlers' graveyard.

In the second half of the innings, however, United brought the full force of their bowling to bear. Shadab removed Rajapaksa in his third over, before a Zalmi procession of wickets ensued. Stand-in captain Tom-Kohler Cadmore, deputising for an ailing Babar Azam, was only good for a cameo before Shadab struck again to remove the white-hot Harris, and Zalmi's soft underbelly was exposed.

Hasan Ali struck twice in the 17th over to gut the lower-middle order, and by now Zalmi were hobbling. They limped to 179 by the time the innings closed out, meaning the second ten overs had seen just 63 runs scored

and seven wickets fall.

It should have been straightforward, even if Hassan Nawaz fell to Khurram Shahzad in the opening over. Sohaib Maqsood's first-ball six was a Harris-like statement of intent, but having flown to 15 off 5 balls, he tickled one through to the keeper off his sixth. A scratchy innings from Alex Hales ended when Aamer Jamal got him to drill one to Kohler-Cadmore, and Neesham struck to end a similarly gritty innings from Colin Munro.

A breezy counterattacking stand from Shadab and Rahmanullah Gurbaz kept the asking rate on a leash, but it wasn't to last. A Muqem drag-down found the over fielder to dispose Shadab, and United suddenly wilted. Four wickets fell for 11 runs in 16 balls to suddenly put United in danger of a walloping, needing a further 69 with just two wickets in hand.

Ashraf, the hero of an earlier game in the week,

however, kept United alive with another stunning onslaught, speeding along to 38 off 12, with United needing 14 off the final four to ambush Zalmi. That was when Shahzad enjoyed his finest moment in a Zalmi shirt, two perfect yorkers sneaking underneath the bats of Faheem - and then No.11 Farooqi - to condemn United to their second straight defeat.

The win today gave Zalmi bragging rights. A repeat on Thursday would put them within one game of the PSL final.

Rashid struck on the helmet as Qalandars lose to Kings

RAWALPINDI: Having already qualified for the play-offs, Lahore Qalandars rested their captain Shaheen Shah Afridi and lost their final league game to Karachi

Kings but that won't worry them so much as the fact that Rashid Khan had to retire hurt, having been hit on the helmet. Qalandars are due to face the big-hitting Multan Sultans in the Qualifier on Wednesday and they'd really prefer going into that game with their ace legspinner in fighting form.

Far removed from those concerns though, the Kings were able to celebrate just their third win of the tournament, which took them off the bottom of the points table. Muhammad Akhlaq, after a poor first two seasons in 2021 and 2022, struck his first PSL half-century. An innings of 51 off 36 balls that set the Kings up for the final flourish provided by the captain Imad Wasim (43 off 31) and Ben Cutting (33 off 14). They were able to put up a total of 196 for 7 after choosing to bat in Lahore, with Tayyab Tahir also contributing a sprightly 40 off 23 balls at No. 3.

The Qalandars' chase went nowhere as they lost their top order inside the powerplay and continued to collapse. They were 79 for 7 when Rashid had to retire hurt at the end of the 15th over. He'd got hit in the 14th, trying to pull a James Fuller bouncer, but continued batting after receiving medical attention. Things seemed okay, especially when Rashid was able to hit the first ball after taking the blow, for an emphatic boundary over square leg. But he couldn't go on for much longer.

The Kings' bowlers enjoyed as good a time as their batters with Imad, Akif Javed, Mohammad Umar and Imran Tahir all picking up two wickets a piece.

Umar of KP becomes National Jr Champion

PESHAWAR (APP): Budding squash player from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Umeer Arif, won the first McDonald National Junior Squash Championship played at Jehangir Squash Complex Karachi.

Umar got the honor after defeating Pakistan Army Azaan in a thrilling 3-0 final in a one-sided affair. In this entire tournament, Umar won all his matches in three straight sets by taking no time in topping his rivals. Umar Arif is in great form, defeating Azaan of Pakistan Army in straight sets, the score was 11-9, 11-8 and 12-10. Umar Arif faced some resistance at the hands of Azaan of Pakistan Army but overall he dominated the proceedings and did not give much time to Azaan to settle down in the three sets battle that lasted for only 24 minutes.

Umar belongs to the famous squash Khan family who made Pakistan famous all over the world. Speaking to the media on this occasion, Umar said that he is thankful to his parents, coaches, Directorate General Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Bank of Khyber for their support and expressed his determination to continue to serve his country and nation in the future. "I will continue my hard work and hopefully not only in the Junior tournaments but also in the Senior tournaments both at national and international levels, I will try my best to win it all," he added. His coach Muhammad Waseem also appreciated Umar Arif for his hard work. Umar Arif is very committed to his practice and matches that is why he has won all the tournaments so far, Muhammad Waseem said.

the act to end Ben Duckett's resistance. Duckett reached a team-high 28 as Mehidy ripped through England's middle order.

"It was a different game of T20 cricket, exciting as well but credit to Bangladesh. There is no good way to get out, but it was a tough wicket to start on and Duckett was doing well, we needed someone to stay with him," added Buttler.



Gharan Bacha of Pakistan Army wins Mr. Pakistan title

PESHAWAR (APP): Gharan Bacha of Pakistan Army clinched the Mr. Pakistan title while Umar Butt of Punjab grabbed the Junior Mr. Pakistan title and Nasir Butt of Sindh lifted the title of Men Physique while Shahid Khan of Punjab took the title of Mr. Master Pakistan.

Overall, Pakistan WAPDA secured first position with 146 points, followed by Pakistan Army with 98 points and Punjab got the third position with 29 points respectively.

Adviser to the Caretaker Chief Minister on Sports Dr. Anwar Riaz was the chief guest on this occasion who gave away titles, trophies and cash prizes to the position holders of Mr. Pakistan, Junior Mr. Pakistan, Men Physique and Mr. Masters Pakistan besides weight wise positions. Secretary Pakistan Bodybuilding Federation Tariq Parvez and other important personalities were present.

The event was jointly organized by Pakistan Bodybuilding Federation and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bodybuilding Association here at PSB Coaching Center Peshawar wherein more than 200 musclemen from all four provinces, Islamabad, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan Army, Pakistan WAPDA, Railways, Police and HEC participated.

Pakistan Army Gharan Bacha won Mr. Pakistan, Punjab's Umar Butt and Sindh Nasir Butt won the title of Junior Mr. Pakistan, Men Physique while Shahid Khan of Punjab won the title of Master Pakistan. Abdul Ali (National Champion), Shiraz Muhammad (National Judge), Muhammad Iqbal (National Judge), Amirullah Khan (National Judge), Imran Qureshi (Mr. Pakistan) and Iftikhar Ahmed (Pakistan Army) performed as technical officials.

President Pakistan Bodybuilding Federation Tariq Parvez said that the organization of National Bodybuilding Championship-2023 and the first fitness challenge for young athletes were organized in the best way in Pakistan. The athletes who won the titles in the competitions will be given the opportunity to participate in the Mr. Asia competitions which are being held on August 25 in Beirut, Lebanon, Tariq Parvez said while talking to APP here on Sunday. He said good preparations would be underway for the team so that they would be able to win a medal at the Asian Bodybuilding Championship.



Murray, Raducanu and Draper win to reach 3rd round

INDIAN WELLS (Agencies): British trio Andy Murray, Emma Raducanu and Jack Draper all won on Saturday to reach the third round at Indian Wells.

Raducanu, the 2021 US Open champion, fought back from 4-1 down in the first set to beat Poland's Magda Linette, the 20th seed, 7-6 (7-3) 6-2. She will now face Brazil's Beatriz Haddad Maia, the 13th seed, for a place in the last 16. Murray beat Moldova's Radu Albot 6-4 6-3 to set up a meeting with Draper, who beat compatriot Dan Evans 6-4 6-2.

Raducanu, 20, continued her return to form after shrugging off illness and a recurring wrist injury to beat Danka Kovinic on Thursday. The world number 77 fought back to win the opening set on a tie-break, then eased through the second set for her first back-to-back victories since September. Raducanu suffered an ankle injury before January's Australian Open and tonsillitis forced her to withdraw from last week's Austin Open, while the wrist injury that cut short her 2022 season required attention from a physiotherapist on Saturday.

"I feel better, it was still a challenge, I wouldn't say I was 100% but better than the first-round match," Raducanu, who earned her biggest win by ranking since landing the major title in New York, told BBC Sport.

"I had to dig really deep against Magda because her level was really high. "The wrist isn't completely pain free. But I gritted my teeth a little bit and it's good to still be able to win matches at this level despite the challenges I've had over the past few weeks."

Poland's world number one Iga Swiatek enjoyed a 6-0 6-1 win over Claire Liu, whose fellow American Jessica Pegula, the third seed, fought back to beat Italy's Camila Giorgi 3-6 6-1 6-2. Tunisian fourth seed Ons Jabeur, playing for the first time since losing in the Australian Open second round in January, fought back to beat Poland's Magdalena Frech 4-6 6-4 6-1.

Murray sets up another all-British match

Former world number one Murray enjoyed his first straight-set win since last October after his original opponent, the 15th seed Pablo Carreno Busta of Spain, had to withdraw because of a muscle injury. After a number of marathon wins in the opening weeks of the season, Murray said it felt good to beat Albot in one hour and 42 minutes. "It has been a long time [since winning a match in straight sets], I've had a lot of brutal matches since then," he said.

"Probably some of them I could have finished sooner and probably a bunch a matches I could have lost as well. It was nice to get through this one." The 35-year-old Scot now has his first meeting with Draper, 14 years his junior and ranked just one spot below him at 56.

In his first match against Evans, Draper broke the 32-year-old in his first two service games and his last two to knock out the 24th seed. "Playing Dan is a really tough challenge, I think he is one of the best competitors on the tour and he has an awkward style. I knew that coming in and knew he wouldn't want to lose to me," said Draper.

Spain's Carlos Alcaraz, who could to the ATP number one ranking by winning the title, started with a sharp 6-3 6-3 victory against Australia's Thanasi Kokkinakis.

Arsenal regains 5-point lead in EPL with 3-0 win over Fulham



LONDON (AP): Arsenal reclaimed its five-point lead in the Premier League by outclassing Fulham in a 3-0 win on Sunday.

Gabriel Magalhães, Gabriel Martinelli and Martin Odegaard scored first-half goals at Craven Cottage to secure a fifth straight victory in the league for Arsenal. Leandro Trossard provided the assist for all three goals.

Second-place Manchester City had applied pressure on Mikel Arteta's team by winning 1-0 at Crystal Palace on Saturday, briefly reducing the gap to two points.

Arsenal and City have 11 games left.

There was further good news for Arsenal, with Brazil striker Gabriel Jesus coming off the bench in the 77th for his first appearance since undergoing surgery on Dec. 6 on a medial collateral ligament injury sustained during the World Cup. Arsenal had already had a goal disallowed for offside following a video review by the time Gabriel headed in a left-wing corner from Trossard in the 21st minute.

The Belgium midfielder set up the second goal five minutes later, too, digging out

a cross from the left that Martinelli nodded in after beating Fulham defender Antonee Robinson to the ball.

Trossard completed his hat trick of assists in the second minute of first-half stoppage time but the goal owed more to the technical skill of Odegaard, who brought down the cross into the area, cut inside and smashed a shot past Bernd Leno Fulham's former Arsenal goalkeeper.

Tosin Adarabioyo headed the ball against the crossbar off a corner as Fulham came into the match more in the second half.

Casemiro sent off again, Man United held 0-0 by Southampton

MANCHESTER (AP): Manchester United held firm after Casemiro's second red card in his last three Premier League games to secure a 0-0 draw with last-place Southampton on Sunday.

The Brazil midfielder was sent off in the 34th

Bangladesh secures T20 series with win over England

DHAKA (AP): Bangladesh wrapped up the three-match T20 series against England with a game to spare as Mehidy Hasan claimed a career-best 4-12 and added a crucial 20-run knock to secure a four-wicket victory over the tourists on Sunday.

Bangladesh held England to a lowly 117 in 20 overs, before knocking off the target with seven balls to spare, reaching 120-6. Najmul Hossain, who was instrumental in the six-wicket victory in the first match with a 30-ball 51, was not out on 46, helping the home side stay in the contest despite England bowlers making inroads at regular intervals.

"I was just trying to bowl in the right areas. I tried to rotate the strike and if there is a bad ball then put it away," said Mehidy, who replaced Shamim Hossain for the only change for Bangladesh. Fast bowler Jofra Archer gave England a flicker of hope, claiming 3-13 but Najmul held his nerve.

Bangladesh lost both openers — Liton Das and Rony Talukdar — while chasing the moderate target for just 27 runs. Later,



Najmul held one end with confidence but the chase didn't get going in earnest until Mehidy struck two sixes as part of his 16-ball 20.

Archer removed him with a slower delivery and then delivered a ball that clocked 92 mph to rattle the stump of Afif Hossain. In between, Moeen Ali claimed the wicket of skipper Shakib Al Hasan as Bangladesh was left at 100-6 in the 18th over.

England appeared to be on course to save the game, sensing an unlikely victory, but Najmul and Taskin Ahmed hit three boundaries off Chris Jordan's first over of the day to close out the contest. Taskin who hit the winning boundary was not out on 8.

"I thought it was an outstanding bowling performance to defend a low total, we bowled without luck as well but really proud of everyone's effort," England

captain Jos Buttler said.

Earlier, Taskin got the Bangladesh attack off the mark, removing David Malan after England was put into bat first. Shakib got the better of Phil Salt who started well before his progress was halted, having reached a 19-ball 25.

But the crucial breakthrough came when pacer Hasan Mahmud bowled Buttler (4) with a searing delivery. Mehidy got into



In brief

IRSA releases 81,900 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 81,900 cusecs of water from various rim stations with the inflow of 56,600 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1435.24 feet and was 37.24 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. The water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 21,900 cusecs while outflow as 43,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1102.80 feet, which was 52.80 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 17,800 cusecs and 22,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 49,900, 38,000, 30,600 and 7,100 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 7,400 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 3,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

6 stolen motorcycles recovered

RAWALPINDI (APP): The police, during an operation here on Sunday, arrested a two-member gang involved in the motorcycle theft and recovered six stolen motorcycles and a Qingqi rickshaw from their possession, informed a police spokesman. The police have also recovered weapons used in the crime. The 2-member "Amber Gang" comprised Amber Masih and Danish Shaukat. Rata Amral Police have registered separate cases against both of them and further investigation was in progress. SP Rawal Faisal Saleem appreciated the performance of the police team and said that operations against organized gangs will be continued.

15,015 challan tickets issued

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi have issued 15,015 challan tickets to the violators for wrong parking, double parking and creating hurdles in the smooth flow of traffic. According to a police spokesman, a grand operation was launched against the wrong parking and double parking and issued 15,015 challan tickets to vehicles and motorcycles. Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Taimoor Khan said that special squads with lifters were formed to control the issue of wrong parking, and double parking in the city. He maintained that awareness banners had also been displayed on important city roads. Traffic wardens and field officers had been directed to take strict action against violators of the parking rules which create hurdles in the smooth flow of traffic. The CTO said that orders had been issued to all the field officers to take action in accordance with the law against double parking, wrong parking and one-way violators. He urged the citizens to cooperate with the traffic police to overcome the traffic problems.

200 bottles of liquor recovered

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested three liquor supplier and recovered 200 bottles of liquor from their possession during crackdown here on Sunday. Saddar Wah police conducted raid and arrested 03 liquor suppliers who were identified as Sajjad, Nasir and Sajjad Khan. Police have registered separate cases against all of them and further investigation was in progress. SHO said that other facilitators of the accused will also be arrested.



ISLAMABAD: Handlers along with their Dogs during the International All-breed Championship Dog Show organized by Canine Union Pakistan at F9 Park.

Teachers face denial of their right to chose better job opportunity

ISLAMABAD (APP): Teachers serving at the educational institutions run by the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) are facing denial of their basic right to move from one occupation to another through non-provision of Departmental Permission Certificate (DPC) to apply for another job. According to an official source, the employees of ministries, divisions and all other departments are allowed to apply for the posts announced by the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC).

However in case of teachers, different restrictions are imposed on their career advancements which seems discrimination and to be harmful for the productivity of the workers.

It is an undeniable fact that occupational mobility helps increase efficiency and productivity when employees move to occupations for which they are suited the best.

Qasim Raza Shah, a lecturer at Islamabad Model Postgraduate College H-8

who is the victim said that he was desirous to change his job and wanted to join office management group as section officer.

He needed a "Departmental Permission Certificate" (DPC) from the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) to apply to the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) but his department did not allow him and hence DPC was not issued to him. Under the International labor organization declaration, every country gives rights to every citizen to move freely from one occupation to another office without discrimination as regards employment, remuneration and other working conditions.

Another lecturer on the condition of anonymity told APP that no teacher wanted to be stuck in a dead-end job, regardless of its compensation and benefits. Teachers should be given the freedom to choose their career that would help them achieve better outcomes in their profession.

Accused the relevant authorities of operating double standards, the lecturer said that Directors at FDE were allowed to join any other department on deputation but teachers were kept bound to stay in the same department.

Instead of restricting teachers' occupational mobility, the authorities should give teachers the liberty to change their profession instead of adopting the career-blocking strategy. An Associate Professor at a local college on the condition of anonymity said, "Everybody has the right for upward career mobility by which an employee uses his/her skill sets and strength of mind to achieve new career goals and more demanding job opportunities". "The opportunities for upward movement on the career path in the education department are pretty low. The four-tier promotion structure of teachers is very old and rotten which has not been revised", the Associate Professor said.

Jalib was remembered on 30th death anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 30th death anniversary of revolutionary poet Habib Jalib was observed on Sunday to pay glowing tributes to him for his notable services in the field of literature. Habib Jalib was born on 24 March 1928 in Hoshiarpur of Indian Punjab. He was titled as the poet of the people by his followers. Habib Jalib migrated to Pakistan after the partition and worked with a newspaper as a proofreader.

His simple and attractive style touched the hearts of people and remained loyal to his progressive school of thought despite being jailed for several times but also remained resilient when it comes to his poetry.

He is among the most influential Urdu poets in Pakistan, who supported democratic ideals and expressively opposed martial laws and authoritarian rule. Some of his famous literary works of the great political and social activist of his time include "Zulmat Ko Zia", "Watan ko Kuch Nahi Khatra", "Main Ne Uss Se Yeh Kaha" and "Aisay Dastoor Ko". His famous poetry books are Sir-e-Maqatl, Zikr Behte Khoon Ka, Gumbad-e-Bedar, Kulyaat-e-Habib Jalib, Is Shehar-e-Kharabi Main, Goshay Main Qafas K, Harf-e-Haqq, Harf-e-Sar-e-Daar and Ehad-e-Sitam.

Saudi-Iran relations to yield positive results in region: Ashrafi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Special Representative for Interfaith Harmony and Middle East Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Sunday said the revival of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran would yield positive results in the region.

He, in an exclusive talk with APP, said the ease of diplomatic row between two brotherly countries would help to reduce the problems and sufferings of Islamic world. Ashrafi who is also the chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council appreciated the efforts of Chineses President Xi Jinping to bring Saudi Arabia and Iran closer. As per reports, the Iran and Saudi Arabia had agreed to re-establish diplomatic relations and reopen their embassies within two months, he added.

He said both of the countries had agreed to revive agreements made in 2001 and 1998 regarding security and trade.

"The most important thing is that the two countries would not interfere in the internal affairs of one other," he maintained. He said this news had spurred a wave of happiness in the Muslim Ummah as it would help dismantle the nefarious designs of enemies who tried to create conflict between the Muslim countries on

the basis of sectarianism.

Shedding light on the background of this new development, he asserted that during the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Saudi Arabia a couple of months ago, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman requested the former to bridge the gap with Iran. Ashrafi said the Arab world had termed the crown prince the 'leader of peace' due to his peace-building measures between the two brotherly countries.

He said Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman following the footprints of King Salman bin Abdulaziz had given a new vision not only to Saudi Arabia but to all the Muslim world by making all-out efforts to unite them at one platform.

He said that whether it was the matter of Palestine or Kashmir, the Muslim world should sit together and devise a combined strategy to meet all the challenges being faced by the Muslim Ummah on the globe.

He expressed the hope that this constructive step would further strengthen fraternal ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran and bring peace and stability in Yemen, Syria and in the days to come ahead. He also appreciated the role of Saudi Arabia in connection with Russia and Ukraine's war.

Over 21m children to be vaccinated in March polio campaign

ISLAMABAD (APP): A Polio vaccination campaign to immunize more than 21.54 million children under the age of five will kick off in Sindh and Punjab on March 13 (Monday).

The five-day vaccination campaign is being held in two phases due to the concurrent activities of the seventh national census.

In the first phase, over 17.41 million children under the age of five in 13 districts of Punjab and 16 districts of Sindh and Islamabad will be vaccinated from March 13 to March 17. The second phase will be held from April 03 to 07 – during the second week of Ramadan – to vaccinate more than 4.12 million children in 12 districts of Balochistan and 26 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including the seven endemic districts in the southern region of the province.

Federal Minister for Health Abdul Qadir Patel urged parents and caregivers to ensure that their children receive the life-

saving polio vaccine so that they remain protected from poliovirus, which has been found circulating in environmental samples.

"The presence of wild polio in the environment shows that the virus is circulating in our communities and posing a serious risk to our children," said Abdul Qadir Patel, the Minister.

"With Ramadan and Eid around the corner, population movements can increase the risk of further spread, therefore, it is critical that parents and caregivers vaccinate their children in this and every campaign," said the Minister.

"We have specifically designed this March campaign to reach areas where population movement is not just frequent but also expected during Ramadan and Eid festival," said Dr Shahzad Baig, National Emergency Operations Center. "It is essential that we reach as many children as possible with the vaccine now to curb polio transmis-

sion," he added.

No human case has been reported in Pakistan since September 2022 when a polio outbreak paralyzed 20 children – all of them in southern KP districts.

Wild poliovirus was detected for the first time this year in sewage samples collected from two separate sites in Lahore in January.

Two more samples have since then tested positive for polio – wild polio has been detected in a sample collected from D.I.Khan and variant poliovirus has been detected from Ghotki.

The polio programme has taken all out efforts to ensure vaccination of children to keep them safe from this highly infectious disease in the context of positive environmental samples detected in some places.

The Sehat Tahhafuz Helpline 1166 and 24/7 WhatsApp Helpline 0346-777-65-46 will be available to assist parents and caregivers in reporting missed children and providing related information.

Drug-Free Society: ANF vigilance squads to combat drug addiction

ISLAMABAD (APP): Across the globe, societies are being faced with the growing challenge of drugs addiction having the wide range of verities and novel techniques, especially amongst the youngsters, and Pakistan is no exception to it.

Youth is considered the future of any country, but what if they are targeted by enemies or anti-social elements indulging them in the deadly habit of drug addiction under their inimical designs. Cognizant of the situation, Pakistan has recently rolled out ANF Vigilance Squads (AVS) aims at countering drug prevalence around educational institutions and community centers.

"The AVS is swift, smart and service-oriented modern proactive mobile patrolling units for operations to purge the society from drug abuse," said an official of the Ministry of Narcotics Control. The AVS, he said, in the first phase would operate in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore and Karachi. Keeping in view the seriousness of the issue, the Upper House of the Parliament has passed two bills titled "Control of Narcotics Substances (Amendment) Bill, 2022" and "Control of Narcotics Substance (Amendment) Act, 1997" unanimously to fight the menace more effectively. The mover of the bill titled "Control of Narcotics Substances (Amendment) Bill, 2022" Senator Mohsin Aziz said the prime objective of the bill was to eradicate drugs from educational institutions.

He said the bill made it compulsory for all educational institutions to form a 'Disciplinary Committee' with representatives of Law Enforcement Agencies. The committee members would have the authority to carryout inspections on regular basis in the premises of educational institutions to prevent such illegal activities.

Senator Rana Maqbool Ahmed, the mover of a bill titled "Control of Narcotics Substance (Amendment) Act 1997", said the aim of the bill was to abate the victimization of private individuals on mala-fide charges doctored by their political opponents.

It is a universal truth that no society in the world has ever achieved the status of a civilized nation unless its people started differentiating between good and bad to save the future of the

coming generations. Therefore, keeping in view the all ills of drug addiction and purging the society of the menace, the country is striving hard for the absolute elimination of drugs to achieve the set goal of a "Drug-Free Society" besides vigorously executing its globally assigned tasks with utmost dedication and determination.

To achieve the set goals, the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) is regularly organizing awareness activities like speech/debate competitions, lectures, seminars, workshops, walks, games, and sports contests in different cities including Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, Quetta, and Rawalpindi through Regional

Directorates of ANF Pakistan to acquaint masses, especially youth with the devastating impacts of drug abuse. ANF Director General Maj General Aneeq Ur Rehman Malik while addressing a seminar, titled "Future Generation of Pakistan," in Bolan Medical College, Quetta emphasized that drug abuse had grown from an essential domestic problem into a national and global threat. "ANF as a force will leave no stone unturned to curb this menace and will fight against all odds to secure our next generation" he added.

He said in an awareness lecture against drug abuse at Government Post Graduate Degree College, Jhelum that a completely drug-free society was the guarantee of a bright future for the young generation. He apprised the students that education was the most effective weapon against drugs.

Experts believe that Pakistan's goal to become a drug-free society can be achieved through creating awareness at the grassroots level against deadly addiction. It is possible to achieve the goal when people get the ability to understand the repercussions of addiction to save the future of the coming generations.

A senior official of the ANF said the youth was Pakistan's greatest asset, which constituted 66 percent of the population. "They are our future and we have to protect them from the harms of drug addiction. Protecting the country's youth and the future generation from the menace is inevitable for the prosperous future of Pakistan," he said, adding that to pro-

tect our youth, the ANF was working tirelessly in coordination with other law enforcement agencies of Pakistan. A Spokesperson for ANF said the department was playing a leading role in mass awareness and community participation programs to educate the people against drug abuse. "We are constantly putting our efforts at the national and international level." He stressed the concerted efforts by all the quarters concerned to fight the menace of drug addiction, particularly among youth.

The force is sparing no effort in carrying out its duties and protecting the young generation from the dangers of drugs, he said, adding "We pledge to carry forward our manifesto with utmost determination, sincerity, and devotion."

While sharing the details of a drive against drug smugglers, the ANF spokesperson said that total drug seizures by Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) in 2022 summed up to 227.2 metric tons, out of which ANF seizures were 116.2 metric tons, with ANF share amounting to 51.1% of complete IATF seizures. By accounts of the drug make and type, ANF seizures of plant-based drugs were 79.986 metric tons (68.95% of seized drugs), synthetic drugs were 3.582 metric tons (3.08%), Chemical Precursors were 25.695 metric tons (22.11%) and other substances 6.9 metric tons (5.8%). Drug Traffickers used different modes; against which ANF seizures through land-based operations were 111.328 metric tons, seizures at seaports added up to 3.312 metric tons and airports were 428 kgs. Seizures against drug trafficking attempts through parcels at mailing offices were 1.147 metric tons.

He said 30 internationally coordinated intelligence operations were also conducted with assistance from international partners. 324 individuals were arrested in ANF's operations at airports to foil drug trafficking attempts to other countries, out of total arrests 1508 were made during the year. As many as 595 drug traffickers were convicted in various trials bringing the conviction rate to a remarkable 87%. He said that 1810 individuals received treatment at model addiction treatment and rehabilitation centers (MATRCs) in Karachi, Islamabad, Sukkur and Hyderabad.

People terming Swat valley tourists paradise

ISLAMABAD (APP): A larger number of visitors including foreign dignitaries and domestic tourists are visiting Swat valley which is considering one of the beautiful and like a paradise for tourists that blossoms fill with lovely colors in every season.

Talking to APP, Sajjad Hussain, a resident of G-10, said the scenic mountains are source of major inspiration and attractions for the tourists and also beautifying the Swat valley including Kalam, Bahrain, Madyan, Bishigram and others places.

He said the beautiful followers, historical places, lovely weather, cleanliness and peaceful atmosphere also a key factor for our trip. "People of valley are so hospitable, loving and tra-

ditional delicious foods make the day so pleasant," he added.

He further said observing the nature can remove stress, depression and anxiety from the tourists and Swat valley one of the attractive sites called a heaven on the earth.

Iman Ali, a resident of Karachi metropolitan city, visited along with his family to Swat valley by founding people very hospitable and fresh food are selling by locals in inexpensive rates compared to Murree and other tourist sites.

He said people belonging to every age including women, children, young adults and students of various universities are visiting the Swat valley to enjoy the nature.

It is pertinent mention here, if leaving from Peshawar or Islamabad

the Swat Expressway M-16 starts from Karnel Sher Khan interchange M-1 (Islamabad-Peshawar motorway). Swat is well connected with important cities like Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Peshawar to facilitate the commuters.

The Swat valley can truly be called the valley of Lakes, which not only feeds the emerald green Swat river but also provided ideal camping sites for adventures and nature lovers. Most of these lakes are hidden from the world due to their far-flung locations and take three to seven hours trekking to reach from the last village of the road.

Exploring these miracles of nature demands endurance, patience, courage and above all love for natural beauty.

CDA plants over 150,000 trees in federal capital

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has so far planted more than 150,000 saplings in the ongoing tree plantation campaign in the federal capital and surrounding areas with the help of residents since last two weeks.

"The campaign is in full swing on the directives of Chairman CDA Noor ul Amin Mengal and the children were engaged in planting saplings in different parks and free-of-cost fruit trees also distributed among citizens," an official told APP here Sunday.

He said that the CDA chief has given a target to officials concerned to plant around 500,000 saplings during the spring season and the plantation drive had already kicked off at the F-9 Park.

The official said that the Authority was involving children to make the campaign a success, adding that, while the CDA, the private sector and civil society had an important role to make the tree plantation drive a success.

Last year, he said the Environment Wing of the CDA planted 250,000 plants and this year the target has been doubled.

The official said the fruit plants were being distributed among citizens for planting in their homes. Among them are

peaches, apricots, pomegranates and other fruit saplings that are compatible with the local climate and environment.

He said that 5,000 plants have been distributed free of cost during the week and about 20,000 plants during the next 15 days. Moreover, on the instructions of the CDA chairman, the authority would try its level best to meet the target of planting 500,000 saplings this year.

The official said the CDA has also decided to increase the city's green cover by planting saplings on billions of rupees of land it recovered from illegal occupants under the anti-encroachment drive.

"The authority has recently launched a massive drive in the federal capital against the land grabbers to recover its precious land that had been unlawfully occupied by the mafia," he added.

The official said the authority would carry out a comprehensive drive aimed at preventing re-encroachment of retrieved land and increasing green spaces across the capital.

He said Islamabad was the only city in the world that had been developed on the concept of green city and "the CDA is taking concrete measures for conservation and enhancement of its green character."

DAB to auction \$16m today

KABUL (Agencies): Da Afghanistan Bank said that it will put in auction 16 million US dollars as part of efforts to keep the local currency afghani stable by Monday. DAB has asked eligible banks and money changer services to participate in the tender, adding that the winners of the auction are obliged to settle their accounts by the end of the day. Partial settlement of transactions is not allowed and the winners of the auction are obliged to deliver the money owed to DAB in cash once.

10 Afghans killed in traffic accident in Iran

KABUL (Pajhwok): Ten Afghan nationals have been killed and three Iranians injured in a traffic accident in Iran, according to a media report.

The accident happened on Nairaz-Mahorqatria-Seerjan Road in Fars province, Iranian News Agency Tasmin reported a local official as saying.

The Fars Highway Chief Abdul Hashim Dehqan said 10 Afghans were killed and

Nadim warns of consequences for opponents of IE govt



KABUL (TOLONews): The acting Minister of Higher Education, Nida Mohammad Nadim, warned that they are ready to confront anyone who stands against the interim government, and he stressed that those who oppose the Islamic Emirate will be suppressed. He made the remarks at graduation ceremony in Kandahar. "If you are hard-headed and make problems for the people of Afghanistan

based on strangers' agendas, then we are ready to confront you, and we will suppress you," Nadim said. The acting minister said that those who undermine the interim government deserve death. "Those who undermine the government whether that is via tongue, pen or undermining in practice, all of are committing rebellion, all of them deserve death," he said.

Analysts called for negotiations as the best way to solve the current problems in the country. "We want any issue that being solved, even if it is war, to be solved through negotiations," said Shams Kamran, a social analyst. Earlier, the Islamic Emirate's spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid said if anyone complains about those in charges, they should do so discreetly.

Bamiyan once again hosts popular skiing contest

BAMIYAN (Agencies): Bamiyan's annual skiing contest was held on Friday in Chap Dara village and attracted over 100 athletes, including three foreign participants.

The three foreigners were from France, the United States and Australia.

Hosted by the Afghan Peaks Charitable Trust, this popular winter sporting event is held annually in a bid to promote the sport among capable skiers and beginners alike, including children, in the province and in the country.

Conditions on Friday were perfect – with clear blue skies and crisp fresh air working in favor of all skiers who took to the slopes of the towering Hindu Kush Mountains, at an impressive altitude of 2,800 meters.

According to Baqir Haidari, the head of the Bamiyan Ski Federation: "The idea is to promote skiing in Bamiyan because people are interested in this sport."

He said athletes took part in two categories – professional and classic.

After a day of exciting events, the winners were announced officially.

Mujtaba and Hadi from Chap Dara youth club secured first and second positions respectively while Hussain Ali from the Mir Shah Khawaja Club came in third.

The winner scooped 6,000 afghanis in prize money while 4,500 afghanis and 3,000 afghanis went to Hadi and Hussain Ali respectively.

Friday's contest came just two weeks after Bamiyan hosted its popular annual winter sports festival.

Both events draw dozens of athletes who enjoy the quality slopes that Bamiyan offers.

In the lead up to Friday's contest, however, skis were distributed to children in the province who were encouraged to take up the sport and to join in the fun on Friday.

Bamiyan has for years been the go-to province in Afghanistan for skiing, and thousands of skiers, both local and foreign, have taken to these glorious slopes in the winter months.

Locals welcome the visitors, who bring in much needed revenue to this province that is also steeped in history.

10 IEA members die of food poisoning in Nawa

HELMAND (Khaama Press): A reliable security source in Southern Helmand confirmed that at least ten Taliban members have died due to serious food poisoning in the Nawa district of the province.

The source which avoided mentioning its identity on Sunday told Khaama Press the report about the death of Islamic security forces caused due to food poisoning in Helmand province is true.

The source added that

food poisoning was intentional and preplanned as a result of which ten members of the Islamic Emirate suffered serious health issues on Friday before they died.

It is stated that Taliban officials in the province are trying to hide the incident with claimed the lives of scores of the group's members, and they have not yet commented about the incident so far.

This comes as the Islamic Emirate's opposite gro-

ups have intensified their attacks on Afghanistan's de facto authorities in Kabul and other provinces.

On February 9, a suicide attack took place in the premises of the Mazar-e-Sharif governor's office around 10 am in morning, which claimed the life of Mohammad Dawood Muzammil, the governor of Balkh province, and his two security guards.

The Taliban-run administration claims to have ended the war and restored

security throughout Afghanistan.

However, since their return to power in August 2021, there has been no considerable improvement security-wise.

Meanwhile, target killing, arbitrary detentions, and anonymous killing have even caused the death of Taliban members. It is believed that intergroup conflict on certain key issues within the Islamic Emirate authorities has increased in the recent past.

Regional cooperation to solve Afghanistan's problems

TEHRAN (Khaama Press): At a meeting in Tehran, Hossein Amirabdollahian, the foreign minister of Iran, and Bakhtiar Saidov, acting foreign minister of Uzbekistan, discussed the state of affairs in Afghanistan.

According to a statement from Iran's foreign ministry, the parties stressed the importance of cooperation and assistance from neighbouring countries to strengthen peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Earlier, in Tashkent, delegates from neighbouring states, Iran, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, China, Russia, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan, attended the first conference of special representatives to discuss the current situation in Afghanistan.

The participants stressed the need for long-lasting peace in Afghanistan and the provision of humanitar-



ian aid to the Afghanistan people.

Moreover, the meeting also pointed out the significance of Afghanistan's political, security and social development for the region.

Iran and Uzbekistan

have always stressed forming an inclusive government in Afghanistan, including women, political parties, and ethnic and religious minorities.

Since the Taliban took over Afghanistan, the inter-

national community has not recognized the current government. However, the Islamic Emirate claims it has fulfilled all the conditions for its recognition, including forming an inclusive government.

Ban on female education continues to spark int'l criticism

KABUL (TOLONews): The US Permanent Representative to the UN Human Rights Council, Ambassador Michèle Taylor, stated on Twitter that female students in Afghanistan face unacceptable restrictions on their freedom of movement, to pursue education.

"Over 600 million children worldwide are unable to attain minimum proficiency levels in reading and math. In Afghanistan, girls are barred from attending secondary school and face

unacceptable restrictions on their freedom of movement," the statement reads.

Although, the new academic year will start in the next two weeks, so far no new decision has been made to reopen girls' schools.

Some female students criticized the closure of their schools by the current government.

"We worked hard and learned a lot; we have goals and ambitions, and it is vital that our schools be opened in order to accom-

plish our educational dreams," Husna, a student in the eleventh grade, told TOLONews.

"We ask the officials to reopen schools for female students at the same time as it is opened for male students," said Salwa, another student.

Kabul residents said that education provides the basis for the progress of the country, and they asked the Islamic Emirate to reopen schools for girls.

"If they reopen schools

and universities it will be a very good thing, and we will get rid of the need of others. We should have doctors and engineers and serve our country," said Janan, a resident of Kabul.

"We ask the Islamic Emirate to open schools for girls, and this is our only request and it will make everyone progress in the country," said Amir, another resident of Kabul. Grades 7-12 f have been closed for girls and young women for more than 530 days.

Iran condemns despicable attack in Afghanistan's Balkh

TEHRAN (Khaama Press): The spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry, Nasser Kanaani, in a statement denounced the terrorist attack on a group of journalists in Mazar-e-Sharif, the capital of the Balkh Province.

Kannani said, "He was saddened by the martyrdom and injury of several journalists and media people and sympathized with the families of the victims and prayed for a speedy recovery for those injured in the incident."

The statement added, "The perpetrators and sponsors of such brutal acts of terrorism are enemies of peace, stability, and security in neighbouring Afghanistan, which have targeted information and

enlightenment as well as coexistence among the Afghan people".

Meanwhile, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) also strongly condemned yesterday's attack on journalists and media people in Mazar-e-Sharif.

Balkh province and expressed its condolence with the people of Afghanistan.

The explosion targeted the journalists' gathering during a ward event at Tebyan Cultural Center, which left at least three journalists dead and 30 others injured.

However, the ministry of Interior of the interim government in Afghanistan confirmed the explosion and said that one person was killed and eight others

were wounded in the attack.

Two explosions have occurred in the province of Balkh in the last three days; the first was a suicide bombing that killed the governor of that province, Mullah Dawood Muzmal, and the second blast targeted the journalists' gathering in Tebyan Cultural Center.

Attack on journalists a blow to freedom of expression



KABUL (Khaama Press): United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan Richard Bennett described the attack on Journalists in Mazar-e-Sharif province as a blow to the freedom of expression in Afghanistan. Richard Bennett said he

is closely monitoring the attack on the gathering aimed at awarding journalists at Tebyan Cultural Center in northern Mazar-e-Sharif province. The UN Special Rapporteur emphasized the need for increased security measures for journalists in Afghanistan. "Three people were

killed and 30 others, including a significant number of journalists, were injured in this incident," according to Tebyan Cultural Center, associated with Iran's Islamic Regime.

A journalists' advocacy organization says that at least 15 journalists have been injured in this incident, and the situation is getting tougher for journalists and media workers in Afghanistan. The attack took place in a gathering in Mazar-e-Sharif aimed at honoring journalists for the tireless efforts they are putting in to update the world on the challenges and developments in the context of Afghanistan.

This was the second terrorist incident in Mazar-e-

Sharif over the past three days. The first one was a suicide attack that killed the governor of Balkh, Mullah Muhammad Dawood Muzammil and the second explosion targeted journalists' gatherings.

No one or militant group has claimed responsibility for the attack so far, and investigations are underway to find the motives behind the incident.

Since the return of the Taliban to power in August 2021, the group has imposed some tough restrictions on media and journalists. According to the decrees, no private or public media outlet or news channel is allowed to criticize Taliban members or speak against Afghanistan's de facto regime.

Fuel prices fall by over 4 per cent in Kabul during oiutgoing week

KABUL (Pajhwok): The prices of sugar, cooking oil increased while the rates of flour and fuel dipped in Kabul during the outgoing week, market sources said.

A worker at the Ahmadyar Group of Pump Stations said the price of one litre of petrol fell from 67afis to 66afis and diesel from 75afis to 73afis.

Mohammad Sharif, a liquefied gas seller in

Kalola Pushta locality, said the rate of one kilogram of the commodity declined from 70afis to 64afis.

Zmarai Safi, head of the Food Traders Association, said the wholesale price of a 49 kilograms bag Indian sugar surged from 2,900afis to 2,950afis and 16 litre tin of Malaysian cooking oil from 1,800afis to 1,850afis.

He said the price of 49-kilogram of Kazakhstani

flour decreased from 1,950afis to 1,900afis.

He added 24.5-kilogram bag of Pakistani rice cost 3,000afis, a kilogram of African black tea 400 afis and the same amount of Indonesian green tea 350afis.

Hamid Sufizada, a retailer on Dehna-i-Bagh Market, said the retail price of a 49-kilogram bag of Kazakh flour was 1,950afis, a 24-kg bag of

Pakistani rice 3,050afis and a 49-kg sack of Indian sugar 3,000afis.

Similarly, he said, a 16-litres cooking oil bottle accounted for 1,900afis, one kilogram of black tea for 400afis and the same quantity of green tea for 450afis.

Gold prices down

Mohammad Fawad, a jeweller in Timor Shahi area, said the price of one gram of Arabian gold

decreased from 4,400afis to 4,350afis and the Russian variety from 3,500afis to 3,450afis.

Afghani exchange rate Haji Hussain, owner of the Sadaqat Money Exchange Service, said one US dollar traded at 88.10afis and 1,000 Pakistani rupees at 303afis.

Last week, one US dollar accounted for 89afis and 1,000 Pakistani rupees for 300afis.



PANJSHIR (Agencies): The restoration and reconstruction of Parakh sports stadium in Bazarak, the capital of Panjshir, has started.

Lately, the stadium has been damaged by natural

disasters.

The provincial head of the Panjshir Sports and Physical Educational Department, Hafiz Shafiq-ur Rahman Rahimi, told BNA that the rehabilitation of the

Parakh stadium has been started by the Department of Public Works of this province.

Parakh Sports Stadium in Panjshir's Bazarak has a capacity of 18 thousand audiences at a time.

Maryam fires a broadside at IK over postponing rally

LAHORE (NNI): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz on Sunday launched a broadside at Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan, saying he was postponing the election rally due to the fear of the police.

Taking to Twitter, she heaped praise on PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif, saying, "The one who left no stone unturned in bid to face the challenges posed by General (Retired) Parvez Musharraf and played a vital role in the independence of judiciary is Nawaz Sharif."

Terming Imran Khan a 'jackal' she lionized Nawaz Sharif who removed all obstacles put up by then military dictator late General © Pervez Musharraf to stop him

from leading a rally taken out to restore deposed judges.

"Those who cancel "movements" due to fear of police, those who stay at home because of fear are called jackals and those who lead from the front after removing every obstacle put up dictator Musharraf and by the grace of Allah restore the judiciary before reaching Gujranwala.

This lion-hearted leader is called Nawaz Sharif!," remarked Maryam.

Earlier, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan called off party's election rally in Lahore till tomorrow (Monday) on account of Section 144 being imposed in the city by the Punjab government.

Saad promises swift, inexpensive justice under reformed system

LAHORE (INP): Federal Minister for Railways and Aviation Khawaja Saad Rafique has said that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) will introduce reforms in the judicial system of the country for quick and doubtless justice to people after coming to power.

Addressing an organisational meeting of the PML-N in his constituency here on Sunday, he said that it was a responsibility of the parliament to provide swift justice to the common man. He said that if the PML-N got an opportunity, such a judicial system would be introduced through legislation in which favoritism would not have any place.

The minister said that the PML-N would also

introduce a revolutionary economic framework for which the PML-N was needed the support of people and it was not possible in just six months. In the new economic framework, tax-net would be expanded without putting burden on the poor and deprived citizens of the country. The government structure would be reduced and expenditures of all government institutions would be decreased, he promised.

He said that the PML-N would work for the common man instead of the rich, adding that he was part of the current democratic system for changing the system. "This democratic system of billionaires cannot run the country pro-

gressively," he added.

The minister said that the election had become a commercial activity, as political parties did not give tickets to political workers if they did not have resources to contest elections. He said that the political parties were not well organised and it was a responsibility of political parties and their leaderships to introduce a democratic culture in their parties and allow political workers to come forward. "We will continue to raise our voice for the rights of workers in parties," he pledged. Saad said that political workers should decide that who would be their representative in the union council, provincial assemblies or in the National Assembly.

Bomb hits convoy of PTI lawmaker's son in Balochistan

QUETTA (PPI): A bomb blast struck a convoy of Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf provincial lawmaker's son Sardar Khan Rind in the country's southwestern region, killing 2 people amid a series of attacks in a sparsely populated area.

Reports in local media claimed that at least two security guards were killed and another wounded in a bomb attack on the convoy of Sardar Khan Rind in the Sunni Shoran area of Balochistan.

Sardar Khan Rind how-

ever remained unhurt in the blast which was carried out using a remote-controlled improvised explosive device.

Soon after the incident, law enforcers and rescue personnel rushed to the spot and shift the dead and the injured to District Headquarters Hospital Dhadar.

Law enforcement officials started a search operation in the area to nab the attackers involved in detonating the explosives while no terror outfit has

claimed the attack.

At least 9 Balochistan Constabulary personnel martyred, over dozen injured in Bolan's suicide blast.

M e a n w h i l e , Balochistan Chief Minister Abdul Qudoos Bizenjo denounced the terror attack and expressed his sorrow over the killing of two security guards.

He dialed Sardar Khan Rind and strongly condemned the bomb attack on his convoy.

Lahore court grants one-day physical remand of Bhatti

ISLAMABAD (NNI): A local court in Lahore has sent Punjab former chief minister's principal secretary on a one-day physical remand to the Anti-Corruption Establishment.

Former principal secretary of Pervaiz Elahi, Muhammad Khan Bhatti was presented before the judicial magistrate on Sunday. The magistrate remanded Bhatti in physical custody for one day. He was handed over to the

Anti-Corruption Establishment, Lahore.

A few days ago, the Quetta police arrested Bhatti when he was trying to flee to Iran.

Bhatti was first shifted to the ACE, Rahim Yar Khan region, where a local court sent him on a 3-day physical remand.

Two days ago, the RYK court sent Bhatti on judicial remand. However, the Anti-Corruption, Lahore region submitted a request to the

ACE RYK region seeking transit remand of the former principal secretary in a Rs800 million corruption case. Bhatti is accused of accepting bribe in transfer and posting cases and receiving heavy kickbacks in development projects.

The ACE has already arrested former XEN C&W Rana Iqbal in the Bhatti corruption case. Both Iqbal and Bhatti have recorded their confessional statements in the court.

Ch Sarwar formally joins PML-Q

LAHORE (NNI): Former Punjab Governor Ch Muhammad Sarwar on Sunday announced his formal joining of Pakistan Muslim League-Q by urging all political parties to sit together for Pakistan's progress. Addressing the press conference, at a joining ceremony held at Muslim League House Lahore on Sunday, Chaudhry Sarwar said Chaudhry Shujaat invited him to join the Muslim League-Q and he took the step after consulting all his friends, everyone suggested he should go with Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain as he is a reliable person.

Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain always tried to connect the politicians [for the betterment of the country]. The Former Punjab Governor said despite the sinking conditions of the country, the politicians are not ready to sit together. We [all] have to sit together to get the country out of its problems and to prosper. I invite all the authorities to come together for the development of the country. Chaudhry Sarwar thanked PML-Q chief Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain

and Tariq Bashir Cheema for inviting him to join the party. He regretted that politicians are not ready to set aside their personal differences even in this critical time, the country passing through. He said he is joining PML-Q with the spirit of serving the country and the nation.

"I am willing to make this party more vibrant, most dynamic and strong political party that works for the construction and development of Pakistan," he remarked.

Pakistan Muslim League Quaid President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, federal minister Tariq Bashir Cheema, federal minister Salik Hussain and Ch Shafi, Ch Mohammad Sarwar, Begum Parveen Sarwar, Mrs. Sabahat, Ansar Farooq Ch, Ch Azhar Waraich, Muhammad Asif Bajwa, Mian Waheed Ahmed, Rashid Riaz and Tayyab Chand Mian Kashif Iqbal were also present on the occasion. While welcoming Chaudhry Mohammad Sarwar to the Muslim League, Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain said that the present and past politics of Ch

Sarwar is transparent. "He has a great affection for the people of Pakistan."

Ch Shujaat added that after Ch Sarwar's joining the party, PML-Q will not only be strengthened in Punjab but also in other provinces. "A good number of overseas Pakistanis will also join our party following Ch Sarwar."

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 due to his alleged 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.

Karachi police arrest PTI MPA Arsalan Taj

KARACHI (PPI): Karachi police on Sunday arrested Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) MPA and the general secretary of PTI Karachi chapter Arsalan Taj. According to a PTI spokesperson, Taj was taken into custody by plainclothes officials from his Gulshan-e-Iqbal residence.

Police also raided the residential property of Sindh MPA Raja Azhar at dawn and reportedly harassed his family, he said. The spokesperson further said Azhar was not present at the house at the time the Karachi police raided his house.

The PTI took to Twitter to share a video of the MPA being taken by the police.

The Twitter said Bilawal and Zardari should be ashamed of themselves for this gross act of fascism against sitting MPA, adding PPP has repeatedly showed their true colours.

Will the media now speak up!?" the party wrote on the microblogging site.

Nationwide anti-polio drive to kick-off today

ISLAMABAD (NNI): An anti-polio vaccination campaign to immunize more than 21 million children under the age of five will kick off in Sindh and Punjab on March 13 (tomorrow). The five-day vaccination campaign is being held in two phases due to the concurring activities of the seventh national census.

In the first phase, over 17.41 million children under the age of five in 13 districts of Punjab and 16 districts of Sindh and Islamabad will be vaccinated from March 13 to March 17. The second phase will be held from April 3 to 7 during the second week of Ramadan to vaccinate children in 12 districts of Balochistan and 26 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including the seven endemic districts in the southern region of the province.

Federal Minister for Health Abdul Qadir Patel urged parents and caregivers to ensure that their children receive the life-saving polio vaccine so that they remain protected from poliovirus, which has been found circulating in environmental samples.

"The presence of wild polio in the environment shows that the virus is circulating in our communities and posing a serious risk to our children," said Abdul Qadir Patel.

"With Ramadan and Eid around the corner, population movements can increase the risk of further spread, therefore, it is critical that parents and caregivers vaccinate their children in this and every campaign," said the Minister.

"We have specifically designed this March campaign to reach areas where population movement is not just frequent but also expected during Ramadan and Eid festival," said Dr Shahzad Baig, National Emergency Operations Center. "It is essential that we reach as many children as possible with the vaccine now to curb polio transmission," he added. No human case has been reported in Pakistan since September 2022 when a polio outbreak paralyzed 20 children – all of them in southern KP districts. Wild poliovirus was detected for the first time this year in sewage samples collected from two separate sites in Lahore in January.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Marriyum Aurangzeb addressing a press conference at Model Town.

Murad threatens to ‘reject’ digital census results if demands not met

KARACHI (NNI): Showing serious reservations over the ongoing digital census in the province, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Sunday made it clear that the provincial government would not accept results of the exercise if Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) demands were not met. Addressing an event in Karachi, Murad Ali Shah said census is more important for PPP and necessary than elections. The digital process is underway and he has also written a letter to the Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Reform Ahsan Iqbal.

"We want a census that no one has any objection to and our position is that the 2017 census should not be repeated, so that there are no reservations," he said.

"We had demanded that we be shown the list of enumerators," he said. Sindh CM requested the coalition government to not to create a situation where the census is not accepted. He also made it clear that no matter how much hue and cry was raised by other parties, Karachi's mayor would be from the PPP. CM Murad demanded the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to immediately hold elections for the seats of mayor and chairmen. He also asked the commission to announce the results of local bodies' elections, which had been withheld.

He said there was a grave economic crisis in the country. "But PTI Chairman Imran Khan is responsible

for that," he alleged. He threatened, "Do not create such a situation that the census (results) would not be accepted." Murad Ali Shah said that the census tablets showed map errors, and he was informed that some of the errors would be corrected later.

Sindh CM said that country is going through severe financial crisis and assemblies were dissolved on the request of one person. He said National Assembly elections will be held in October. On the other hand, although first phase of the census namely house census is complete, still houses in several localities of Karachi have not been counted so far.

PPP to bag slot of Mayor in Karachi: CM Murad: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has once again reiterated his stance that the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), being the single largest party that emerged in local bodies elections in Karachi, will take over the slot of the Mayor by setting aside the cries and claims of a 'self-claimant'. He made these remarks while talking to the media persons at the KMC Mega Sports event organized at Fuwara Chowk.

Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori, Minister Information Sharjeel Inam Memon, Advisor law Murtaza Wahab and others were also present on the occasion.

Replying to a question, The CM said it was loud and clear that PPP would bag the slot of Mayor in Karachi. "We [the PPP] are a majority

party and our candidate for the slot of mayor would easily be elected by the KMC council," he said and giving an oblique reference to Jamaat Islami's Candidate Naeem Rehman, added that his cries, claims, and allegations have no foundation and would prove to be the bubbles of hot air.

The CM urged the Election Commission of Pakistan to expedite the process of conducting the election on the local bodies' seats where it had been postponed and declare the results of the seats which have been challenged or withheld so that the final round of election for the seats of chairmen and mayors could be finalized. Talking about the census, Murad Ali Shah said that the objections his government and the party had raised during the census of 2017 have proved to be valid and genuine now.

He said that if the reservations raised by the people of the province were not addressed, his government would have no option but to withdraw the support it has extended to the Bureau of Statistics for conducting the ongoing census process. Murad Ali Shah said that he has urged the census authorities to share a copy of the data/enumeration of a family with the concerned family members. "We must know how many members of a family in a particular area have been counted so that cross-check can be made, and the claim can be filed in case of any inaccuracy," he said and added the provincial government must have access to the data of the province.

US Senator asks Pakistan to ensure freedom of expression

WASHINGTON (NNI): US Senator Brad Sherman on Sunday asked the Pakistani authorities to ensure freedom of expression.

In a video statement released after a telephonic conversation with PTI chairman and former prime minister Iman Khan, the US senator, who is a senior member of the Foreign Affairs Committee said PTI worker Zile-e-Shah was 'tortured' to death and his body was thrown on the road.

The gruesome murder should be investigated and the elements involved in it should be held accountable, the statement said.

The US Senator Brad Sherman noted that licence of a private television channel was revoked, speeches of the former prime minister were banned asked the Pakistani authorities to ensure and respect freedom of press and expression.

The US Congress is monitoring the situation in Pakistan very closely as we want to see a strong democratic Pakistan.

Earlier this month, a delegation of lawmakers from the United States (US) met Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan and discussed matters of mutual interest and bilateral issues.

The delegations comprise Speaker California Anthony Rendon, Eloise Reyes, Chairperson Appropriations Committee Chris Howden Spencer, Chief of Democratic Caucus Mike Gibson, Chairperson Small Business Wendy Carrillo and members of the IT committee.

The PTI shared a video message on Twitter today in which Sherman was standing alongside Dr Asif Mahmood, who is a Democratic candidate running against Young Kim in the state's 40th congressional district.

Sherman recalled that ties between the United States and Pakistan dated back to the early 1940s and over the years the two countries had worked together on several global and regional issues.

He said the US must support

democracy and human rights around the world and particularly in Pakistan. "It is not the role of the United States to involve itself in Pakistan's internal governmental matters with respect to Pakistan's constitutional and democratic process. But we must not shy away from raising our voices for human rights and democracy in Pakistan or anywhere else.

The US congressman was of the view that the government of Pakistan and every government should respect the right of people to speak, the right to organise, the right to demonstrate. "Everyone wanted to see a "calm, orderly, democratic and prosperous Pakistan where Pakistanis can have the freedom to have an open and political dialogue".

He raised alarm at the incident of "custodial torture" and "sexual abuse" of PTI leaders Shahbaz Gill and Azam Swati. The US congressman also talked about the "brutal deaths" of journalist Arshad Sharif and PTI worker Zille Shah.

Iran says it agrees prisoner swap with US, Washington denies claim

DUBAI (Reuters): Iran and the United States have reached an agreement to exchange prisoners, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian told state TV on Sunday, but Washington denied it as a "false" claim by Tehran. "Regarding the issue of prisoner swaps between Iran and the U.S. we have reached an agreement in the recent days and if everything goes well on the U.S. side, I think we will witness a prisoner exchange in a short period," Amirabdollahian said.

"On our part everything is ready, while the U.S. is currently working on the final technical coordination."

A White House official denied Amirabdollahian's statement about the prisoner swap, but added that the United States was committed to securing the release of Americans held in Iran.

"Claims by Iranian officials that we have reached a deal for the release of the U.S. citizens wrongfully held by Iran are false," a spokesperson for the White House National Security Council said.

A source briefed on the talks said the prisoner exchange is "closer than it has ever been," but one of the remaining sticking points is linked to \$7 billion in frozen

Iranian oil funds under U.S. sanctions in South Korea.

"The logistics of how these funds will be exchanged and how oversight will be provided are unresolved," said the source, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the negotiations.

The source added that Qatar and Switzerland have been involved in the prisoner exchange talks. Iranian sources told Reuters that two regional countries were involved in the indirect talks between Tehran and Washington.

One of several Americans held in Iran is Siamak Namazi, a businessman with dual U.S.-Iranian citizenship, who was sentenced in 2016 to 10 years in prison for spying and cooperating with the U.S. government.

Emad Sharghi, an Iranian American businessman first arrested in 2018 when he was working for a tech investment company, is also jailed in Iran, as is Iranian American environmentalist Morad Tahbaz, who also holds British citizenship.

For years, Tehran has sought the release of more than a dozen Iranians in the United States, including seven Iranian American dual nationals, two Iranians with permanent

U.S. residency and four Iranian citizens with no legal status in the United States.

The Islamic Republic, which is holding dozens of Iranian dual nationals and foreigners, has been accused by rights activists of arresting them to try to extract concessions from other countries. Iran has dismissed the charge.

Some Iranian media reported last week that Iran had reached a prisoner swap deal in exchange for the release of the \$7 billion in frozen Iranian oil funds.

In 2018, then-U.S. president Donald Trump ditched a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and six powers and reimposed sanctions that have crippled the Islamic Republic's economy.

The deal had imposed restrictions on Iran's nuclear activities in exchange for lifting international sanctions. In reaction to Washington's sanctions, Tehran has gradually violated curbs of the pact on its nuclear programme. Indirect talks between Tehran and U.S. President Joe Biden's administration on reviving the agreement have stalled since September. The deal imposed restrictions on Iran's nuclear activities in exchange for lifting international sanctions.