

PTI MPA remanded

KARACHI (PPI): An anti-terrorism court in Karachi approved two-day physical remand of PTI MPA Arsalan Taj in a case pertaining to an attack on the office of Keamari deputy commissioner. Police produced the PTI MPA before the court amid tight security and handed over him to police for a two-day physical remand after hearing the arguments of the parties.

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LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing a meeting to review Ramazan Package for Punjab.

LHC extends suspension of Pemra ban on Imran's speeches

LAHORE (PPI): The Lahore High Court Monday adjourned the hearing on a petition filed by PTI Chairman Imran Khan challenging the jurisdiction of PEMRA to issue a blanket prohibition order to all TV channels from broadcasting his speeches and statements till March 20.

A three-judge LHC bench headed by Chief Justice Muhammad Ameer Bhatti and comprising Justice Shams Mehmood Mirza and Justice Sajid Mehmood Sethi heard the petition on Monday. PTI Chief Imran Khan filed a plea against the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority's decision to bar all satellite TV channels from broadcasting his speeches and press talks.

A single-bench of LHC comprising Justice Shams Mehmood Mirza on Thursday suspended the PEMRA's ban on Imran's speeches and requested the court to form full bench to hear the case. During Monday's hearing, the court directed to bind together Imran's petition with other similar petitions.

It also directed the PEMRA's lawyers to give their arguments about the jurisdiction of the media regulatory body regarding issuing the prohibition order during next hearing. The court also extended its suspension order regarding PEMRA ban given in Imran and other cases. The PTI chief in his petition stated that PEMRA had issued the order "in excess of the jurisdiction vested in it and without having regard to the constitutional rights guaranteed under Articles 19 and 19-A of the Constitution". It further contended that the authority was not empowered to issue a blanket prohibition order, which appears to be "in violation of the principle of proportionality".

Dar directs implementation of austerity measures

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Highlighting the current economic situation in the country, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar here on Monday directed all the concerned quarters to expedite the implementation of austerity measures with sincerity and true spirit without any exception.

The minister was chairing the second meeting of monitoring Committee to oversee the implementation of austerity measures, according to press statement issued by finance ministry. Among others, the meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training, Rana Tanveer Hussain; Federal Minister for Law & Justice, Azam Nazeer Tarar; Advisor the PM on Kashmir Affairs & Gilgit-Baltistan, Qamar Zaman Kaira; SAPM on Finance, Tariq Bajwa; SAPM on Revenue, Tariq Mehmood Pasha; federal secretaries and senior officers. Earlier, the meeting reviewed the implementation of the decisions of its first meeting on the implementation of austerity measures. The committee was informed that implementation on austerity measures has already been started by the respective Ministries/Divisions.

Two KP cops martyred as census teams attacked

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Two police officials were martyred while five others received injuries in terrorist attacks on policemen deployed on census duty in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Tank and Lakki Marwat districts, police and Rescue-1122 confirmed on Monday.

Constable Khan Nawab was martyred while police constables Shah Nawaz and Aslam Khan, Levies official Bismillah, Frontier Constabulary official Abdullah and driver Eid Jan received bullet injuries in an armed attack from terrorists on a police van deployed for the security of census staff in Tank's Kot Azam area.

The injured officials retaliated and forced the



attackers to retreat who later escaped from the scene.

Meanwhile, a fresh contingent of police reached the spot, cordoned off the area and started a search operation. The martyr and injured were moved to District Headquarters Hospital Tank for medical treatment where their condition was stated as being stable.

In another attack in Lakki Marwat's Parwala village near Sadar police station, two terrorists targeted Constable Dil Jan deployed on census duty and martyred him on the spot. The terrorists managed to escape after the incident. A heavy police contingent reached the spot and surrounded the area and initiated a search operation.

Imran's non-bailable warrants issued

ISLAMABAD (APP): A lower court of Islamabad on Monday issued non-bailable arrest warrants of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan in the female judge threatening case and directed the police to produce the accused before it on March 29.

Senior Civil Judge Rana Mujahid Raheem also rejected Imran Khan's request for a one-time exemption from the appearance. The court in its verdict, which was first reserved and later announced, said it had granted several opportunities to Imran Khan for appearance in his personal capacity and every time he requested for exemption.

It cited that the Islamabad High Court (IHC) had also declared the non-appearance of the accused on the excuse of security as irrelevant and ordered him to appear before the court on March 13. The accused had again requested for exemption from attendance on Monday. The court observed that the exemption request from appearance in a personal capacity was inappropriate and due to which the court was issuing non-bailable arrest warrants of Imran Khan.

It said that it would also serve notices to respon-

dents on March 29, in the PTI chief's acquittal plea. At the outset of the hearing, the judge remarked that the court had summoned the accused to share copies of the case documents and he had to appear in person so that the trial could proceed.

Imran Khan's lawyer Intizar Panjutha argued that there were security threats to the former prime minister as he had already faced an attack in Wazirabad. Moreover he was also not completely fit to appear before the court. He said the officials deputed for his client's security had also been withdrawn and a petition had been filed before the Lahore High Court in that regard. He prayed to the court to grant a one-time exemption from attendance to Imran Khan.

Special Prosecutor Raja Rizwan Abbasi, on the occasion, opposed the exemption request of Imran Khan. Imran Khan's lawyer also filed an acquittal plea of his client. After hearing arguments, the court reserved its judgment and later issued non-bailable arrest warrants for the PTI chairman.

It may be mentioned that the Margalla Police Station Islamabad had registered a first information report against the PTI chief for his threatening remarks about Judge Zeba Chaudhry at a

public gathering at F-9 Park.

LHC suspends Imran's arrest warrant in ECP contempt case: The Lahore High Court (LHC) Rawalpindi Bench on Monday suspended the bailable arrest warrants of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan and Fawad Hussain Chaudhry in the ECP's contempt case.

The three-member LHC bench comprising Justice Chaudhry Abdul Aziz, Justice Sadaqat Ali Khan, and Justice Mirza Waqas Rauf, in its verdict, ordered the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to continue the proceedings within its jurisdiction as the LHC would not interfere in them. The court said any party could challenge the Election Commission's decision.

The ECP had issued bailable arrest warrants for the two PTI leaders for their "contemptuous" remarks against Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja. The four-member ECP bench comprising Nisar Ahmed Durrani, Shah Mohammad Jatoi, Babar Hasan Bharwana, and Justice (Retd) Ikram Ullah Khan had issued the order following the non-appearance of the PTI leaders in the case proceedings.

Toshakhana case: Court reserves verdict

ISLAMABAD (INP): A district and sessions court in the federal capital reserved a verdict on a petition filed by PTI Chairman Imran Khan seeking exemption from appearance in the Toshakhana case owing to security threats.

Additional Sessions Judge Zafar Iqbal reserved the verdict after hearing arguments from Mr Khan's lawyer, Khawaja Harris, on the petition. He would pronounce the verdict at 3:30pm. The court has summoned the PTI chief today for indictment in the case initiated on the complaint filed by the Election Commission of Pakistan.

PTI chief's lawyer Khawaja Harris told that his client could not appear in court due to security threats. He said Mr Khan

was not deliberately skipping the hearings, adding that it was on the record that he got injured when an assassination attempt was made on him last year.

He informed the judge that petitions had been filed in the Islamabad High Court and Lahore High Court for appearance of his client via video link. He also submitted another plea asking the court to declare the petition filed by the ECP seeking criminal proceedings against the PTI chief inadmissible. Khawaja Harris raised questions on the ECP complaint saying it was not filed by a competent authority. He said it was yet to see in which conditions the ECP could file a complaint. He opposed the indictment of Imran Khan in the case. Last week, the IHC

suspended the non-bailable arrest warrants issued against the former PM by Additional Sessions Judge Zafar Iqbal in the graft case related to the purchase and sale of gifts from the Toshakhana till March 13.

IHC chief justice Aamer Farooq accepted Khan's plea against judge's decision and directed the PTI chairman to ensure that he appears on March 13 before the trial court that had issued the arrest warrants.

The former prime minister has thrice skipped indictment hearings in the district and sessions court in the case initiated at the request of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for concealing the details of gifts he retained from the Toshakhana while in the power.

Altaf loses properties case to MQM-P in London

LONDON (Agencies): Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) founder has lost a case of six properties in London, worth £10 million, to MQM-Pakistan (MQM-P) after a legal battle at the United Kingdom (UK) High Court.

According to details, a London high court heard a case regarding the ownership of six properties, including the MQM secretariat, in London. Federal Minister Syed Aminul Haque represented the MQM-P in the UK court.

During the hearing Judge Clive Jones ruled that MQM founder had resigned from the party after his August 2016 speech. "In this regard, MQM-P is the true beneficiaries of the trusts that control London's properties," he added.

The judge noted that MQM-P is the real MQM and its members are the actual owners of London properties, which are currently under the control of Altaf Hussain. Federal Minister Aminul Haque filed the case. Party leader Nadeem Nusrat appeared in the London court to record his statement while Farooq Sattar recorded his words via video link.

The trial of the second part of the case will also begin, wherein the income from the properties will be heard. It is pertinent to mention here that MQM Founder was facing proceedings before the UK high court after MQM Pakistan petitioned to get control of seven London properties worth over £10 million belonging to the political party.

ECP urged to appoint DROs, ROS from judiciary

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has urged the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to appoint district returning officers (DROs) and returning officers (ROs) from the lower judiciary for the Punjab elections.

Shah Mahmood Qureshi in a letter requested the ECP to appoint DROs and ROs from the lower judiciary under Sections 50 and 51 of the Election Act 2017. The letter has been given reference of article 2018 of Pakistan in the letter sent to the ECP. The letter further states that the appointment of DROs and ROs from the judiciary is important for impartial elections.

Earlier, sources said that for Punjab by-polls after the dissolution of the assembly, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has decided to appoint returning officers (ROs) and deputy returning officers (DROs) from the judiciary. Sources said that the ECP decided to appoint ROs and DROs from the judiciary. The ECP requested the Supreme Court (SC) for the ordering the subordinate courts to provide the workforce for Punjab by-polls.

PML-N to field candidate in all constituencies

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) has decided to field its candidate in all constituencies for general elections in Punjab. The decision was made when PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif made a telephonic contact with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and party Chief Organiser Maryam Nawaz, says in media reports.

The contact between the top leadership of the party ruling in Centre comes as the ECP has issued a schedule for general elections in Punjab. It has announced that elections would be held on April 30 but clouds of uncertainty overhang the polls as the security officials, in a recent meeting, recommended the electoral body to delay the elections due to security concerns.

Ramazan package 15.8m Punjab households to get free wheat flour

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said that around 15.8 million households of Punjab province would be distributed wheat flour, free of charge during the Holy Month of Ramazan.

The prime minister, who chaired a meeting to review the Ramazan Package, said it was for the first time in country's history that a package for distribution of free wheat flour had been prepared. He said the wheat flour would be distributed from 25th of Sha'ban to 25th of Ramazan through 8,500 Utility Stores. Moreover, another 20,000 flour distribution points would also be set up to facilitate the people.

The prime minister directed the authorities concerned to ensure transparency in the distribution of free flour among the poor and instructed to use modern technology to curb theft during the process. Moreover, he said there would be no compromise on the quality of flour. He said the people would be able to check their eligibility for the free wheat flour through an SMS.

The prime minister said the federal government would also assist the other provinces for such a programme. The representative of the Punjab government gave a detailed briefing to the prime minister on the free flour distribution programme during the Holy Month of Ramazan. Caretake Punjab Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi, Advisor to PM Ahad Cheema and relevant senior officers attended the meeting.

Meanwhile, in a major step for relief of the lower and middle class, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif decided that the federal government would distribute wheat flour among one million residents of the

PM approves Rs 8,500 per 40kg as cotton support price

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In a major step to facilitate the cotton farmers, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday approved the support price of the commodity at Rs 8,500 per 40 kilogram. The prime minister directed to present the matter to the Economic Coordination Committee on priority. Chairing a meeting of the Agriculture Task Force, the prime minister urged the provinces to ensure the implementation of cotton price.

He termed cotton as the backbone of the country's textile sector and expressed confidence that the step would support the farmers. Highlighting the importance of cotton in earning foreign exchange, PM Shehbaz Sharif said the government would extend every possible assistance to the provinces in this regard. He mentioned that steps were being taken to boost per acre produce of cotton and directed the Ministry of National Food Security to finalise requisite proposals. The meeting was informed that last year, the cotton produce faced exponential reduction due to floods, heavy rains, shortage of canal irrigation water, and the crisis of fertilizer. This year, the overall cotton production has been estimated at 12.77 million bales, which is expected to witness significant growth as a result of the policies of the government. The meeting was attended by Federal Ministers Ishaq Dar, Syed Naveed Qamar, Tariq Bashir Cheema, Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Raza Naqvi, Adviser to PM Ahad Cheema, and relevant officials.

Capital, free of charge during Holy Month of Ramazan.

The prime minister, chairing a high-level meeting to discuss the measures for reducing the impact of inflation on the lower and middle-income classes, said the government was striving to minimise the difficulties faced by these income groups.

He also invited the provincial governments of Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan to become part of the scheme. The prime minister instructed the authorities concerned to take advantage of modern technology to ensure transparency in the distribution of free wheat flour.

The meeting was informed that as per the prime minister's directives, a programme for supply of free wheat flour in the outskirts of Islamabad during the Holy Month of

Ramazan was in final stage that would benefit around 150,000 households in the Federal Capital. The prime minister also, in principle, decided to provide petrol for the motorcycle and rickshaw owners on reduced rates as a programme for their relief had been designed.

Different proposals were presented for provision of low-cost petrol to motorcycle and rickshaw drivers. The prime minister directed the relevant officers to finalise and submit the programme as the government would take all possible steps to protect the low and middle-income groups against inflation.

Former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, Advisor to Prime Minister Ahad Cheema, State Minister for Petroleum Dr Musaddik Malik and senior officers attended the meeting.

Noor murder: IHC upholds Jaffer's death penalty

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday upheld the death sentence awarded to Zahir Jaffer in the Noor Mukadam murder case by the trial court and turned his life imprisonment into capital punishment.

A two-member bench of the divisional bench, comprising Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan, issued the verdict which was reserved December 21 on appeals filed against the punishment awarded to the convicts and acquittal of co-accused for the brutal murder of the 27-year-old woman. The court's decision for the double death sentence came following Jaffer's crime for Noor's rape and murder. He earlier received a 25-year imprisonment sentence with hard labour and a fine of Rs0.2 million after the rape was proven.

The IHC reserved a verdict on December 21 last year in the high-profile murder case in which the prime accused, Jaffer, was sentenced to death after a long-drawn-out trial of over four months. The trial court awarded a death sentence to Jaffer last February, while the two suspects Jan Muhammad and Muhammad Ifikhar — the gardener and security guard at Jaffer's house — were awarded 10 years of imprisonment each.

Other suspects in the case including Jaffer's parents, Zakir Jaffer and Ismat Adamjee, along with all employees of Therapy Works were acquitted by the court. The convict also received a 25-year imprisonment sentence with hard

labour and a fine of Rs0.2 million. Jaffer was also awarded a 10-year imprisonment sentence for the abduction and an additional one-year for keeping the victim in illegal confinement.

Before reserving its judgement in the case, the court remarked the lawyers of the parties were allowed to submit their additional arguments on the pleas within seven days. The verdict was reserved after hearing the arguments from parties in separate pleas against the death sentence handed out to Jaffer, and the acquittal of convicts and accused — filed by Noor's father.

Twenty-seven-year-old Noor was found dead at the residence of the prime suspect, Jaffer, in Islamabad's upscale Sector F-7/4 on July 20, 2021. The gruesome murder sent shockwaves across the country and sparked nationwide outrage and calls for justice for Noor which resulted in the successful trial and eventual conviction of her murderer. After a first information report (FIR) was registered under Section 302 (premeditated murder) of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) on behalf of Noor's father — former Pakistani ambassador Shaukat Ali Mukadam — Zahir was arrested with a murder weapon and bloodstained clothes from the crime scene on the day of the killing.

According to Noor's father, Zahir killed Noor with a sharp instrument and severed her head. As the police went deeper into investigations, Zahir's parents were found involved in concealing evidence

and assisting their son in the crime. Both Zahir's mother and father were arrested on July 25, 2021. However, the couple was later granted bail on separate occasions as they reached out to higher courts for release on bail.

Imran ready to spread political chaos: Sherry

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change, Senator Sherry Rehman on Monday said Imran Khan was ready to spread political chaos again today but not ready to answer in court.

In a pair of tweets, the federal minister criticized former prime minister Imran Khan for not appearing in the court. Senator, Sherry Rehman said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman was all right to lead the rally and had no security concerns either during the rally.

"But when called by the court, he (Imran Khan) ask for exemptions from attendance citing health and security reasons. Instead of adjourning the hearing and delaying the hearing, the court should take action against Ladley (blue-eyed) Khan (Imran Khan)," Sherry Rehman said. Imran Khan, she said, was playing with the lives of the PTI workers for his so-called politics. "Are those who take out bloody marches and rallies well-wishers of their workers and the country?" Sherry Rehman queried.



Awareness seminar at University of Education

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) conducted a cleanliness awareness seminar at the University of Education, here on Monday. The event was organised in connection with the ongoing 15-day special campaign 'Safai Nisf Eman'.

More than a hundred students and faculty members attended the seminar. LWMC Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Babar Sahib Din was chief guest at the event, while Principal Dr Samina Mazhar, Clean Green Society's Coordinator Madiha Saleem, LWMC management and members of the mobilisation team were also present. The CEO briefed students and faculty members on the role of LWMC in the city and how citizens could participate in maintaining cleanliness.

The audience were also briefed about the initiative taken by the LWMC i.e. Compost, Landfill etc.

10 killed, 1,273 injured in 1,196 accidents in Punjab

LAHORE (APP): At least 10 people were killed while 1,273 injured in 1,196 road traffic accidents in Punjab during last 24 hours.

Out of the total injured, 738 people were seriously injured who were shifted to different hospitals, whereas, 535 minor injured victims were treated at the incident site by rescue medical teams, said a spokesman for Rescue 1122 here on Monday.

The analysis showed that 581 drivers, 45 underage drivers, 139 pedestrians, and 563 passengers were among the victims of these road traffic crashes. The statistics showed that 269 accidents were reported in Lahore which affected 273 persons placing the provincial capital at top of the list followed by 81 in Multan with 88 victims and at third Faisalabad 78 with 77 victims. As many as, 996 motorcycles, 96 rickshaws, 134 cars, 26 vans, 14 buses, 35 trucks and 120 other vehicles and slow-moving carts were involved in the road traffic accidents.

IRSA releases 87,200 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 87,200 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 59,300 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1433.63 feet and was 35.63 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 23,000 cusecs while outflow as 43,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1101.85 feet, which was 51.85 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 20,100 cusecs and 28,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 36,900, 39,200, 31,900 and 6,900 cusecs respectively.

Murad launches anti-polio drive to cover 16 districts

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Monday launched a week-long anti-Polio campaign from 13th-19th March in 16 High-Risk districts of the province by administering drops to the children in a ceremony organized at CM House, here by the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) for Polio Eradication. The ceremony was attended by Minister Health Dr Azra Fazal Pechuho, Parliamentary Secretary on Health Qasim Soomro, Chief Secretary Sohail Rajput, Commissioner Karachi Iqbal Memon, Secretary Health Zulfiqar Shah, Aziz Memon, Coordinator EOPE Fayaz Abbasi, and others.

The CM said that an anti-polio drive was being launched in 16 high-risk districts of the province which include all seven districts of Karachi division, Larkana Division (all five districts), Sukkur division (Sukkur & Ghotki), Hyderabad division (Hyderabad full and Jamshoro Partial) with an aim to vaccinate more than 5.6 million children of under 5 years of age. The minister for health told the chief minister that more than 40 thousand polio workers would be deployed and around 2,270 security personnel would be deployed in Karachi.

Speaking on the occasion, the CM said that Pakistan was one of the two polio-endemic countries in the world along with Afghanistan. "Pakistan has reported 20 cases of Polio since April 2022, all cases belong to South KP while positive environmental samples have also been reported from all provinces," he said.

Mr Shah said that it was a great achievement for Sindh that no Polio cases had been reported over the last 33 months.

The last polio case was reported on 14th July 2020 from Jacobabad, the CM said, and added the environmental samples had been reported negative for more than one

and half years except one in August 2022 from Landhi district Malir.

"If we continue with the same momentum, we will further see significant results, but we must not get complacent and continue the hard work," Murad Shah said and added children could be saved from childhood diseases like polio through vaccination and we seek every stakeholder's help to raise awareness regarding this.

Murad Ali Shah said that the Pakistan Pediatric Association, Pakistan Islamic Medical Association, medical experts across the world, as well as prominent religious scholars in Pakistan, and across the region endorsed the oral anti-polio vaccine as the safest and most effective for not only preventing polio but also eradicating the environment. The chief minister said that polio had no cure but could be easily prevented by administering two polio drops during every campaign. He urged parents to cooperate with the polio teams reaching their doorsteps for vaccination and help save Pakistan's future by eradicating polio. Minister Health told the chief minister that more than 40 thousand polio workers will be deployed and around 2270 security personnel would be deployed in Karachi.

Minister Health Dr Azra said that the efforts of EOC the anti-polio program have resulted in more than a 60 percent reduction in refusals and missed children, but we must bring them down further, especially in Karachi. The Pakistan Pediatric Association, Pakistan Islamic Medical Association, medical experts worldwide, and prominent religious scholars in Pakistan and across the region endorse the anti-oral polio vaccine as the safest and most effective for not only preventing polio but also eradicating the environment. "Remember polio has no cure but can be easily prevented through two polio drops (the safest and most effective vaccination) during every campaign."

Punjab Culture Day to be celebrated at Alhamra Lahore

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Provincial Minister for Information and Culture Amir Mir said on Monday that the main events in connection with the Punjab Culture Day would be held at Alhamra Lahore on Tuesday, March 14, which would include cultural village, cultural show, cultural stalls, luddi, bhangra and much more.

In a statement, he said that this time the Punjab Culture Day would not remain limited to a single region or city. Celebrations would be held across Punjab, including Lahore, in which all colours of Punjab's culture would be highlighted.

Amir Mir said that women would also be adequately represented at these events. A special logo had been designed for the day which includes a sketch of a woman with a man. He said that Punjabi culture was the name of advancing the philanthropic traditions of Punjab, it

reflects the culture of unity, love and human respect, he added.

The minister said that the culture of Punjab was among the oldest cultures in the world in which there was love and respect whereas the culture of Pakistan was a bouquet of different cultures.

Punjab's culture, festivals, food, costumes and ancient places were filled with thousands of colors, he said and added that the blessed region had a history of thousands of years old civilization. The culture of Punjab was a blend of fascinating cultural colors and was rich in the love of great Sufis like Hazrat Ali Hajveri, Baba Fariduddin Ganj Shakar, Sultan Bahu, Balhe Shah and many others. He said that the culture of all the desert, plain and hilly areas of the province would be highlighted on the Punjab Cultural Day.

Cleanliness drive in Punjab to continue till March 19

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Minister for Local Government and Community Development (LG&CD) Ibrahim Murad said on Monday that the cleanliness campaign would continue throughout the province until March 19.

Talking to the media about the ongoing cleanliness campaign's progress to date, he said that the local government department had established garbage dumps in various cities, towns and villages throughout the province, with 10,000 tons of garbage being disposed of during eight days. In addition, 21,000 tons of solid waste had been removed from the sides of roads, he added. Cleanliness and renovation of 6,433 intersections and roundabouts had been completed in various areas and more than 1,947 bus stops have also been cleaned, he further said. About 35 kilometres of sewer lines have been cleared, and 3,225 manholes have been covered as well.

He said that cleanliness was the respon-

sibility of every citizen, and was equivalent to half of the faith. Keeping one's environment clean is not only the responsibility of a government agency but of every member of society. Cooperation from the public is essential for the success of the ongoing 15-day cleanliness campaign throughout the province, he added. Residents could register their complaints about cleanliness on helpline 1139 or share them on Facebook and Twitter. In addition, they can also tag my personal Twitter account, he informed.

During the campaign, 233 complaints were received, and 96 complaints have been resolved. The importance of cleanliness was also emphasized during sermons at nearly 2,000 mosques during the campaign. Additionally, 22600 awareness camps have also been set up at the level of union councils across the province, he said and concluded that an awareness campaign was also run to mobilise people in this campaign.



KARACHI: Special Assistant to CM Sindh, Faraz Lakhani hosted diner in the honour of Madam Faryal Talpur at his residence.

Siraj urges PDM to announce snap polls

KARACHI (NNI): Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) chief Sirajul Haq urged on Monday the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) to announce general elections in the country.

Addressing a press conference, Mr Haq assailed the government over the flood funds, claiming, "The rulers will spend the flood funds to run their electoral campaign." Taking a dig at the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Mr Haq said,

"The people of Karachi have not accepted the PPP's government."

He lamented the masses of Karachi were deprived of clean water and were not having the best of the facilities in the hospitals. Mr Haq urged the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to take its decisions without taking the pressure of the PDM.

Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) chief Sirajul Haq schooled the incumbent gov-

ernment, saying, "The rulers are busy plundering the money despite the country is facing severe economic hardships."

"The prime minister has announced Rs70 billion for the flood-stricken people. He asked the Chief Justice to take action in connection with where the flood funds are being spent," added Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) chief Sirajul Haq.

Senate parliamentary year report launched

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The report of the Senate of Pakistan for the parliamentary year 2022-2023 has been launched, says a press release issued here Monday.

The Report uploaded on Senate website encompasses Senate's achievements and progress over the past year. The report details how the Upper House continued working on improving our country's economic, social, and political landscape, playing a vital role at the forefront of policymaking, legislation, and oversight, discharging its constitutional duties with utmost

dedication and commitment.

It also takes into account of the significant legislative activity and meaningful contributions by the Senators, as well as passing of several important bills that addressed various social, economic, and political issues faced by the country. In addition to the legislative and oversight role, the Senate has also been a platform for important debates on issues that affect our nation.

During the year, the Senate held significant discussions on the state of education, health, and the environment in Pakistan. These debates led

to recommendations for improvements in these areas and contributed to shaping government policies. The Senate also dilates on the pivotal role in providing oversight to the government's policies and actions. The Senate Standing Committees conducted rigorous oversight of various ministries and departments, holding them accountable for their performance and spending. The Senate also took up important public interest issues such as the rise in prices of essential commodities, the state of public health, terrorism, and the condition of educational institutions.

'PTI playing tactics to avoid court cases'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-N, senior leader and Senator Dr Afnan Ullah Khan on Monday said that Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is playing tactics to avoid court cases.

Talking to a private television channel, he said Imran Khan is trying to escape from serious level criminal cases including Toshakhana and foreign funding. The PTI leader is wasting the time of the nation through long march, Jail Bhara Tehreek, and public meetings, he added. He said that PTI leader is creating unrest in the country. Commenting on political victimization, the Senator said that PML-N dislikes punishing the leaders of rival party. He said that PTT's last regime had filed number of false cases against the PML-N. He said that the leaders of PML-N had to face court cases due to Imran's negative politics.

Police rescue female child worker

LAHORE (APP): Under the directions of Inspector General Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar, protection centers of Punjab police were actively working to help and protect homeless and destitute children suffering from social neglect, transgenders and special persons with mental and physical disabilities.

In this regard, today the protection center established in Lahore has rescued Maryam, a 10-year-old home worker who was a victim of violence, from the clutches of her owners.

According to the police, 10-year-old Maryam was rescued from the DHA Phase VII home and handed over to her parents. The police took immediate action after receiving complaints about the violence of the owners on the girl and before handing her to parents, it was assured that the girl would not go to work again, the police spokesman said. The IG Punjab directed all the officers to continue taking vigorous measures for the deserving class and special people in all the districts through the platform of protection centers.

PFA stops production of two nimko units over adulteration, poor cleanliness

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) has stopped the production of two nimko manufacturing units during two different raids in Nishtar Town.

The authority imposed emergency prohibition orders (EPOs) over adulteration and failing to meet food safety standards. This was informed by PFA Director General Muddassir Riaz Malik here on Monday.

He said the team raided the units and caught the food business operators (FBOs) red-handed producing nimko with reused oil and adulterated spices. He said that the authority also witnessed an abundance of insects, a poor storage system, presence of rodents, open vents in the production area and poor handling practices of food items.

Apart from that, FBO also failed to present the record of product approval, oil changing and contract with the biodiesel company to the raiding team on the spot. He further said that FBOs were not following the labelling law of PFA.

Muddassir Malik said that the use of substandard and unhygienic ingredients in the preparation of any food product causes health issues for consumers. He added that it's compulsory for any food business operators to comply with the Punjab Pure Food Regulations to run the food business in the Punjab province.

He said the food authority would not compromise on the quality of food and take strict action against the violators as per law. The utmost priority of the Punjab Food Authority is to ensure an adulteration-free food supply in Punjab, he said.

Distribution of summer uniform shirts for policemen in progress

LAHORE (APP): On the instructions of Inspector General Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar, the distribution of summer uniform shirts (dark olive green T-shirts) to the police force in all the districts of the province was going on, which would be completed soon.

According to the details, 140000 t-shirts were purchased for the officials posted in all the districts of the province, out of which more than 100,000 uniforms were provided to the various districts while the process of delivery to the rest of the districts was going on.

On the occasion of summer, 31890 t-shirts had been purchased for Lahore police, 9494 for Rawalpindi police, 8477 for Faisalabad Police, 5961 for Gujranwala police, 5855 for Multan police and 3255 for Sheikhupura, 2,126 for Nankana Sahib, 1804 for Hafizabad, 1212 for Hafizabad, 4492 for Gujarat, 3149 for Sialkot, 1371 for Narawal, 1854 for Mandi Bahauddin, 2579 for Attock, 1381 for Chakwal, 1339 for Jhelum, 3344 for Sargodha, 1119 for Khushab, 1758 T-shirts for Mianwali, for Bhakkar 1318, 1601 for Chiniot, 1625 for Toba Tek Singh, 3037 for Jhang, 2080 for Sahiwal, 1300 for Pakpattan, 2869 for Okara,

1832 for Khanewal, 1376 for Lodhran, 2144 for Vehari, 3081 for Bahawalpur, 2201 for Bahawalnagar, 3568 for Rahimyar Khan, 2506 for DG Khan, 2197 for Rajanpur, 1371 for Layyah, 3200 for Muzaffargarh, 6441 for Telecommunication, 1344 for Motor Transport Wing, 146 for Central Police Office, 670 for PC Sahala. As many as, 553 for PTC Lahore, 293 for PTC Multan, 342 for PTS Ferozepur, 281 for PTS Sargodha while 194 olive green T-shirts were being purchased and distributed for PTS Rawalpindi.

CTP establishes anti encroachment camps

LAHORE (APP): The City Traffic Police on Monday set up temporary anti-encroachment camps at nine points in provincial capital to take action against encroachment at 24 thoroughfares.

Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Lahore Mustansar Feroze said that encroachment, wrong parking and other traffic rules' violations were the biggest problems in traffic jams, disrupting the ease of citizens and traffic flow. The anti encroachments points had been established at Allama Iqbal Road, Shalimar Link Road, Darughawala, Main Boulevard Multan Road, Chungi Anarsadhu and other important thoroughfares, the CTO added.



KARACHI: Officials from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics collect information from a resident at the second phase of the digital census.

TRIBAL AREA ELECTRIC SUPPLY COMPANY PESHAWAR CORRIGENDUM With reference to the TESCO Invitation to Bid published in newspapers Daily Jang (Islamabad), Daily Frontier Post (Peshawar) and Daily Karak Times (Karak) on 02/03/2023. The following amendments are notified for information of bidders. 1. The field of specialization codes "CE-10 & CE-11" may be read as CE-10 only. 2. Last date of submission of applications for tender documents is 10-03-2023 may be read as 16-03-2023. 3. Deadline for submission of bids may be read as : 20/03/2023 at 11:00AM 4. Opening of bids may be read as: 20/03/2023 at 11:30AM Other terms and conditions will remain the same. Executive Engineer TESCO (GSC) Division, Industrial State Hayat Abad Peshawar (091-9217401) DPR/2023/G-A

Appointment of Chief Engineer Irrigation: PHC orders Chief Secretary KP to submit reply

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Arshad Ali ordered Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa along with Secretary's Irrigation reply for failure in appointment of Engineer Wilayat Khan as Chief Engineer North despite approval of summary by Chief Minister till 17th March, on Monday.

The counsel Adnan Aman Advocate argued that petition is serving as Executive Engineer in Irrigation department at Mardan. He added that a summary has forwarded for appointment of Wilayat Khan as Chief Engineer North at Irrigation's department.

Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa approved the summary of appointment of Chief Engineer Wilayat Khan on 26th January following procedure while the petitioner is also seniority for nomination, the counsel added.

The other chief engineers are serving as Chief Engineer Merged District and Director General Jabba project approved on 26th January in the summary, the counsel informed. He added that provincial government is playing different delaying tactics in the appointment of petition.

The counsel argued Chief Minister is competent authority for approval while Establishment's department is obliged to issue notification but the Establishment didn't issue the notification which is unconstitutional.

The divisional bench of PHC comprising of Justice Ijaz Anwar and Syed Arshad Ali ordered Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Secretary's irrigation along with other respondents to submit reply while adjourned further hearing till 17th March.

Ministers to inaugurate tree plantation campaign

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Three caretaker ministers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Manzoor Khan Afridi, Shaf-ullah Khan and Bakht-nawaz Khan will inaugurate tree plantation campaign in Khyber district on Tuesday.

The three ministers will practically participate in the plantation drive at Dora mountain range in Tehsil Bara. They along with four hundred children from Alam Godar and other local schools and a large number of tribal elders will participate in the tree planting campaign on the mountain range of Dora.

The forest department and district administration have made special arrangements for this purpose.



PESHAWAR: European Union's Ambassador to Pakistan Dr. Riina Kionka meeting Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammed Azam Khan.

Irshad stresses for quality enhancement in education

F.P. Reprot

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa caretaker Minister for Higher Education and Law Justice (retired) Irshad Qaiser on Monday said that innovation and reform in higher education is the need of the hour as in the past our focus has been more on quantity, but in the current scenario, quality must be increased as well as quantity.

He expressed these views while speaking as a special guest at a ceremony to give certificates of appreciation to teachers who completed quality assurance training organized by the Higher Education Department (HED), Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in Khyber Medical University (KMU) Peshawar.

Secretary HED Muhammad Dawood Khan, Vice Chancellor KMU Prof. Dr. Ziaul Haq, Prof. Dr. Shafiqur Rehman, Asad Khan, Prof. Dr. Mehmoodul Hassan Butt and Imranullah Marwat, heads of various colleges and college teachers were also present on this occasion.

Justice (retired) Irshad Qaiser said that higher education has a fundamental role in the development of nations and giving importance to higher education in backward provinces like

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the need of the hour.

She said that along with objectivity in education, it is also very important to align education with our national needs.

She said that we should give the education to our new generation which is compatible with their ideological development as well as the market demand.

Justice (Retired) Irshad Qaiser said that HED has started the series of teacher training which will not only increase the professional skills of teachers but also improve the quality of education.

Speaking at the ceremony, Secretary HED Muhammad Dawood Khan said that the steps being taken at the department level to popularize the culture of quality in degrees have yielded excellent results.

He said that today's the purpose of the event is to encourage teachers who have completed quality teaching training under quality assurance.

He said that there will be no compromise on the quality of teachers and education and all the necessary measures will be taken on a sound basis.

VC Prof. Dr. Ziaul Haq said that the purpose of universities is not just to issue degrees, but to provide the best opportunities for edu-

cation and research to the young generation is the main purpose of these institutions.

He said that after the establishment of a large number of universities in the province, now is the time that we have to pay attention to the teaching and research quality of these universities.

He said that it is the need of the hour to align

education with our social problems and social needs. He said that after creating a quality enhancement cell in more than two hundred institutions affiliated to the university, KMU has now focused on training and improving the quality of these QECs, which not only improves the educational quality of the affiliated institutions.

Several projects started for uplift of inmates: IG



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Inspector General (IG) Prison Sadat Hassan said that several projects for education and socio-economic uplift of inmates to make them productive citizen across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on Monday.

This he said while inaugurating model meeting room with inmates within Hazara jail first of its kind across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and added that this facility will ensure human integrity within jails. IG

Prisons said that the facility is computerized which equipped with camera, intercom and bell along with other necessities.

ail superintendent Najam Abbasi briefed IG Sadat Hassan on current uplift projects for prisoners and available facilities including security measurements.

Inspector General also inspected that newly constructed bathrooms for inmates and inaugurated clothing wash space in the premises. He also granted certificates among prisoners completed their students

while DEO female Rehana Yasmin along with staff were also present.

IG also congratulated Hazara jail's administration for obtaining affiliation from TEVTA for Skill Development Complex within the prison.

He also inspected room established for virtual courts and equipment installed in the premises.

IG Prison Sadat Hassan also distributed certificates and shields among staff for best performance while ordered to focus rehabilitation of inmates.

Culture & Tourism Authority and Dost Welfare Foundation holds 'Pyar, Phool aur Aap'



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: To promote the unique culture of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and traditions of Pashtuns the festival titled "Pyar, Phool aur Aap" that was jointly

organized by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority and Dost Welfare Foundation in DHA arena ended amid atmosphere of excitement and enjoyment.

The festival that was

held to mark 30 years celebration of Dost Welfare Foundation was attended by famous artists including Yousaf Qureshi Bashir, Shahid Malang, Abdul Hanan, Wajih Farooqi and Jaam Boys.

A large number of people from different walks of life including families and youth attend the musical festival and enjoyed the thrilling performances presented by the artists. It was a jam-packed show.

Famous fashion designer and Sufi Poet Yousaf Bashir Qureshi recited his mystic poetry in the festival while other performers mesmerized the audience by their performances.

Audience present in the concluding ceremony gave ovation to Yousaf Bashir Qureshi who took public into an ambience of unbelievable feeling.

The tunes of Shahid Malang on traditional music instrument 'rabab' raised people to their toes and forced them to move and enjoy.

Wajih Farooqi and Abdul Hanan who performed in the festival also delivered a remarkable performance that was unexpected for the people those were present on the occasion.

The festival was aimed to promote traditional skills, inculcate awareness among youth generation about the indigenous heritage of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and above all, to create a spirit of peace and unity, strengthen and reinforce national harmony and integration through a cultural perspective.

They praised KPCTA for hosting such an festival to unite the youth, families and elders of KP, ensuring quality arrangement and providing a family-friendly environment for the visitors.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Labour, Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control Haji Manzoor Khan Afridi chairing a meeting.

Motorway Police recover arms

PESHAWAR (APP): The Motorway Police on Monday foiled an attempt of arms smuggling and seized cache of arms and ammunition from a car near Burhan Interchange on M-1.

According to Motorway Police, a suspected car was signaled to stop near Burhan but the car driver accelerated the vehicle in an attempt to escape. T

The car was intercepted at some distance while the driver made his escape well, leaving the car on the road. The Motorway Police, when inspected the vehicle, recovered a cache of arms including 81 pistols of 30 bore, 72 9MM pistols, one M-14 rifle, 2700 cartridges of SMG, 9700 cartridges of 30 bore and 165 magazines.

Motorway Police said the arms and ammunition were being smuggled to Punjab from Peshawar that could be used in subversive activities. A case was registered and a search for the escaped smuggler was initiated.

Minister directs to be alert against unregistered vehicles

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Labour, Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control Haji Manzoor Khan Afridi on Monday directed the Excise Department to focus on cent percent recovery and target achievement being its foremost obligation.

He said this while chairing a recoveries review meeting that was held at Directorate General Excise Peshawar. The meeting took stock of the performance of excise directors and officers as well as the achievements of the last eight months of the department.

In addition to Director General Excise Zafarul Islam Khattak, all Regional Directors and District Excise and Taxation Officers participated in the meeting. The performance of regional and district offices of Excise Department for the 8 months during the fiscal year 2022-23 were reviewed in detail on this occasion.

The caretaker minister directed to speed up the efforts to meet the recovery targets in a timely manner and to ensure the achievement of the overall, regional and district wise targets.

He also issued orders to make the ongoing campaign against unregistered vehicles, illegal number plates and token tax defaulting vehicles, more efficient and effective in the province.

On this occasion, he also reiterated his determination to take strict measures

against drugs and issued orders to all the concerned excise and Narcotics Control squads to be alert at all times against any kind of drug activity.

The minister said that in all government initiatives, public convenience and excellent treatment with the people should be the first priority. Hence, he said the officers and officials of the excise department should also behave politely with the public while dealing with the government and public affairs related to the department in a timely manner and the citizens should be treated in a nice manner.

Those who attended the meeting included Salahuddin Director Revenue, Engineer Dr. Eid Badshah Director Narcotics Control, Javed Khilji Director Malakand Region, Hayat Wazir Director South Region, Fawad Iqbal Director Mardan Region, Aftab Uddin Excise and Taxation Officer Three, Dawood Shah Excise and Taxation Officer One, Irshadullah Afridi Excise and Taxation Officer Abbottabad, Faisal Khurshed Barki ITO Two, Sahibzada Farman Excise and Taxation Officer Five, Saeed Gul Excise and Taxation Officer Six, Asghar Wazir Excise and Taxation Officer DI Khan, Khalid Khan Excise and Taxation Officer Khyber and Circle Officer Peshawar Region, Akbar Shah, Saifullah Inspector and Kamran Ali Azimi SI & In-charge Excise Media Cell.

Conference on sustainable utilization of natural resources 2023 (SUN-R) begins at NCEG UOP



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A two-days International Conference on Sustainable Utilization of Natural Resources (SUN-R) 2023 formally started here on Monday at National Centre of Excellence in Geology (NCEG), University of Peshawar.

The Conference is organized by the NCEG, University of Peshawar, in collaboration with National Centre of GIS & Space Applications (NCGSA), Institute of Space Technology, Islamabad.

Inaugurating the Conference, Pro Vice Chancellor, University of

Peshawar, Prof. Dr. Zahid Anwar remarked that through this event the academia will look into the viable solutions for bringing sustainability in utilization of natural resources. He hoped that this opportunity will provide a platform for building long lasting relationships between academia and other stakeholders, which will resolve issues of the wastage of natural resources.

Speaking on this occasion, Director NCEG and Convenor of the Conference, Dr. Liaquat Ali highlighted the research strengths of NCEG in all fields of earth sciences. He

informed that NCEG has 17 state of the art laboratories, providing maximum opportunities for research and development.

He went on saying that GIS & Space Applications in Geosciences (G-SAG) Lab has been established with cost of more than 95 million rupees to cover the domains of geohazards, geological applications, water resource dynamics and forest resource assessment.

The Director NCEG also informed that the Centre is publishing research Journal of Himalayan Earth Sciences since 1964.

In his address to the Conference, Chairman

NCGSA and Co-Convenor of the Conference, Dr. Najam Abbas Naqvi said that real development lies in advancement of human resources of the Country. He reiterated that his institute is ready to collaborate with academia and industry right from north to south in the country so that the data collected through satellite, GIS and space applications are utilized for the welfare of society.

Speaking at the inaugural session of the Conference, Additional Director, Pakistan Science Foundation Dr. Ghazala Yasmeen stressed the need for seeking appropriate solution to the issues of country through applied research.

Chairman, Pakistan Mineral Development Corporation and Director, General Geological Survey of Pakistan, Dr. Sajjad Ahmed urged that we should concentrate on applied research in minerals to ensure considerable growth of Gross Domestic products.

Addressing the Conference as a Chief Guest, Provincial Secretary, Minerals Development Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Amer Latif stressed that government is trying its level best to manage minerals in the province and control its pilferages. He said that efforts are underway to encourage mineral industry in the province to create direct and indirect employment opportunities for the people.

The Chief Organizer of the Seminar and Assistant Professor at NCEG, Dr. Muhammad Ali presented vote of thanks to the participants and sponsors, including Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL), Directorate of Soil & Water Conservation, Govt of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan Minerals Development Corporation (PMDC), COM-STECH, USAID and Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF), of the International Conference on Sustainable Utilization of Natural Resources 2023.



In brief

Brother, two nephews killed

JHELUM (PPI): A man killed his brother and two nephews over a land dispute in Malot area near Jhelum on Monday. According to police, the man, along with his associates, killed his brother and two nephews besides injuring one other. The cause behind the incident was stated to be a property dispute in Malot area near Jhelum. The bodies and injured were shifted to a local hospital for medico-legal formalities and treatment, respectively. The identity of the victims could not be ascertained till filing this news. Tense situation prevailed in the locality. The police have started probe into the incident. However, no arrest could be reported yet. Punjab IGP Dr Usman Anwar has taken the notice of the incident and sought a report from Rawalpindi RPO. He also ordered Jhelum DPO to constitute a special team and arrest the accused as soon as possible.

Malak visits Tehsil Wadh

F.P. Report

KHUZDAR: Governor Balochistan, Malak Abdul Wali Khan Kakar, arrived in Tehsil Wadh Monday as part of his first visit to District Khuzdar after assuming the charge of his office as the governor. According to a statement issued by the Governor's Secretariat, besides meeting local people of Tehsil Wadh, tribal elders, office-bearers and workers of Balochistan National Party (Mengal), Khuzdar, he would also offer Fateha at the mausoleum of late Sardar Attaullah Mengal, the first Chief Minister Balochistan and founder of Balochistan National Party. The Governor Balochistan would also acquaint himself of the problems of local people and prevailing situation of the far-flung district during his interaction with the people of the area.

Vacant post creates problems

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Insaf Teachers' Association (ITA), a teachers' wing of the Pakistan Tehreek Insaf district president Tahir Altaf Sarhadi has complained that the teachers' community in Lower Dir faces difficulty because the post of district education officer male has been vacant for several months. Talking to local journalists at the Timergara press club here on Monday Mr Sarhadi said the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government transferred the DEO from the district several months ago but his post was not filled so far. He said the DEO office was being run by a junior officer who worked as acting district education officer but he too lacked important financial and decisive powers. The ITA district president also pointed out that primary schools' teachers in Adenzai sub division were not being paid their salaries due to a tussle between two SDOs. He said the government and high ups of the education department should take notice of the matter and resolve it soon so that the teachers could get their salaries. He said that a competent education officer Miftahud Din, who belongs to Lower Dir, had been working as DEO in Chitral district, so he should be immediately transferred to Dir. The ITA district president warned to stage a protest rally in front of the deputy commissioner officer if both the demands were not accepted soon. He also demanded the provision of free textbooks to schools on time so that the new academic session could be started well on time.

Ruling elites blamed for political and economic instability

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Jamaat-i-Islami former provincial chief senator Mushtaq Ahmad Khan has said the present and past ruling elite class is solely responsible for the current political and economic crises in the country. He was addressing a 'donor conference' arranged by the JI Lower Dir chapter at Timergara as chief guest here the other day. People from all walks of life including doctors, lawyers, traders, social and political activists and area elders attended the event.

The JI district chief Izazul Mulk Afkari, general secretary Hafiz Yaqub ur Rehman and others also spoke on the occasion. The JI senator said the burden of Peshawar Electric Supply Company (Pesco) Rs 4000 billion circular debt was being put on the consumers that would further affect the purchasing power of the oppressed class. The JI parliamentarian said the western powers, while taking advantage of the deteriorating economic condition, would now try to abolish the Islamic constitution of the country, to put pressure on nuclear deterrence and bring changes in Pakistan's China and Russia policies. He said the economic situation was attached to the political instability in Pakistan while the inflation would further deteriorate. He said that neither the PDM nor the PTI were sincere with the nation as none of them cared about the poor masses.



The JI leader said the rulers had mortgaged the country with the International Monetary Fund. He said the record inflation and devaluation of Pakistani currency had snatched the right to live from the poor segment of society. He said the elite class including the serving and retired judges, generals and bureaucrats were getting hefty amount from the national kitty. He said that millions were being spent on fuel for the official vehicles each month.

Peace march: Hundreds of residents from all parts of Maidan on the call of Maidan Action Committee held a 'peace March' at Kumbhar demanding immediate arrest of the killers of a seven-year old child. Carrying white flags, banners and placards inscribed with slogans against terrorism and in favour of peace, the protesters marched on the road and gathered at the Chargano Chowk in Kumbhar bazaar. The action committee chairman and former MPA Saeed Gul, JI Maidan emir Haji Fazal Wahab, JI Youth wing district president Ateequr Rehman, Jehan Zada of the

PML-N, Amanullah Khan of the PPP, Ateeq Khan of the ANP, Jehan Anwar, Maidan traders' president Dr Shaikat Ali and others addressed the gathering.

The speakers said the residents of Maidan felt insecurity. They said that a 7-year old child Ayan Ali was brutally killed at Sar Dargai some 18 days ago but his killers were yet to be arrested. The speakers expressed concerns over the deteriorating law and order situation in Maidan and demanded the government and local administration to take solid measures for people's protection. They demanded the police officers to identify the killers of Ayan Ali and arrest them soon.

The speakers also demanded the imposition of a ban on outsider dealing in cell phone business, opening of the THQ hospital Lal Qila gate for the public and establishment of an online center of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) in Maidan. They warned to stage a protest sit-in in front of the deputy commissioner office if their demands were not met.

PTI's govt faced economy with disaster: Muqam

F.P. Report

PABBI: Advisor to Prime Minister for Culture, Lok Versa and Political Affairs and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Engineer Amir Muqam said that Imran Khan is responsible for anarchy in the country because he has destroyed national economy during his rule while placed baseless allegation on state's institutions following ousting from power, on Monday.

This he claimed while addressing oath taking ceremony of All Pakistan Clerk Association Central and Provincial Cabinets at Pabbi in which Caretaker Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rahmat Salam Khattak was



chief guest.

During the oath taking ceremony PMLN Information secretary Ikhtiyar Wali Khan, district chapter president Sahibzada Hamza Khan and Sajid Gurmani along with larger party activists and clerks were present. Engineer Amir Muqam took oath from APCA cabinet headed by central and provincial presidents Fazal Ghaffar Bacha and Wazir Zada respectively.

PML-N Khyber Pakhtunkhwa president

Amir Muqam claimed that government is struggling to clean-up mess spreaded during Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) led incompetent government which had faced national economy with disaster. He claimed that PML-N is the only party to overcome the economic problems of Pakistan. Advisor to Prime Minister claimed that clerk and administrative employees are backbone of every country while they can also ensure good governance in every sector of life.

Community-support snow jeep rally concluded

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: The residents of Kalam has arranged snow jeep rally and Kabaddi tournament with community-support at the royal ground which has attracted tourists from across the country.

According to details, native youths set an example organizing the festival on self-help at the cost of only 2 lakhs. The festival concluded with all the colours. More than 40 driv-

ers demonstrated their skills on unpaved tracks and trails.

In the jeep race, Fida Naseeb Kalami, a resident driver of Kalam, won the trophy by covering the five kilometer track in 1.44 minutes. Mohammad Saeed got the second position and Wazir Mohammad got the third position. Snow Kabaddi match was won by Kalam Young challengers by defeating Saidu Medical College.

On this occasion, apart from local people, tourists

from all over the country participated in the event and enjoyed the competitions.

On this occasion, the organizing committee in-charge Aziz Kalami and the local youth of Kalam said that we organized the festival under our help at a cost of around two lakhs, if the government provides resources to the local people, then the festival will be organized and could be held at low cost at venues of every tourist spots of Swat.

Action against baggers demand

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Large number of baggers, mostly non-local, have annoyed shopkeepers and customers here in Landi Kotal bazaar. The local traders and pedestrians said that a bulk of non-locals, frequently women and children, wandered in the streets of the bazaar and sought financial support.

The majority of the baggers were fake and professional ones and so trained to make sentimental cries and heart rendering appeals. They beg in the name of Allah and religion and utilize various tactics to attract the attention of the customers and to take some money from them.

Muhammad Bilal, a wholesale dealer of beverages, pulses, soap etc., said that more than the buyers, the baggers visited their business centers, asked for money; he said and added that the local administration should take strict action against the professional baggers. He demanded of the authorities that like cities in downtowns, they should curtain baggers in the Landi Kotal bazaar and let them do their business without anxiety.

One of the locals, Iqbal Shinwari, said that these days the numbers of baggers had increased in all parts of the bazaar. Even they were found in great numbers in main entries of Mosques asking for financial assistance on the pretext of buying medicines or food items, he remarked. He remarked that they encouraged many others to become baggers because it was an easy way of earning.

President Anjumane Tajeran, Landi Kotal bazaar Haji Jafer said that mostly baggers also do criminal activities as they steal things and cheat in shops and offices. They are found involved in child lifting also. He added that a written complaint would be filed with the local police station to take actions against them. The government should check this social evil with iron hands and the public should also co-operate with the authorities by discouraging begging to crush this evil practice, he maintained.

Reference arranged

F.P. Report

BUNER: A reference was held in memory five members of one family martyred during militancy in Buner at residence of Malak Muner Khan in Malakpur Kor the family was graced with certificate of courage, on Monday.

Awami National Party Khyber Pakhtunkhwa general secretary general Sardar Husain Babak was chief guest while ANP central leader Salim Khan Sawabiwal, Mehfoz Swati, Shams Buner, Mian Said Laiq Bacha, Istiqbal Khan, Dr. Taj Mohammad, Afsar Khan, Shukat Ali, Murad Khan and Malak Muner presented the certificate of courage to the bereaved kid and kin of the martyred.

On the occasion martyred family members, the ANP leaders, workers and villagers largely participated. ANP leaders Sardar Babak, Salim Khan, Shams Buner and Malak Muner presented tributes to the martyred and courage for their kid and kin.

NA Deputy Speaker inaugurates gas supply schemes

F.P. Report

BANNU: Deputy Speaker National Assembly Zahid Akram khan Durrani on Monday inaugurated a gas supply scheme for Azmat Khel and surrounding villages. Addressing an inauguration ceremony after unveiling a plaque, the deputy speaker said that Jamiat-Ulama-i-Islam(JUI-F) believed in practical measures and launching of Rs 163.89 million worth sui gas supply schemes a number of villages spoke high volumes of his party's sincerity, he added.

He said that villages would be covered in two phases including Shahbaz Azmat Khel, Mardi Khel, Sher Ali Baz Kallay, kotka

Sherin, Ghani Michen Khel, Azmat killi in first phase besides Degana, Kaba Khel, Akhundana, kot qalandar and kumbaran which would provided with with gas pipelines in second phase of the project. He said it was a matter of happiness that a long-standing demand of residents of those villages was going to be fulfilled, adding the scheme would be completed speedily so that area could be provided with the gas facility at the earliest.

He also criticised political opponents for doing politics for personal gains and lamented that underprivileged areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were neglected. He said issues of those areas would be taken up on

all forums so that they could be provided with all basic necessities of life including gas facilities.

Earlier, the deputy speaker was briefed by officials concerned of the Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited(SNGPL) about details of the schemes costing Rs163.89 million.

He was informed that the length of the distribution network was 46 kilometer with eight inch diameter 1.6km main pipeline was already laid and commissioned. Other local political workers and notables addressed the occasion and expressed thanks to Zahid Akram Durrani for fulfilling his promises made during election campaigns.

Lawyers role vital for provision of speedy justice

F.P. Report

LODHRAN: District and Session Judge (D&SJ) Lodhran Sadiq Mahmood said that importance of lawyers for speedy delivery of justice and meeting the demands of justice is an undisputed fact. Lawyers are playing the best role to bring justice to the people. Young lawyers should continue learning. They will play a role in solving the problems of the bar, Justice Sadiq Mahmood Khurram.

Lodhran bar advocates are always present to solve their problems, lawyers will try for four walls around the chamber, District and Sessions Judge Lodhran Tariq Mehmood Zargham. I would like to thank Justice Sadiq Mahmood Khurram and other guests for coming to Lodhran Bar Association and being a part of our event. Support for Lawyers Colony should be provided. Sardar Kamran Khan Advocate President Bar Association Lodhran.

According to the details, the introduction ceremony of the newly elected officials of the District Bar Association Lodhran was held at Bar Room Lodhran yesterday. Justice Sadiq Mahmood Khurram of Lahore High Court Bahawalpur Bench was the chief guest of the ceremony, while the guest of honor was District and Sessions Judge Lodhran Tariq Mahmood Zargham. On the arrival of Justice Sadiq Mahmood Khurram at the Judicial Complex, the District and Sessions Judge, Additional Sessions Judges, Senior Civil Judges, Civil Judges posted in Lodhran welcomed him warmly. Khushi inaugurated the tree planting campaign by planting saplings in the judicial complex. The distinguished guests came to the Bar Association. Lodhran Bar President Sardar Kamran Khan, Advocate General Secretary Malik Ijaz Saeed Sahoo, Advocate and lawyers gave him a grand welcome. The leaves of the flowers were showered.

The ceremony formally started with the recitation of the Holy Quran, President Bar Sardar Kamran Khan Advocate welcomed the distinguished guests on arrival at the ceremony. Speaking at the event, Chief Guest District and Sessions Judge Lodhran Tariq Mehmood Zargham said in his address that the lawyers of Lodhran



Bar are very professional and are always ready to provide immediate justice. I am always present for the solution of the problems.

Chief guest Justice Sadiq Mehmood Khurram of Lahore High Court said in his address that the importance of lawyer in the justice system is unquestionable, professional training should be the goal in our system, it is not that the court should investigate the cases by itself, immediately. The judiciary depends on the ability of the bar to deliver justice, he said that lawyers should play their role to serve the suffering humanity and deliver speedy justice. There are a large number of young lawyers in the Lodhran Bar and the process of learning from senior lawyers is going on. One should keep and prepare oneself according to the requirements of modern times and help the distressed members of the society. In the age of globalization, modern technology has been started to be used and all the capabilities should be used to provide speedy justice. Cars are being brought.

Lawyers should lead the way and appear in the courts with full preparation. Inshallah they will make up for the lack of books and will play a role in solving the problems of Lodhran Bar. In the same way, the hearing of civil cases is being done quickly so that justice can be provided to the justice seekers in the shortest possible time. Additional Session Judges appointed in Lodhran, Muhammad Altaf, Yasir Arafat, Muhammad Asaf Sial, Additional Session Judge Naveed Bari appointed in Kahrur Pakka, Additional Session Judge appointed in Dinapur, Senior Civil Judges, including Admin Senior Civil Judge Muhammad Ikram, Ranjha, Family Division Ms. Afaf Aslam, Criminal Division Qazi Waqar Rahmat, Civil Judges Naveed Abbas, Shahwar Amin Wagha, Saqib Rasool Tatar, and

Chaudhary Kaleemullah Bhatti, Vice Chairman Punjab Bar Council Syed Jafar Tayyar Bukhari Advocate, President High Court Bar Assoc. Association Multan and Bahawalpur Presidents, General Secretary, Maher Haseeb Qadir Advocate, Muhammad Tahir Jatui Advocate, Member Punjab Bar Council Rana Muhammad Iqbal Noon, Presidents and General Secretaries of Kahrur Pakka and Duniyapur Bars including Lodhran Bar lawyers, women lawyers. A large number of people participated while the duties of the stage secretary were performed by General Secretary District Bar Malik Ijaz Saeed Sahu. Finally, the District Bar Association will pray for the elevation of the ranks of senior lawyers Mian Saeed Ali Bhatti Advocate, and Mian Mukhtiar Sameja Advocate, who passed away recently.

KBA elects new cabinet

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Kohat Bar Association (KBA) elected new cabinet unanimously for 2023-24 including Dr. Mir Ajam Khattak and Qasim Bukhari as president and general secretary respectively, on Monday.

According to details, KBA elected new cabinet without contesting election. The newly elected cabinet for welfare and redressal of lawyer's problems.

The new cabinet comprising of Ishtiaq-ur-Rehman as vice president, Adnan Sajid as Joint Secretary, Malik Bilal as Library's secretary, Mahpara Farid as finance secretary and Ilyas Ali Shah as Information's secretary. KBA also elected Shahab Khan and Basit Hafeez Advocates as Executive Committee members.

The next threat

state officials while bypassing the parliament; proved as a boast for the defeated group. Which prompted the TTP fighters to deliberate for the restoration of its former position in the region. The move was not less than a recognition to their political objectives and legitimacy. Analyzing the latest developments, we can say that two events contributed to the current situation simultaneously. First is the fall of Kabul into Taliban's hand and second is the unilateral and abortive move of some state official to offer the TTP a negotiation table.

In the present de facto Taliban regime in Afghanistan the members of TTP enjoy a privileged status, even some sources confirm their presence on local key administrative positions. Their ideological affiliations, ethnic association and long-standing coalition during the War on Terror with the Afghan Taliban,

are the most inalienable features of TTP and Afghan Taliban. The latest developments reveal the wrong calculations of our policymakers regarding Afghan Taliban; that they would be ultimate friends of a tricky neighbor.

The internal divisions in Afghan Taliban constitute another potential hurdle for Pakistan to combat TTP as the hardliners Kandahar Faction and the Haqqani Network possess different of opinion regarding the matter. But the second option proved very fatal as the government tried to shift its counter-terrorism policy from a long perusing military action to a swift diplomatic course with the banned organization. When actions are designed on a thorough and well-deliberated strategy then the occurrence of such lapses are made impossible. But unfortunately, our security policies are impaired by the lack of

pragmatic calculations. It is a heavy irony with Pakistan that its security policies are formulating on a pattern to secure narrow institutional interests at the cost of national interests.

The recent attacks on government and civilian targets suggest that TTP is more organized, well-resourced and well-established. As compared to the local hybrid police which were installed from the demoralized Khasadar Force into Khyber Pukhtunkhwa police by the PTI government. Which are now assigned with charge of merged districts. It was also a serious lapse in this regard. This step was taken in haste without thorough deliberation, ignoring the required criteria for the recruitment of police personnels.

Generally, the task of containing terrorism falls in the domain of local administration; but they are facing severe challenges in tackling the problem of terrorism. Police personnel are not well-equipped and trained in a manner to combat with the men-

ace of terrorist onslaughts. There is a wide chasm between the police and citizens which limits the chances of coordination among these important stakeholders on the matter of mutual concern. It is high time to devise a comprehensive program to train the police force of the newly merged districts and establish a community based force to effectively combat the menace of terrorism. The state needs to adopt a bottom-up approach instead of a top-bottom in countering terrorism. Every action against terrorists ought to be devised in coordination with the local community. It is imperative for the state to win public support first and then move for action against terrorists. The effectiveness of any action against terrorism is determine by the endorsement of local community and social activists of the region. The next threat of terrorism needs to be counter wisely, the war-torn region and its racked inhabitants are not in a position to afford another imposed war.



Two decades after Saddam’s fall, Iraqis still haunted by disappearances

BAGHDAD (Reuters): When he first heard that US troops had toppled Saddam Hussein, Iraqi engineer Hazem Mohammed thought he would finally be able to find his brother, who had been shot dead and dumped in a mass grave after a failed uprising against Saddam's rule in 1991. It wasn't just Mohammed's hopes that were raised after the US-led invasion in March 2003. Relatives of tens of thousands of people who were killed or disappeared under the dictator believed they would soon find out the fate of lost loved ones.

Twenty years later, Mohammed, who was hit by two bullets but survived the mass killing in which his brother perished, and countless other Iraqis are still waiting for answers. Dozens of mass graves were found, testimony to atrocities committed under Saddam's Baath Party. But work to identify victims of historic killings has been slow and partial in the chaos and conflict engulfing Iraq in the past two decades. "When I saw how mass graves were being opened, randomly, I decided to keep the location of the grave secret until a stronger state would be in place," Mohammed said.

As exhumations dragged on, more atrocities were committed in sectarian conflict and amid the rise and fall of armed groups, such as Al Qaeda and Islamic State militants, as well as Shi'ite Muslim militias. Today Iraq has one of the highest numbers of missing persons in the world, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross, which says estimates of the total range up to hundreds of thousands of people. It was another 10 years before Mohammed led a team of experts to the site where he, his brother and others were rounded up as Saddam's troops crushed a mainly Shi'ite uprising at the end of the 1991 Gulf War. At the time, they were forced to their knees next to trenches summarily dug in the outskirts of the southern city of Najaf, and shot. Tens of thousands of Iraqis were killed by Saddam's forces during his rule.

The remains of 46 people were exhumed from the site, now surrounded by farms, but Mohammed's brother was never found. He believes more bodies are still there, unaccounted for. "A country that is not dealing with its past will not be able to deal with its present or future," he said. "At the same time, I sometimes forgive the government. They have so many ... victims to deal with." According to the Martyrs Foundation - a governmental body involved in identifying



victims and compensating their relatives - over 260 mass graves have been unearthed so far, with dozens still closed. But resources are limited for such a huge task. In a section of the ministry of health in Baghdad, a team of about 100 people processes remains from mass graves, one site at a time.

The department head Yasmine Siddiq said they have identified and matched DNA samples of around 2,000 individuals, out of about 4,500 exhumed bodies. Lining the shelves of her storage room were remains of victims from the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war - skulls, cutlery, a watch, and other items that might help identify victims. The forensic efforts are complemented by archivists studying stacks of documents from Saddam's Baath Party, which was disbanded after his overthrow, for the names of missing persons yet to be identified. Mehdi Ibrahim, an official at the Martyrs Foundation, said that each week his team identifies about 200 new victims. The names are published on social media. So far the foundation has processed about half of the 1 million documents in its possession, just a fraction of Iraq's scattered archive. Most Baath Party-era documents are held by the government, while others were destroyed after the invasion.

Some atrocities are more quickly examined than others. According to Siddiq, massacres committed by Islamic State militants, who seized much of northern Iraq in 2014 and held it for three violent years, have been prioritised. The highest identi-

cation rate for victims was achieved for an incident known as the Camp Speicher massacre by Islamic State, a mass shooting of army recruits. "Most families declared their missing ones and most bodies had been retrieved," Siddiq said. The Martyrs Foundation says the killings resulted in about 2,000 martyrs, including 1,200 killed and 757 who remain missing.

In Sinjar, where Islamic State committed what UN investigators described as genocide against Iraq's Yazidi minority, about 600 victims have been reburied, with some 150 identified. Other disappearances remain unexplored. In Saqlawiya, a rural area near the Sunni town of Falluja, families are losing hope of discovering the fate of more than 600 men captured when the area was retaken from Islamic State by security forces. Shi'ite militiamen seeking vengeance against Islamic State rounded up Sunnis from the town of Saqlawiya, according to witnesses interviewed by Reuters in 2016, UN workers, Iraqi officials and Human Rights Watch. From her living room in Saqlawiya, furnished with just a carpet and a thin mattress, Ikhlal Talal wept as she scrolled through pictures of her husband and 13 other male relatives who disappeared in early June, 2016. Talal did not want to describe the men in uniform who took them away, fearing retribution. But she and other women from the neighbourhood have searched for their husbands, fathers and sons for years, travelling across Iraq and contacting prisons and hospitals - all in vain.

Chicago firefighter's two kids die after fire

CHICAGO (AP): A Chicago firefighter's two remaining children have died days after a fire at the family's Northwest Side home also fatally injured his wife and 7-year-old son, authorities said. The Cook County medical examiner's office said firefighter Walter Stewart's 2-year-old son, Emory Day-Stewart, and his 9-year-old daughter, Autumn Day-Stewart, died, respectively, from injuries related to smoke inhalation, the Chicago Sun-Times reported.

Stewart's wife, Summer Day-Stewart, 36, died, and their son, Ezra Stewart, 7, died. She and the three children were rescued from the family's burning home in the Montclare neighborhood and rushed to hospitals with smoke inhalation, officials said. Stewart was not part of the fire crew that responded to the fire, but when he heard the address of the fire over radio dispatch, he went to the scene and gave his wife CPR. Chicago Fire Department spokesperson Larry Langford said.

The fire began in the home's kitchen but its cause remained under investigation, he said. The Chicago Fire Department is raising money to help Stewart's family face the "unspeakable tragedy" through its charity, Ignite the Spirit.

China to boost domestic strategic resources bases

BEIJING (Reuters): China will consolidate and add to its domestic strategic resources bases this year to achieve a rapid buildup in mineral resources, natural resources minister Wang Guanghua said, according to state media. "We will launch a new round of strategic action for mineral prospecting," Wang told reporters on the sidelines of the annual parliamentary meeting.

"The focus is to strengthen domestic exploration and development around scarce and strategically important mineral resources," he said. China will also promote the "nationalization" of high-tech mineral equipment to avoid being caught in any stranglehold regarding technology and equipment, he said. Chinese authorities in 2021 rolled out a five-year action plan to increase exploration for strategic mineral resources such as oil, natural gas, copper, chromium, tungsten, rare earths and crystalline graphite, to ensure the security of the country's resources and energy. The Ministry of Natural Resources will roll out follow-up measures to attract social capital into mineral exploration and development, Wang said.

Zelenskiy honors Ukraine troop

KYIV (Reuters): President Volodymyr Zelenskiy bestowed posthumously the honour of "Hero of Ukraine" on a soldier who defiantly said "Glory to Ukraine" before being seen to be shot dead in a video posted on social media. Ukraine's military, on its Telegram channel, had earlier confirmed the identity of the soldier as Olesandr Matsievskiy, a sniper with a unit from the northern region of Chernihiv.

"Today, I have bestowed the title of Hero of Ukraine on soldier Oleskandr Matsievskiy," Zelenskiy said in his nightly video address. "A man that all Ukrainians will know. A man who will be forever remembered. For his bravery, for his confidence in Ukraine and for his 'Glory to Ukraine'." The apparently unarmed man in a uniform with a Ukrainian flag insignia on his arm was shown in a video smoking a cigarette and saying "Slava Ukraini" - or "Glory to Ukraine" - before apparently being shot dead. A voice off camera then says, in Russian, "Die, bitch." Germany's Bild newspaper said its reporter spoke to Matsievskiy's mother, Paraska, who was quoted as saying: "He stood there unarmed, but proud to be Ukrainian. He was always incredibly brave."

More than 1,300 migrants brought ashore in Italy

ROME (Reuters): More than 1,300 migrants have been rescued in three separate operations off the southern tip of Italy, the coastguard said, two weeks after at least 74 people died when their boat hit rocks near the coast.

Growing numbers of migrant arrivals have piled pressure on Italy's conservative government, which took office last October promising to reduce the flow only to see a sharp increase insuch landings this year from both North Africa and Turkey. The coastguard said one of its vessels had taken 500 migrants off one boat more than 100 miles (160 km) out to sea, and subsequently took them to the city of Reggio Calabria.

A further 379 migrants were removed from a separate vessel in the same vicinity and will be brought to land shortly. "The rescues (were) complex due to the boats being overloaded with migrants and the unfavourable sea conditions," the coastguard said in a statement. Another packed fishing boat carrying 487 migrants was escorted into the Calabrian

port of Crotona, lashed to a tug to help give it stability. Local officials said a further 200 people had been picked up off the coast of Sicily and would be ferried to Catania later in the day, while the airforce was flying migrants out of a packed reception centre on the island of Lampedusa.

More than 17,000 people have reached Italy so far this year, including around 4,000 this week, compared to 6,000 in the first 2-1/2 months of 2022. Hundreds have also died trying to cross the Mediterranean and reach Europe. The body of a young girl was recovered close to where a migrant boat broke apart on Feb. 26, bringing the death toll from that one disaster to 74. Seventy-nine people survived the shipwreck, but around 30 are still missing, presumed dead. In all, the United Nations estimates 300 migrants have died in the central Mediterranean so far this year.

Prosecutors are investigating whether Italian authorities should have done more to prevent the disaster. Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has rejected

the suggestion and looked to pin the blame entirely on human traffickers. Her cabinet introduced tougher jail terms for people smugglers and promised to open up more channels for legal migration. Late last year, it cracked down on charity rescue boats, accusing them of acting as a taxi service for migrants. The charities denied this was the case. The measure has led to a sharp reduction in the number of rescue ships patrolling the Mediterranean, without apparently dissuading migrants from putting to sea.

Enrico Borghi, a senator with the centre-left Democratic Party, accused the government of bungling the crisis. "(It) thinks it can solve such a profound problem through media posturing, the criminal code and fake efforts at appearing tough," he wrote on Twitter. "The result: landings have tripled with the Meloni government." Meloni herself issued a statement, saying the only solution lay with a joint European effort to strengthen the EU's borders and enhance cooperation with expulsions.

Masks stay put in Japan as request to wear them ends

TOKYO (AP): Japan on Monday dropped its request for people to wear masks after three years, but hardly anything changed in the country that has had an extremely high regard for their effectiveness at anti-virus protection. Most commuters exiting Tokyo's main train station in the morning were wearing masks as they headed to work. So were people on the streets. During a televised budget committee meeting at parliament, some lawmakers still wore masks, though Prime Minister Fumio Kishida wasn't wearing one when he arrived at his office Monday.

Baseball fans who gathered outside of the Tokyo Dome hours before Monday's games Australia-Czech Republic and China-South Korea also had on masks. They'll also be able to cheer without their masks as that ban was lifted, too. Dropping the mask-wearing

request is one of the last steps Japan's government is taking in easing COVID-19 rules in public places as it tries to expand business and other activity. "From today, mask wearing is left up to individual judgment. We are not forcing anyone to wear it or take it off," Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told reporters as he arrived at his office. "I think there will be more occasions when I will take my mask off."

Kishida, however, asked people to use masks around vulnerable people to protect them from risks of infection. In a country where the pressure for conformity is extremely strong, many people were expected to keep wearing them for now. The mask request was dropped for outdoors last summer, yet many have kept wearing them. Restaurants, stores and airlines removed signs asking customers to wear masks. But many of their employ-

ees are keeping their masks on to show consideration for customers and others who need protection. A popular chain Ramen Jiro tweeted Monday that mask-wearing is up to customers but employees will continue wearing them for the time being. It also asked customers to cooperate in hygiene measures, such as not talking loudly.

Spectators at baseball and soccer games will be no longer be asked to wear masks and will be allowed to cheer without masks. Fukuoka Softbank Hawks announced that visitors and employees at their stadium can use their own judgment on masks beginning Monday. Japan last fall stopped requiring COVID-19 tests for entrants who had at least three shots - part of the country's careful easing of measures after virtually closing its borders to foreign tourists for about two years.

Nicaragua closes Vatican embassy in Managua

VATICAN CITY (Reuters): Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega has ordered the closure of the Vatican Embassy in Managua and that of the Nicaraguan Embassy to the Vatican in Rome, a senior Vatican source said. Nicaragua signalled that the move, which came a few days after Pope Francis compared the Nicaraguan government to a dictatorship, was "a suspension" of diplomatic relations.

The Vatican source said that while the closures do not automatically mean a total break of relations between Managua and the Holy See, they are serious steps towards that possibility. Ortega's administration has been increasingly isolated internationally since he began cracking down heavily on dissent following street protests that erupted in 2018. Ortega called the protests an attempted coup against his government. Bishop

Rolando Alvarez, a vocal critic of Ortega, was sentenced to more than 26 years in prison in Nicaragua last month on charges that included treason, undermining national integrity and spreading false news.

Alvarez was convicted after he refused to leave the country along with 200 political prisoners released by Ortega's government and sent to the United States. Alvarez refused to board the plane and was stripped of his citizenship. In an interview published last week with Latin American online news outlet Infobae ahead of Monday's 10th anniversary of his pontificate, the pope pointed to Alvarez's imprisonment and likened what was happening in Nicaragua to the "1917 Communist dictatorship or that of Hitler in 1935". Staff in both embassies had been down to barebones for years with only a chargé

d'affaires for the Vatican in Managua and almost no one for Nicaragua in Rome.

The relationship between the Nicaraguan Catholic Church and the government has been severely strained since the crackdown on the anti-government protests in 2018, when the Church acted as a mediator between both sides. The Church had called for justice for more than 360 people who died during the unrest. Nicaraguan Bishop Silvio Baez, also a critic of the government, went into exile in 2019. A year ago, the Vatican protested to Nicaragua over the effective expulsion of its ambassador, saying the unilateral action was unjustified and in c o m p r e h e n s i b l e . Archbishop Waldemar Sommertag, who had been critical of Nicaragua's slide away from democracy, had to leave the country suddenly after the government withdrew its approval of the envoy.

Hawaii’s Kilauea not erupting, reversing warning: Scientists

HONOLULU (AP): Hawaii's second-largest volcano is not erupting, scientists said in an update to a previous warning. The US Geological Survey said in a statement that seismic activity beneath the summit of Kilauea "has returned to background levels, ground deformation has stabilized, and no lava has been observed at the surface."

The statement cautioned "another intrusion or resumption may occur in the near future with little or no warning." The agency

previously said a shallow earthquake storm signaled "resumption of eruptive activity at Kilauea summit is likely imminent." Scientists said that lava had stopped flowing after 61 days of volcanic activity. Kilauea, one of the world's most active volcanoes, erupted from September 2021 to last December. A 2018 Kilauea eruption destroyed more than 700 residences.

For about two weeks last December, Hawaii's biggest volcano, Mauna Loa, also was erupting on

Hawaii's Big Island. The dual eruptions of Hawaii's biggest volcanoes provided a temporary boost to tourism during the slow season. Volcanic eruptions have deep spiritual and cultural significance for Native Hawaiians. When Mauna Loa started erupting in November after lying dormant for 38 years, many Hawaiians took part in cultural traditions such as singing, chanting and dancing to honor Pele, the deity of volcanoes and fire, and leaving offerings known as "hookupu."

Iraqi PM promises action to tackle crippling climate change

BAGHDAD (AP): Iraq's prime minister promised sweeping measures to tackle climate change - which has affected millions across the country - including plans to meet a third of the country's electricity demands using renewable energy. Climate change for years has compounded the woes of the troubled country. Droughts and increased water salinity have destroyed crops, animals and farms and dried up entire bodies of water. Hospitals have faced waves of patients with respiratory illnesses caused by rampant sandstorms.

Climate change has also played a role in Iraq's ongoing struggle to combat cholera. "More than seven million citizens have been affected in Iraq ... and hundreds of thousands have been displaced because they lost their livelihoods that rely on agriculture and hunting," Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani said in a speech to open the two-day Iraq Climate Conference in Basra. Al-Sudani said the Iraqi government is working on a national plan to tackle climate change that consists of a series of measures it hopes to take by 2030. The plan includes building renewable energy plants, modernizing inefficient and outdated irrigation techniques, reducing carbon emissions, combating desertification, and protecting the country's biodiversity.

Among the projects is a massive afforestation initiative, where Iraq would plant 5 million trees across the country. Iraq also hopes to provide one-third of the country's electricity demand through renewable energy instead of fossil fuel. Al-Sudani said he is hoping to organize a regional conference on climate change in Baghdad in the near future as well. Developments in neighboring countries have also compounded Iraq's water woes. Iraq relies on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers for nearly all of its water needs. They flow into the country from Turkey and Iran.

Cyclone displaces hundreds in Mozambique

JOHANNESBURG (Reuters): Cyclone Freddy displaced hundreds of people as it battered central Mozambique after making landfall for a second time in a month, breaking records for the duration and strength of tropical storms in the southern hemisphere. Communications and electricity supply in the storm area have been cut so the extent of the damage and number of casualties were not clear. At least one person was killed in Quelimane when his house collapsed as the storm swept onshore.

More than 171,000 people were affected after the cycloneswept through southern Mozambique last month, killing 27 people in Mozambique and Madagascar. More than half a million are at risk of being affected in Mozambique this time, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). State TV reported that hundreds were displaced across the storm's path. More than 650 houses were destroyed in Marromeu district, it said, while in Sofala province more than 3,000 people

were affected by flooding. After passing the port town of Quelimane, the storm was continuing inland towards the southern tip of neighbouring Malawi, satellite data showed.

However, national power company Electricidade de Moçambique said that by mid-afternoon electricity had been restored in most areas, with the exception of Milange, Lugela, Maganja da Costa, Namanjavira and parts of the city of Mocuba. "The wind was very strong into the night ... There is a lot of destruction, trees falling down, roofs blown off," UNICEF chief of advocacy, communications and partnerships for Mozambique, Guy Taylor, told Reuters by satellite phone from Quelimane. He had no word yet on casualties or numbers of displaced. "It's potentially a disaster of large magnitude, and additional support will be needed," Taylor said, adding that heavy rains were continuing to fall.

In Malawi, authorities were bracing for the cyclone to pass near the southern tip of the landlocked country by evening, bringing torrential rains and flooding, the department of meteorological resources and climate change said in a statement. A Zoom Earth satellite map laying out the cyclone's probable path forecast it would fizzle out near the Malawi border as it moves further inland. Two weeks ago, 27 died when the storm first made landfall, after first being spotted near Indonesia on Feb. 6.

After swirling for 35 days, Freddy is likely to have broken the record for the longest-lasting tropical cyclone, with the previous record held by a 31-day hurricane in 1994, according to the World Meteorological Organization. It has also set a record for the highest accumulated cyclone energy, a measure of the storm's strength over time, of any southern hemisphere storm in history, according to the US National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration. Climate change is making hurricanes stronger, scientists say. Oceans absorb much of the heat from greenhouse gas emissions, and when warm seawater evaporates its heat energy is transferred to the atmosphere, fuelling more destructive storms.

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intensively to get further clarity about the information (of the confirmed sentence)." The Islamic Republic has had tense relations with its ethnic minorities, which include Arabs, Kurds, Azeris and Baluch, and has accused them of aligning with neighbouring countries rather than Tehran. Arabs and other minorities have long said they face discrimination in Iran, a charge the Islamic Republic denies. The confirmation of Chaab's death sentence comes amid soured relations between Iran and Sweden over a Swedish court's life time in prison sentence for a former Iranian official for involvement in the mass execution of political prisoners in 1988 in the Islamic Republic. Iran has rejected former Iranian official Hamid Noury's sentence as "baseless, distorted and fabricated".

Iran upholds death sentence of Swedish-Iranian Arab dissident

DUBAI (Reuters): Iran's supreme court has upheld the death sentence handed down to a Swedish Iranian dual national convicted of leading an Arab separatist group accused of attacks including one on a military parade in 2018 that killed 25 people, state media reported. Iran said in 2020 that its security forces arrested Sweden-based Habib Farajollah Chaab in Turkey and took him to Tehran, without saying where or how he was captured.

"Chaab was sentenced to death after several court sessions with the presence of his lawyer ... The Supreme Court confirmed his death sentence," Iran's judiciary's Mizan news agency reported. In 2022, Iran started trial of Chaab on charges of leading the separatist Arab Struggle Movement for the Liberation of Ahwaz, which

seeks a separate state in the oil-rich Khuzestan province in southwestern Iran, and plotting and carrying out "numerous bombings and terrorist operations". He was sentenced to death for being "corrupt on earth", a capital offence under Iran's strict form of Islamic law, Iranian state media said.

Sweden's foreign ministry said its representatives had been in continual contact with Iran's authorities about Chaab's situation and had repeatedly requested permission to visit him and be present at the trial. "The death penalty is an inhuman and irreversible punishment and Sweden, along with the European Union, condemns its use in all circumstances," Foreign Minister Tobias Billstrom said in an emailed statement. "The foreign ministry and Sweden's embassy in Teheran are working

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Messy politics and human rights in Pakistan

RECENTLY, US Congressman Brad Sherman has raised concerns over the alleged violation of human rights and democracy in Pakistan and called on the government to ensure freedom of speech and the rule of law in the country. Standing alongside Pakistani American Democrat leader, American Congressman not only expressed concerns over the violation of human rights and freedom of media but categorically discussed the alleged custodial torture and sexual abuse of PTI leaders Shahbaz Gill and Azam Swati. He also mentioned the death of PTI worker Zill-e-Shah, journalist Arshad Sharif and the government crackdown on the PTI rally on March 8. According to Brad Sherman, he did not support Imran Khan but he advocates human rights everywhere in Pakistan and across the globe.

The PTI-PDM political brawl has made its triumph everywhere across the globe. Anti-Nawaz sloganeering which had been customary in London and Bradford has now reached California and Metropolitan Washington DC. Whether it was the outcome of PTI supporters' lobbying campaign or the fringe benefit of PTI's hired gun Fenton/Arlock LLC that an outspoken US Congressman and longstanding critic of Pakistan, had pronounced a brief verdict in favor of the PTI and censured the coalition government for its manhandling of human rights and civil liberties. Interestingly, the American Congressman made a telephone call with PTI Chairman and former Prime Minister Imran Khan before issuing a statement to the media. Although such statements are of political nature and not binding by the law yet they serve as an image-building and reference for global human rights organizations and rating agencies in the world.

Realistically, media and civil rights had been the continuous target of the coalition government over the past year. The state significantly worked to curb media freedom by adding more repressive provisions in the PECA law, reducing space for sane criticism by Intelligentsia along with introducing multiple laws to protect the so-called sanctity of the institutions. Meanwhile, the coercion and intimidation of the journalists remained an undying fact, while several journalists had been arrested, and trialed under multipurpose laws. Thus, civil liberties and citizens' right to information became decoration pieces in the Parliament's gallery. In fact, excessive use of administrative provisions and unjust protection of blue eyes seriously damaged the narrative of multi-party government and caused differences among the allies. The opposition took advantage of this situation and tried to elude justice in genuine cases of corruption, and misconduct in government affairs in the past.

On these pages, we categorically condemned the government's ban on Imran Khan's speech and license revocation of ARY News Channel by the coalition government and exclusively mentioned that the court will turn down the PEMRA actions which clearly contradict the fundamental rights and media freedoms. The same happened within the next few days. In fact, the country, the public, and politics are not an heirloom of any particular person or party but it is divine service that bestows by the nature through fortune and public work. Despite multiple flaws and shortcomings, it has been the legacy of the American people that they commonly preach and support global values such as truth, human rights, democracy, and civil freedoms not only in their country but across the world and thus leading the world so far. As, if our nation adopts those divine values, no power can defeat Pakistan in the race for great power.

Post-Brexit Britain slams its doors on the outside world

Baria Alamuddin

THE UK government has determined that because it doesn't share borders with failed states such as Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan, it is not required to share any humanitarian burden for addressing the global refugee crisis - or even abide by its elementary legal obligations. Post-Brexit Britain appears resolved on retreating within its island shores and trying to forget altogether that the outside world exists.

The UN High Commissioner on Refugees has said that Britain's proposed new legislation barring entry to asylum-seekers arriving in small boats "amounts to an asylum ban, extinguishing the right to seek refugee protection in the United Kingdom for those who arrive irregularly, no matter how genuine and compelling their claim." Of the 90 million people forcibly displaced across the world, the UK granted asylum to 13,000 in 2021 - a tiny fraction of the numbers accepted by many other European countries. States such as Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan, which lack the minimum infrastructure to grapple with such influxes, have nevertheless absorbed well over a million refugees each.

The response of the British public to Ukrainian refugees was largely compassionate, despite the government throwing countless administrative obstacles in

the path of potential arrivals. Around the world I encounter many who question why the response was so radically different for those fleeing equally brutal conflicts in Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Afghanistan and the Congo - or why desperate families travel thousands of miles, risking their lives on unseaworthy boats, only to be locked up and stigmatized as criminals and potential terrorists. Relentless fearmongering and hyperbole by politicians and the right-wing media, often playing on negative religious and ethnic stereotypes, have turned this issue into a British national obsession. Home Secretary Suella Braverman's assertions that "100 million" or even "billions" of asylum-seekers could soon be heading for Britain are naked demagoguery.

Braverman's repugnant solution for those who have fled torture, war, ethnic cleansing and repression is to pack them off to a nation such as Rwanda, with a disastrous human rights record, dysfunctional infrastructure, and a complete lack of qualifications for managing refugee concentration camps on behalf of the UK government. The reality is that only through the grace of God are any of us not born in war zones, compelled to throw ourselves at the mercy of other nations to avoid our children facing starvation, or worse.

A succession of Conservative governments

has calculatedly engineered a "hostile environment" for all migrants. Consequently, Home Office infrastructure for processing asylum cases is, by design, perversely unfit for purpose, with immense backlogs. Instead of processing applicants quickly and repatriating undeserving cases, arrivals are locked up in indefinite limbo. Over 117,000 people were awaiting an initial decision on their asylum case as of mid-2022. This includes doctors, teachers, builders and nurses who could pay taxes and make much-needed contributions to the economy. While many recent arrivals have been from Albania, this should be addressed as a specific phenomenon, rather than stigmatizing all arrivals as "illegal" and "undeserving" economic migrants. In 2022, 76 percent of cases that were processed were found to be legitimate and were granted asylum.

High-profile ex-footballer Gary Lineker triggered a media frenzy with a tweet comparing the government's rhetoric on migrants with the language of 1930s Germany. The comparison was not unjustified, given the systematic manner in which government ministers have dehumanized and criminalized refugees, to the extent that many Europeans express the view that it would be better to let immigrants drown at sea. Scandalously, several

hundred child asylum-seekers simply disappeared, sometimes abducted directly from hostels, probably into prostitution, abuse and forced labor. The point is not whether Britain currently resembles Nazi Germany, but rather that Europe risks pursuing the same trajectory. Populist far-right politicians calculatedly whip up fears about immigration, and being "deluged" by non-Christian, non-white foreigners. Neo-fascists and populist authoritarians are today in power in nations such as Italy, Israel and Hungary, with likeminded factions on the ascendancy in most European states. Many of these parties praised Britain's measures against refugees. Threats of terrorism and organized violence from far-right extremism now greatly exceed that from Islamist groups.

The right-wing media cynically manufactures these moral panics to sell newspapers, disingenuously feeding audiences an insatiable diet of exceptional cases in which refugees are portrayed as thieves and delinquents. Donald Trump notoriously launched his US presidential campaign with a diatribe against refugees: "They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists..." Recent disclosures from Fox News highlighted how the channel relentlessly peddled falsehoods, knowing they were lying to their audience.

Particular hosts deliberately propagated white supremacist narratives, with explosive social consequences. Neo-isolationist, post-Brexit Britain is a greatly diminished nation, with many sectors badly impacted by the self-harming decision to wrench the national economy out of the European single market. Efforts to consolidate new trade deals have floundered. The halting of the annual influx of millions of European seasonal workers, the impossibility of exporting perishable goods under cumbersome new regulations, and the fragmentation of supply chains have forced food producers to slash output, giving rise to empty supermarket shelves and rampant inflation. Yet a government that has spent the past 13 years demonizing refugees isn't going to suddenly look to these arrivals as potential positive contributors to major gaps in the workforce.

I am immensely grateful for the welcome we and our young daughters were given in 1980s Britain when we fled the Lebanon conflict, and I hope that as taxpayers and law-abiding citizens we can be seen as having made a net positive contribution to our host society. Britain's prime minister, home secretary and several other ministers are themselves from migrant families. The government abolished the Department for International Development in 2020. Aid to many of the

poorest countries was slashed by over 60 percent. About half the much-diminished remaining "overseas development" budget is spent domestically on detaining refugees. As well as being morally indefensible, this and Brexit have caused Britain's global influence to plunge.

Britain appears unable to comprehend that when aid budgets are curtailed, greater numbers are forced into exile. Leading nations have meanwhile abandoned their conflict-resolution role. Refugees will keep coming. Numbers of worldwide displaced demographics have relentlessly increased. Conflicts intensify, states disintegrate, governance deteriorates, and worldwide democracy is in retreat. Climate change is rendering sizable regions uninhabitable.

By letting the xenophobia genie out the bottle through incessant dehumanization of refugees, politicians created a rod for their own backs, coming under inexorable pressure to bring net migration toward zero - an impossible goal that would precipitate economic meltdown. Instead of such self-defeating isolationism, Western governments must take a farsighted approach to factors driving mass migration, so people around the world can enjoy the infinitely preferable option of looking forward to a bright future in their own homelands.

Arab News

In Ecuador, the US risks being on the wrong side of history

Luis Ortiz

In February, the main opposition party won all the key races in Ecuador's local elections, including the mayoral elections in Quito and Guayaquil, Ecuador's two largest cities, and now also holds governorships in the most important provinces, where approximately 70 percent of the population resides. In the same elections, Ecuadorians voted on eight referendum questions, all of which were promoted by Lasso, including changes to the constitution. Voters rejected all of his proposed reforms. In the last few weeks, several corruption scandals have dealt further blows to Ecuador's beleaguered president. Lasso's brother-in-law, Danilo Carrera, is being investigated for a large-scale corruption scheme of falsified contracts in the energy sector.

The prosecutor general has also opened an investigation into alleged links between one of Carrera's close associates and an Albanian drug-trafficking ring and the Lasso government's attempt to shut down an investigation into this organized crime network. The president's brother-in-law has also long been suspected of having hidden assets in the US, including

holdings in Florida. Lasso himself has faced accusations, dating from before his election in 2021, of overseeing a complex web of offshore companies in jurisdictions that have allegedly enabled him to dodge taxes. He also features prominently in the Pandora Papers.

Since 2017, it is an impeachable offence for Ecuadorian public officials to hold assets in tax havens. Despite potentially being in breach of this prohibition, Lasso has managed to remain in office - and on the White House visitor logs. The Ecuadorian president has rejected the accusations of corruption. Carrera has also denied any wrongdoing and has filed a lawsuit against a journalist, who has reported on the scandal.

Lasso has also sought to publicly intimidate the journalists investigating corruption allegations, calling them "media terrorists", "mercenaries of news entertainment", and "spoiled brats [who] should be stopped instantly". Media watchdog Reporters Without Borders has condemned his "violent diatribes" against the press. When summoned by Ecuador's National Assembly, Lasso refused to

attend legislative hearings to present his version of events. A day after the prosecutor issued a warrant to search the presidential palace in relation to a corruption investigation, the government removed the police investigators assigned to the case, a measure which was denounced by the National Assembly and the National Court of Justice.

Yet, until now, the Lasso government has received nothing but accolades from the US authorities. "We admire the strong voice for democracy that you have shared with the Ecuadorian people, but also for people throughout our hemisphere", Secretary of State Antony Blinken said during his visit to Ecuador in October last year. "You and I are united not only in our values but in our vision of the future, one that's both free and democratic", President Joe Biden said after meeting the Ecuadorian president in December. All this has been duly accompanied by the US foreign policy establishment lavishing praise, with Eric Farnsworth, the vice president of the Council of the Americas, calling on the US to unequivocally help Lasso's Ecuador, a "strong democracy in a troubled neighbourhood". The appeal was

heard by Republican Senator Marco Rubio who, undeterred by the proliferation of corruption allegations, flew to Ecuador in late February in a show of support for the beleaguered Lasso government.

But the truth is that, under Lasso, Ecuador has been moving backwards. Institutions and the rule of law have been crumbling and corruption has thrived and penetrated Lasso's inner circle. In light of these troubling developments, the Biden administration should stand by its commitment to fighting corruption, even when it comes to a perceived ally. It should denounce Lasso's attacks against the media and his attempts to intervene in the investigations into the alleged wrongdoing by his close associates. The US Department of Justice and the Treasury should investigate claims that Lasso, his brother-in-law and various other associates hold assets in US jurisdictions. If the US continues to blindly support the Ecuadorian president, it runs the risk of being perceived as an enabler of corruption and authoritarianism by Ecuadorians and others in the region. And as the crisis in the country deepens, Washington may wind up on the wrong side of history.

Migration makes the world grow rich, but can it build stable nations?

Janet Daley

HUMAN history is a story of the migration of peoples. The movement of populations has almost certainly been a primary force for social progress even when it was motivated by desperate circumstances like famine, or cruel intentions like conquest. Tribes or nations that remain static and isolated do not evolve: they lose the dynamism that seems to be essential for a successful, resilient culture. Taking in newcomers is not simply a humane gesture, it is essential to the health of a nation.

But however obvious this fact is, it contains a paradoxical tension. Societies - even sophisticated, modern ones - are made up of communities that maintain their identity by a belief in shared values and attitudes. That homogeneity - the like-mindedness that binds people with a common purpose - is threatened by the arrival of large numbers of incomers who may have quite different social assumptions and expectations.

So there is a dilemma: the very thing most likely to encourage progress and

vitality in the life of a nation, particularly one with an ageing population, causes fear and resentment which - on the face of it - are not unreasonable. It is no good castigating either of these groups - the incomers or the established communities. Some of the migrants may well be opportunists rather than victims.

The angry local people may be bigots, or they might just be afraid of losing their cohesion and sense of identity. Both of these impulses need to be addressed honestly. The desire to improve your chances in life, which motivates the economic migrant, and the longing to protect the recognisable character of your community are both absolutely legitimate. I expect few reasonable people would argue with that. So usually it comes down to numbers and the ability of the host society to cope with the impact of those numbers. This is often depicted as a contest between cosmopolitanism - life without tribal or national ties in which anyone has a right to live anywhere - and what is often described as

"nativism", which binds those born into a place with a blood bond that is easily inflamed into hatred of the outsider.

The second of these has an infamous history, which can be glibly summoned up (by, say, sports presenters) to poison any discussion of the consequences of sudden increases in mass migration. Genuine instances of it still do occur - in Donald Trump's rhetoric for example - and need to be called out. But oddly, right before our eyes, there is a notable case study of the problems created by the first. The United States was founded on a commitment to the cosmopolitan ideal: on the principle that you can create a viable nation by admitting anyone from anywhere (in truth, it was not that unconditional), providing that they accept the conditions of the Constitution, which is regarded as a legal contract with the people. It was an unprecedented experiment, at least in scale, founded on 18th-century optimism - the belief that rationality could replace inherited cultural idolatry. And it worked -

didn't it? Certainly the American economy was a modern miracle, which was obviously connected to the fact that so many of its incomers were economic migrants who had the extraordinary determination that allowed them to risk everything on a journey to a place they had never seen.

A place, incidentally, that offered nothing in the way of government support if you couldn't cope. The ruthless conditions that greeted those who arrived at Ellis Island in the last century, as my grandparents did, was that they must have no physical or mental disability that might cause them to become "a charge upon the state". You arrived and you took your chances. And that is one of the critical differences between the great migrations of the past and the present ones, which have become so contentious. The desirable destinations now - the developed democracies - are welfare states in which it would be unthinkable to allow huge numbers of people to be left starving and homeless. So accepting

migrants costs the state a lot of money, which has to be collected from the resident population. At least for the duration of their early period of settlement, these people certainly are a "charge upon the state" which changes the equation. Permitting them to become net contributors to the country - in every sense - has to be the top priority of those who campaign for their right to stay.

So is the United States truly a cosmopolitan success? Is it living the dream of a land of opportunity for all those disparate peoples who have settled there? Or does it have, at its centre, a core of existential anxiety that comes from rootlessness: a sense of not belonging anywhere, which permeates even private relationships and preoccupations? I remember being quite startled when I first encountered the European expectation of inherited communal ties. Friends in Italy or Ireland would explain that their families could trace their origins in a region - or even a village - back 10 generations. The parochialism and complacency of this did not appeal to me - and yet it made me

deeply aware of what was missing in American life.

Patriotism was intended to take the place of folk memory in establishing national identity. Every school day began with a pledge of allegiance to the flag because being a proud American should be enough to make you feel at home. This theme crops up repeatedly in American popular culture. Superman - whose original motto was "Truth, justice and the American way" - is a refugee from a dying old world who reinvents himself out of devotion to the new one. But the superhero is a loner who must live without personal ties. What does that say about the nature of the American condition? Do the periodic fits of hysteria and neurotic self-obsession, which envelop American life, spring from an absence of any real understanding of what it means to feel at home? Perhaps what we need is not a whole world of people who belong nowhere, but stable societies that can offer a sense of belonging without losing their sense of who they are.

The Telegraph

How to prepare for the next pandemic

LATE last year, I participated in an exercise meant to play out what might happen if the world was presented with a new disease spreading quickly, with no warning. The exercise revolved around a number of simulated emergency meetings of the World Health Organization advisory board, called in response to a very serious new pandemic - a risk that the W.H.O. refers to as "Disease X."

Among the exercise participants were highly experienced current and past health ministers and senior public health officials from nine countries. The urgent events required them to make hard policy decisions quickly, with little information. Each decision had huge consequences for society and for the course of the pandemic. This was how it was in the early days of Covid. It's also how it will be in other pandemics. Some of the smartest and most experienced international public health leaders had differing, sometimes opposing views on many fundamental questions about the response. Should they shut down travel in the earliest days? Should they close schools in the first affected countries? If a future pandemic has a much higher case fatality rate than Covid or if it severely affected children, should countries take different, stronger, faster measures to contain it? Top experts don't yet agree.

These will be terribly hard decisions for leaders to make. And that's why it's essential to anticipate and be ready for them in advance, reaching broad consensus where it's achievable. During the peak of the Omicron wave in January 2022, US congressional leaders across the political spectrum were frustrated by the need to transform the country's pandemic response. "We can never let this happen again," was a frequent refrain.

But a year later, and three years after Covid was declared a pandemic, that collective resolve is diminished. The promise to prepare for pandemics in fundamentally new, far more ambitious ways has rapidly faded. As horrible as Covid has been - it remains one of the leading causes of death in the United States - it is not the worst-case scenario. There are viruses with case fatality rates twice, 10 times or even greater than that of Covid, such as H5N1 influenza (bird flu), Nipah and Ebola. Fortunately, those viruses have not developed the capacity for efficient human-to-human respiratory spread. A concern is whether a new viral strain with higher case fatality will also develop the capacity for rapid spread among people. There is growing global concern over H5N1's spread in animals - a development that governments must track and prepare for, and which all the more should broadly spur vigorous new pandemic preparedness efforts. The world needs to be prepared for the next Disease

X, something capable of causing global catastrophic risks. Here's what it would take to collect all we learned from Covid and to transform our preparedness.

A number of countries call this commitment the 100-day mission - referring to the number of days it should take to develop a safe, effective vaccine after the sequencing of a novel pandemic virus. This would require serious investment from governments and close partnership with private sector vaccine manufacturing companies to establish much faster processes in research and development, clinical trials, regulatory review and more. It would require more investment in technologies such as mRNA that could be used for a range of Disease X threats. Right now, a large majority of government funding to help develop vaccines and medicines for pandemics is for existing, known pathogens, as opposed to preparing for future unknowns. We need to make it much easier to develop and distribute tests. Until diagnostic tests are widely available, leaders and the

The world needs to be prepared for the next Disease X, something capable of causing global catastrophic risks. Here's what it would take to collect all we learned from Covid and to transform our preparedness. A number of countries call this commitment the 100-day mission - referring to the number of days it should take to develop a safe, effective vaccine after the sequencing of a novel pandemic virus.

public will be flying in the dark in a future pandemic. We now know that we need contracts to exist between the federal government and the diagnostic industry that can be enacted quickly, because we don't have time to start complex negotiations in a crisis.

The Food and Drug Administration needs a clear and established path for rapidly reviewing new tests during a crisis. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention must be ready to provide immediate diagnostic clinical guidance, and health insurers and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services need to be ready to provide quick and full coverage for testing. Pharmacies, doctors' offices and community centers should be positioned to dispense tests swiftly. Imagine if in the first weeks of Covid everyone could have easily gotten a free test at one of thousands of locations. That should be the expectation for the future.

We need a stronger stockpile of high-quality protective gear. Our national supply of personal protective equipment, or PPE, was far too small in the first months of Covid, especially when it came to masks.

We need a far stronger and more resilient approach. The US supply chain is still quite vulnerable to disruption because we rely on so many single-use products that have components from around the world, which many countries will be seeking at the same time in a pandemic. We must be in a position in which health care workers and all essential workers can obtain very high-quality masks quickly. This means shifting at least a substantial portion of our national high-filtration-mask supply away from disposable single-use ones to reusable respirators that can be worn repeatedly and safely.

We need to seriously change our approach to indoor air quality. Just as we expect clean water from our spigots, we should have cleaner air moving through our buildings. Better filters, more outdoor air intake and new technologies to diminish pathogen burden should all be part of the plan - these things are key for future pandemics and for lessening the toll of viruses overall. The Biden administration made substantial funding available

for schools to increase ventilation, but many schools have not made these investments. The administration also began an effort to improve indoor air in buildings across the country, but most of the implementation of that plan depends on local decision makers, building owners and operators, and better building codes. We need stronger research oversight and lab safety.

It is still not clear what caused the Covid pandemic, and resolving that uncertainty would require new information and data. But even without knowing what the proximal cause of Covid was, we should resolve nationally - and internationally - to operate labs with lethal and contagious viruses in the safest possible ways. We need strong government oversight of that kind of work, with a framework that balances proposed benefits with major risks. A White House and National Institutes of Health review of these policies is underway now, and there are many important changes that if adopted would make US policy and practice much safer and more effective on these issues. These efforts are part of the larger set of actions and

programs needed to prevent accidental or deliberate events from starting major epidemics and pandemics. That work should include requirements for monitoring or preventing the laboratory synthesis of deadly or extinct viruses; a strong national capacity to attribute a novel pathogen to its origin; commitment to support the Biological Weapons Convention, the international treaty that bans biological and toxin weapons; and vigorous scrutiny and oversight of the practice of extracting from remote ecosystems viruses that may have pandemic potential and have never been introduced to people or studied in a lab.

The C.D.C. needs a reset. The C.D.C. has essential national pandemic preparedness and response responsibilities as the nation's top national public health agency. But the pandemic revealed many of its challenges, including early testing mishaps, complicated public guidance and an inability to collect some key data that national leaders and the public needed. The agency needs new authorities to gather data quickly, new abilities to contract, retain and recruit talent, and new capacity to deploy people and funding to state and local public health organizations around the country that will need that assistance. The C.D.C. needs to operate rapidly in crisis, both in the United States and internationally. Currently, its budget is broken into about 160 programs that aren't allowed to be changed during pandemics - this must change. Some changes are in the C.D.C.'s control; others will require legislative solutions (like giving it more authority and funding).

These are not the only efforts needed - we also need stronger local public health capacity, stronger support to community organizations doing on-the-ground response work and more - but they are a critical start. And there are upcoming opportunities to act on them. The Biden administration's budget request asks for funding for pandemic preparedness, and Congress should embrace it. Congress also has the opportunity to reauthorize the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act this year, and it could bolster, among many key capacities, the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response in its work to develop and distribute vaccines and to strengthen the supply chain. Covid brought out incredibly resolve, scientific ingenuity, individual and community perseverance and innovation. But even with that, millions of people died, many millions more were sickened, and societies were terribly set back in the United States and around the world. We are likely to face similar or worse pandemic threats in the future. We need to use the time we have now to make big preparedness changes to protect us from challenges that could arise again without warning.

The New York Times



20 years on, memories of Iraq war may have faded

John Harris

POLITICS is in the midst of a New Labour revival. Keir Starmer draws huge inspiration from his party's landslide win back in 1997. Tony Blair offers him advice, and regularly tours TV and radio studios. Gordon Brown has found a role as British politics' thundering conscience.

That former titan of "comms" Alastair Campbell is now a super-successful podcaster and caller-out of Brexit lies; over the past few days, he has been hyperactively defending Gary Lineker and decrying the management of the BBC. There is even something of New Labour in Rishi Sunak: his faux-classless speaking style, and his attempts to sell himself as a master of technocratic efficiency, determined to pull his party back into the mainstream.

But now, an uneasy anniversary arrives. Next Monday will mark 20 years since the invasion of Iraq: a reminder not just of Blair et al's responsibility for the greatest political and humanitarian disaster the UK had been involved in since the second world war, but a moment when the supposed political centre ground suddenly lurched

and one thing in particular burns through: a sense that politics and power had lurched away from the public, and left a huge and very uneasy gap. Quotes to that effect were gathered by the dozen: "Something's happened recently, to me and so many friends - we just know there's something going wrong in this country. No one's being consulted"; "This is not about party politics, but a simple feeling that democracy has been forgotten." Less than a month after the invasion began, the Iraqi capital apparently fell to US forces, and millions of us were told once again that we were simply wrong. But anyone who remembers the war will be familiar with what happened next: endless violence, huge levels of death, the horrors perpetrated by US personnel at the Abu Ghraib prison, and so much more. Then, in October 2004, the most breathtaking news of all was coughed out. The BBC put it succinctly: "Iraq had no stockpiles of biological, chemical or nuclear weapons before last year's US-led invasion, the chief US weapons inspector has concluded."

In 2005, Blair won an

kind of politics was rooted in his opposition to the Iraq adventure. The right was speeding down the isolationist and parochial road that led to Brexit, while the left embraced the kind of ideas that Blair had always warned against. Whatever political story I was covering during this period, I heard the same refrains from voters: bitter verdicts on his time in office, and dismissals of politicians as liars. Iraq was hardly the sole reason for this, but it was always present and correct.

The idea of politics as a mendacious trade is an ancient cliché, but in this instance, people were not wrong. Next week's anniversary, in fact, ought to serve as a reminder of the three deceptions so central to the politics of the war, and the public disaffection they triggered. It was hardly a revelation, but the 2016 Chilcot report confirmed it: Blair and his aides presented weak and patchy intelligence as authoritative evidence of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. He repeatedly assured the country that no decision about whether or not to go to war had been taken, but his assurance to Bush in July 2002 that "I will be with you, whatever"

But an episode as significant as this was always going to have profound effects on the UK, thanks to the war's sheer disastrousness, and the fact that the case for our involvement soon turned out to have had no basis in fact. The result was a crisis of public trust that festers on. There was an early sense of this in February 2003, when more than a million people arrived in London to demonstrate their opposition to a war that felt more likely by the hour. Pick through reports that day, and one thing in particular burns through: a sense that politics and power had lurched away from the public, and left a huge and very uneasy gap. Quotes to that effect were gathered by the dozen: "Something's happened recently, to me and so many friends - we just know there's something going wrong in this country. No one's being consulted"; "This is not about party politics, but a simple feeling that democracy has been forgotten."

somehow reckless and catastrophic. Support for the invasion, let us not forget, also enveloped the Conservative party, and the vast majority of the British press. In that sense, the anniversary is a vivid reminder of the perils of groupthink, and the grim results of squeezing complex realities into simple narratives. In a deeply scared, crisis-prone Iraq - and the wider region - people still live with the consequences as a matter of everyday experience. Here, by contrast, most of us have the awful luxury of thinking of the war as a distant, fading set of events. Only last week, a columnist in the Financial Times mused that "within the western world, the Iraq war has left little trace", and that the invasion "didn't shake politics". But an episode as significant as this was always going to have profound effects on the UK, thanks to the war's sheer disastrousness, and the fact that the case for our involvement soon turned out to have had no basis in fact. The result was a crisis of public trust that festers on.

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election with the support of less than a quarter of the electorate, and Labour's Commons majority fell from 167 seats to 66. "There is little doubt that historians will look back on the 2005 election as the Iraq election," said the Guardian. When the SNP defeated Labour in the Scottish elections of 2007 and that country's politics underwent a watershed change - just as Blair stepped down - it happened partly because the SNP's then leader, Alex Salmond, had successfully tapped into huge anger about the war, baldly accusing Blair of lying (as one academic study put it, "voter problems with Westminster were responsible, with some dissatisfaction with the performance and leadership of the UK government and also with the issue of Iraq"). The financial crash came a year later, followed by further proof that politics was now in an unstable and volatile state: 2010 saw the flurry of support for the Liberal Democrats known as "Cleggmania", and the election of a hung parliament. And then came a run of seismic shifts: the rise of Ukip, the Scottish independence referendum of 2014 and the election as Labour leader of Jeremy Corbyn - whose reputation for a supposedly righteous

suggested that his mind had long since been made up. Then, as the invasion loomed and the UN security council considered its options, Blair said that "the French position is that France will vote no, whatever the circumstances", whereas President Jacques Chirac had said something very different: that UN weapons inspectors needed to be given more time, and if Iraq did not cooperate, "regrettably, the war would become inevitable. [But it] isn't today."

Our memory of these deceptions may have faded, but their effects ripple on. Iraq hideously sullied Blair and Brown's domestic record and marked the end of the New Labour vision of Britain as a young, confident country. It reduced the fantasies of "liberal interventionism" to ash, and deepened the disaffection and unease that would lead to our exit from Europe. For the people now in charge of the two main Westminster parties, there may be comfort in the idea that we might somehow return to being the comparatively quiet, orderly, outward-facing nation we were 20 years ago. But there is no going back there, and the horrors and political contortions of the war are one of the key reasons why.

The Guardian

Georgia's ruling party is turning toward Moscow. Its people are not

WHEN Georgian lawmakers backed a controversial Kremlin-esque bill late Tuesday night, mayhem erupted outside Parliament. As the crowd of protesters grew larger and larger, riot police gathered at their flanks. All hell broke loose. The riot police fired tear gas canisters into the crowd. They used batons and water cannons. The images were remarkable. In one, a woman waving a European Union flag takes on a fire hose - an apt metaphor for Georgian democracy.

By Thursday morning those protests had proved a success. The ruling party retracted its "foreign influence" bill, which would have required organizations receiving 20% or more of their annual income from abroad to register as "foreign agents" or face heavy fines. Though after all the duplicitous justifications they gave for passing it in the first place, the move feels cynical at best. A similar law has been used to dismantle independent media and NGOs in Russia since 2012.

But Thursday was a reminder that the Georgian people have the power to reclaim their democracy. (That's even if the ruling party ends up finding other rights to take away from its people in its desperate attempt not to lose in the upcoming 2024 parliamentary elections.) In the past several years, it appears that the Georgian government has been intentionally subverting its democracy in order to leave the EU and NATO with no choice but to reject it. Which is exactly how Moscow likes it.

The Georgian people have fought back at every turn. Whether it is about their government's refusal to support Ukraine, raids on nightclubs or attacks on journalists covering LGBTQ demonstrations, thousands of Georgians have taken to the streets. The circumstances for these protests are always different. But the reason is always the same. Georgia's ruling party is turning toward Moscow. Its people are not. The men, women and children who gather before Parliament are essentially sending a message: "We are Europe. If you intend to take away

our democracy, you must first come through us."

Georgians shouldn't have to get beaten in the streets to exercise their democracy. But they will. Georgia's informal ruler, the oligarch Bidzina Ivanishvili, is miscalculating his people just as Russian President Vladimir Putin underestimated the Ukrainian people. It may sound trite to compare those protesting a bill in front of the Georgian Parliament to the Ukrainian soldiers fighting in the slush and mud that was once a city called Bakhmut. But these fighters share what they see as a common enemy, and both know what is at stake.

As a journalist living here in Tbilisi for the last 15 years, one gets used to the tear gas. Despite having a chronic lung disease, or more likely on account of it, I get a strange high - an adrenaline rush at the first whiff of tear gas. In the bright police lights, things take on a cinematic quality. This is why I am here - to bear witness, while coughing my face off, to thousands of Georgians ready to take a tear gas canister to the face to keep the democracy for which they've fought for the last 20 years. As an American, I often get asked why I live here, most often by cynical taxi drivers. The reason is that I've always believed that in Georgia, especially as a journalist, one person can make a difference.

When Parliament tried to push through a law that would mean I'd have to register as a "foreign agent," for the first time I questioned my decision to raise my family here. My wife is Georgian, and we have two young boys. I'm not alone in thinking this. I find little comfort in the fact that the law was revoked. For the first time in 15 years, I didn't feel welcome in Georgia. But there is another thing too. It has taken me 15 years to realize that living in a place where one person can make a difference for the better means that one person also can make a difference for the worse. Still, Ivanishvili is losing his footing. He is making increasingly desperate decisions that indicate a

Will Cathcart

growing animosity toward the United States. By some absurd calculus, Ivanishvili appears to believe that Putin is the only man who can help his ruling Georgian Dream party hold on to power in next year's elections. He has chosen sides.

I don't see how a country full of designated "foreign agents" could be good for tourism or any sector. Entire farms funded by organizations like USAID and the German development agency GIZ could be labeled foreign intelligence operations while growing tomatoes, blueberries and kiwifruit. There would be black-op asparagus harvests and clandestine apple collections. Perhaps vegetables would come with both non-GMO and non-foreign-agent-funded stickers. I wonder if they would taste any different. Ironically, the actual Russian intelligence agents in Georgia appear to be welcome. In the 10 years since Ivanishvili came to power, it seems that no actual Russian agent has been prosecuted. Hans Gutbrod, who studied similar laws in other countries for the Transparency and Accountability Initiative (TAI), calls it the "We can repress anyone we like law." There are "clear tell-tale signs when a law has bad faith. This law here has all of them." After the bill was withdrawn, Gutbrod told me, "Georgian Dream is greatly weakened. If it cannot project strength, it will struggle to command the loyalty of local elites, especially of police chiefs, that it needs to win elections."

In response to the government's violence, US State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said, "It is our strong hope that the Georgian Government listens to the Georgian people." As of Thursday, that happened. In its attempt to explain why it retracted the bill, the ruling party claimed that "the radical forces were able to involve some of the youth in illegal activities." Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili (who is politically independent though her campaign was originally funded by the ruling party), currently visiting the United States, told CNN that the draft law

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‘Businessmen facilitation, information sharing can boost Pak-Vietnam trade’

LAHORE (APP): Ambassador of Vietnam Nguyen Tien Phong said on Monday that in order to increase bilateral trade volume, Vietnam and Pakistan needed to facilitate business people and share trade information for which Vietnam Embassy in Islamabad and Consulate in Karachi were always ready to help and facilitate Pakistani businessmen.

Talking to LCCI Senior Vice President Zafar Mahmood Chaudhry and Executive Committee members here at Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), the Ambassador shared history of Vietnam Diplomatic and Economic relations; what frameworks should be in place for economic cooperation; trade statistics; and the implementation process.

He said that last year, Vietnam and Pakistan had celebrated 50 years of relations, adding that Pakistan had always supported Vietnam in all the international forums. “We should go ahead with our relations by boosting our economic ties. We have a mechanism in place like meetings every year. We have setup sub-committees as we are partners in difficult times. We should be partner in prosperity,” he maintained.

The Ambassador said that he wanted to bring Vietnam businessmen to Pakistan to explore huge trade and investment potential of Punjab especially Lahore. He mentioned that 90 percent of cotton and 60 percent of yarn was being imported from Punjab. While Vietnam exported fisheries, tea, paper, chemicals, ginger and other products to Pakistan which were not more than 0.5 percent of the total exports. Similarly, Vietnam also

imported pharmaceuticals, cotton, leather products from Pakistan, the volume of which was also very low.

He said that the embassy could also assist to find potential business partners for Pakistani businessmen, and LCCI should also send a business delegation to Vietnam to meet their counterparts and ‘we can also arrange meetings with ministers and high-ups in Vietnam.’

Nguyen Tien Phong said, “We have seen that Pakistan is facing difficulties and containers are stuck at ports but we have solution to this issue also as we can work out to develop a mechanism of barter trade between the two sides.” Upon which LCCI SVP agreed and said that he would personally lead a delegation of businessmen to Vietnam to explore trade and investment opportunities.

LCCI Senior Vice President Zafar Mahmood Chaudhry said that Vietnam and Pakistan enjoyed more than 50 years of sound diplomatic relations that were formally established in 1972. Besides excellent diplomatic ties, both countries enjoyed trade and economic cooperation in diverse fields. He said that despite starting as one of the weaker economies in the mid of 1970s and 1980s, Vietnam emerged against all the odds. Following the path of rapid economic growth, he added, Vietnam showed impressive progress in industrial, agricultural and services sectors.

He mentioned that over the few decades, the global exports of Vietnam had surpassed US \$ 335 billion, while the global imports of Vietnam had crossed US \$ 330 billion. “We have a lot to learn from Vietnam eco-

nomics model.” He thanked Vietnam for contributing US \$ 100,000 in flood relief assistance programme initiated by the Government of Pakistan.

The SVP said that there was an increasing trend being witnessed in mutual trade figures between Pakistan and Vietnam, however, further concrete measures should be taken to enhance the scale of bilateral trade that was hovering around US \$ 839 million. “Moreover, we would also like to close the gap of trade deficit as Pakistan is facing unfavourable balance of trade with Vietnam,” he added.

According to State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) statistics, he mentioned, Pakistan’s exports to Vietnam increased from US \$ 117 million in 2020-21 to US \$ 261 million dollars in 2021-22. In the same period, the imports from Vietnam also increased from US \$ 444 million to US \$ 578 million. Pakistan’s share in total trade of Vietnam was just 0.12 percent so both the countries should take the level of bilateral trade volume to at least US \$ 2 billion in the first phase and keep on enhancing it, especially through providing more space to Pakistani exporters to tap the immense potential in Vietnam market.

Zafar Mahmood Chaudhry said that Pakistan’s main exports to Vietnam consisted of cotton, plastic, frozen fish, woven fabrics of cotton, oilcake, leather, oil seeds, frozen meat, maize, and Pharmaceutical products etc.

On the other hand, Pakistan’s imports from Vietnam included electronic equipment, man-made filaments, coffee, tea, spices, sea foods, vegeta-

bles, rubber products, iron and steel etc.

He said that Pakistan had huge potential of exporting various items to Vietnam which were being imported from other countries. For example, the fabrics imports of Vietnam were around US \$ 4 billion, coal US \$ 3.9 billion, corn US \$ 2.8 billion, medicaments US \$ 2.2 billion, wheat US \$ 1.4 billion and leather US \$ 1.1 billion etc. Pakistan could certainly enhance its exports to Vietnam in these sectors.

He said that seafood could be the most potential holding sector for Pakistan. Similarly, Pakistan could also export processed meat, fruit and vegetables to Vietnam. Moreover, there was tremendous room for collaboration in the Information Technology and tourism sectors.

He said that there was a need to find new avenues of trade between Pakistan and Vietnam because Vietnam being an active member of ASEAN, held great importance for Pakistan. Both countries should explore the possibility of a signing Free Trade Agreement (FTA) which could provide better market access to business communities from Pakistan and Vietnam, he added.

“We always ask for having support from the respective commercial sections of our missions and expect that they should share market survey reports with their national chambers of commerce on regular basis. I believe that we can get better and quicker results by engaging the private sector representatives of both the countries through exchanging trade delegations and holding single country exhibitions,” he concluded.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar chairing second meeting of Monitoring Committee to oversee implementation of austerity measures at Finance Division.

Tokyo stocks close lower after US lender’s failure

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks closed lower on Monday as contagion fears grew after the failure of US regional lender Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) sent Wall Street shares tumbling.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index ended down 1.11 percent, or 311.01 points, at 27,832.96, while the broader Topix index lost 1.51 percent, or 30.59 points, to 2,000.99.

“SVB’s failure led to global risk-off sentiment as worries over the financial system grew,” IwaiCosmo Securities said.

“The prospect that the Bank of Japan’s massive easing policy will likely be maintained for a while also prompted sales of banking shares, while the yen’s appreciation against the dollar weighed on export-linked shares.”

US authorities unveiled sweeping measures on Sunday to rescue depositors’ money in full from SVB.

The Federal Reserve also said it would make extra funding available to help other institutions meet customer needs, as a second tech-friendly bank was closed by regulators.

With the two bank failures rattling nerves, US President Joe Biden vowed to hold “fully accountable” the people responsible for “this mess”.

Biden said he would deliver remarks on Monday about maintaining a resilient banking system.

In Asia, the dollar fetched 134.35 yen, down from 134.80 in New York late Friday.

SoftBank Group fell 1.67 percent to 5,254 yen and Toyota lost 1.69 percent to 1,864 yen. Hitachi dropped 2.30 percent to 6,888 yen.

Megabanks ended sharply lower, with Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group falling 3.47 percent to 900 yen, and Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group sinking 4.16 percent to 5,669 yen.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): General cargo carrier ‘Wooyang Dandy’ carrying steel coil, berthed at Multi-Purpose Terminal on Sunday.

Meanwhile another ship, Al Areeesh carrying LNG also arrived at outer anchorage of the port on Monday morning.

A total of 3 ships were engaged at POA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them an oil tanker ‘Silover Cindy’ is expected to sail half on today.

A Cargo volume of 44,728 tonnes, comprising 38,795 tonnes imports cargo and 5,933 tonnes export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 391, Containers (42 TEUs Imports and 349 TEUs exports) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 04 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them, two ships, Evridiki and Al Areeesh& another ship, MSC Ridacarrying Mogas, LNG and Containers are expected to take berths at FOTCO, EETL and QICT respectively on Monday.

PSX’s 100-index gains 62 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) gained 62.98 points, a positive change of 0.15 percent, closing at 41,856.85 points against 41,793.87 points the previous day.

A total of 289,274,485 shares were traded during the day as compared to 272,742,393 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 10.268 billion against Rs 6.770 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 340 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 147 of them recorded gains and 169 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 24 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were Hascol Petrol with 42,448,000 shares at Rs 6.25 per share; Telecard Limited with 25,819,000 shares at Rs 8.00 per share and Oil and Gas Dev. XD with 18,456,595 shares at Rs 93.20 per share.

Reliance Cotton witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 48.24 per share price, closing at Rs 691.50,

whereas the runner-up was Ismail Ind with a Rs 34.50 rise in its per share price to Rs 494.60.

Rafhan Maize witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 249.00 per share closing at Rs 8,000.00; followed by Pak Services with a Rs 140.69 decline to close at Rs 1,735.19.

Rupee sheds 83 paise against dollar

The Pakistan rupee weakened by 83 paise against the dollar in the interbank trading on Monday and closed at Rs 281.60 against the previous day’s closing of Rs 280.77.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs 283.5 and Rs 286.3 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs 2.91 and closed at Rs 300.47 against the last day’s closing of Rs 297.56, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen increased by 06 paise to close at Rs 2.11, whereas an increase of Rs 4.36 was witnessed in the exchange

rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 340.02 as compared to its last day’s closing of Rs 335.66.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal increased by 23 paise each to close at Rs 76.67 and Rs 75.01 respectively.

Gold prices up by Rs 500 to Rs 199,200 per tola

The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 500 and was sold at Rs199,200 on Monday against its sale at Rs 198,700 the previous day. All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.428 to Rs.170,782 from Rs.170,353, whereas the price of 10 grams 22 karat gold went up to Rs.156,550 from Rs. 156,157 respectively.

The price of per tola and ten-gram silver remained unchanged at Rs 2,120 and Rs.1,817.55 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by US\$20 to \$1,886 against its sale at \$1,866, the association reported.

PCJCCI for establishing Pak-China joint agri lab

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI) on Monday suggested for establishing a joint agriculture laboratory under the framework of CPEC (Pak China Economic Corridor).

Chairing a meeting here at PCJCCI Secretariat, the joint chamber’s President Moazzam Ghurki said that the agriculture laboratory would help aware and improve the agriculture sector of Pakistan by technology transfer for the increase of cultivation and production.

He added that the project would not only help the farmers by lowering the need to invest in insecticides and pesticides but also alleviate poverty in Pakistan.

PCJCCI Senior Vice President Fang Yulong said that technology transfer was extremely important so this Pak-China agriculture laboratory would definitely help in exchanging contemporary and innovative techniques. “We will also launch various awareness courses for the farmers for enhancing cultivation and production.”

He added that wheat was the largest food crop in Pakistan and continuous increase in wheat yield had become a strategic objective to ensure food security in Pakistan.

China’s success story in using molecular breeding technology to breed high-yielding, disease-resistant and high-quality wheat varieties would be very useful for Pakistan to increase wheat production, he observed.

Vice President Hamza Khalid said that there was a dire need to introduce smart agriculture in Pakistan because this would definitely help in awareness and educating the farmers with the modern ways and technologies of the world. He said, “We are still stuck to the old traditions of farming which are no more

cost effective and reliable. Through Pak China Joint Agriculture Laboratory we should inculcate the smart agriculture technology among the farmers and connect them with e-commerce platforms through which they can also access contemporary machinery of agriculture at reasonable and nominal rates.”

Secretary General Salahuddin Hanif was of the view that with the country’s current massive internet penetration rate, which was likely to grow further in the years ahead.

“We should connect the entire agricultural chain of Pakistan with e-commerce from production to marketing. This digital transformation should be the prime motive of Pak China Agriculture Laboratory because it will help in reducing agricultural production costs, upgrading efficiency and creating new job opportunities for local communities in the rural areas of Pakistan,” he concluded.

ADNOC Gas shares surge 25% in \$2.5b IPO

DUBAI (AFP/APP): Shares in the United Arab Emirates’ ADNOC Gas soared 25 percent in opening trade on Monday in a \$2.5 billion initial public offering that aims to tap into growing demand for the fuel.

ADNOC Gas, a subsidiary of state-owned energy giant Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), rose to 2.96 dirhams (\$0.80) from its launch price of 2.37 dirhams.

ADNOC Gas, which only became operational at the start of this year, is the biggest flotation yet on the Abu Dhabi stock exchange. The IPO was heavily oversubscribed even after it was expanded from 4.0 to 5.0 percent of issued share capital in response to strong

interest. The final offer price of 2.37 dirhams, near the top of its range, implied a market capitalisation of around \$50 billion.

At more than 50 times oversubscribed, it was the biggest demand ever seen for an initial public offering in the Middle East and North Africa, outstripping oil firm Saudi Aramco’s world-record \$29.4 billion listing just over three years ago.

The rapidly organised IPO follows last year’s scramble for alternative gas resources after the Russia-Ukraine conflict and comes as countries search for cleaner fuels to mitigate global warming.

ADNOC, the United Arab Emirates’ key revenue

earner, retains a 90 percent stake in the subsidiary formed from its former gas processing, LNG and industrial gas units.

Gas is being touted as cleaner than other fossil fuels as countries around the world strive to reduce their emissions.

Energy consultant Roudi Baroudi, who heads the Qatar-based Energy and Environment Holding firm, said Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) was “the most important transition fuel in the move away from hydrocarbons”.

In 2021, the UAE produced 57 billion cubic metres (bcm) of natural gas, or about 1.4 percent of global output, according to the BP Statistical Review of World Energy.

Pre-budget seminar discusses taxation, regulations SMEs growth

LAHORE (APP): Representatives of the business community said at a pre-budget seminar that the government should take the business community into confidence while making major decisions on taxation and regulations to ensure economic growth, especially promotion of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the country.

The seminar was held with Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) Chief Executive Officer Farhan Aziz Khawaja in the chair, here on Monday. Various business leaders including Adnan Jalil, KP Minister Industries, Muhammad Haroon, a senior officer-bearer of Peshawar chamber, Amjad Siddique, vice president Quetta chamber, Hamid Ateeq Sarwar, former federal additional secretary and Mahmood Khalid, senior economist of Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), addressed the seminar. Ms Nadia Jehangir Seth, GM Policy Planning

and Ms Maryam Anas Ganaei, manager SMEDA, conducted the seminar as hosts.

Farhan Khawaja urged the participants to identify crucial issues facing the SME sector in the prevailing economic crisis. He said, “We should focus our attention to find out solutions to problems.” He suggested to consider the examples of Egypt and Sri Lanka, who had adopted viable measures to come out of the crisis similar to be faced by Pakistan at present. He assured that recommendations given by the participants at the session would be taken up with policy-makers in Islamabad.

The CEO said that a meeting of the business community leaders in this context would also be arranged with federal Minister for Industries and Production.

The business community representatives expressed a common viewpoint that high mark-up rate, augmenting prices of energy

and burden of multiple taxes at provincial and federal level had squeezed the margins of growth for industry.

They appreciated that SMEDA was acting as voice of SMEs in the policy making corridors. They said that government should take the business community into confidence while making major decisions on taxation and regulations.

Muhammad Harpoon regretted that tax concessions committed with FATA business community to promote SMEs, had not been implemented. He suggested to utilise 2,080-kilometre Afghan border linked with FATA for promoting bilateral trade between SMEs of the two countries.

Amjad Siddiqui suggested to make a strategy to explore plenty of the previous mineral resources available in Balochistan.

He said that 42 registered minerals including gold, coal and manganese could change the economic fate of Pakistan if utilised with

the support of modern technology. He also urged to promote agriculture and livestock sector in Balochistan through modern techniques.

Mehmood Khalid, in his concluding remarks, made a number of forecasts about the incoming fiscal budget. He suspected that future budget would bring a big cut in PSDP account and a huge increase in taxes. He suggested that instead of increasing tax rate, measures should be taken to expand tax base.

He said that a research had revealed that 45 lines out of 88 lines of Withholding Tax had made less than one percent contribution in the tax-net. So, these 45 lines should be removed from the list the Withholding Tax, he suggested and made the similar opinion about the distinction rule of Filers and Non-Filers.

He observed that such distinction had created distortion in the taxation system and recommended to abolish this distinction in the coming budget.

Most Asian markets sink after US lender’s collapse

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Most Asian markets fell Monday as the closure of two regional US banks sparked fears of contagion in the financial sector, even as officials promised to support customers.

The collapse Friday of Silicon Valley Bank, which specialises in venture-capital financing largely in the tech sector, came after a huge run on deposits left it unable to stay afloat on its own.

That came in response to its announcement of a stock offering and sale of securities to raise much-needed cash. Its shares collapsed 60 percent in New York on Thursday and trading was suspended Friday morning, before regulators said they had closed it down.

SVB is the largest retail bank to fail since the 2008 financial crisis.

Its problems had built up as the US Federal Reserve’s year-long interest rate hikes meant securities it owned were selling for significantly

less -- a problem that other banks could face.

On Sunday, New York regulators said they had closed another lender, Signature Bank.

The crisis forced the Fed, the Treasury Department and Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. to pledge to fully protect all depositors and give backup to any lenders struggling to find cash, providing easier terms on short-term loans.

In a joint statement, they said SVB depositors would have access to “all of their money” starting Monday, March 13, and that taxpayers will not have to foot the bill. “We are taking decisive actions to protect the US economy by strengthening public confidence in our banking system,” the agencies said in the statement.

“The US banking system remains resilient and on a solid foundation,” due in large part due to reforms undertaken after the financial crisis that introduced

new safeguards for the banking industry.

President Joe Biden vowed to hold “fully accountable” the people responsible for “this mess” and said he would deliver remarks on Monday morning on maintaining a resilient banking system.

US bank shares plunged Friday, and Asian lenders extended their own losses, with HSBC, National Australia Bank and Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group all well down on Monday.

And broader equity markets were also down, with Tokyo off more than one percent, while Sydney, Seoul, Singapore, Taipei, Wellington, Manila and Jakarta were all in the red. However, Hong Kong bounced after last week’s steep losses, while Shanghai also edged up. US futures were also sharply higher.

The crisis will complicate the Fed’s plans to further hike interest rates as it strug-

gles to rein in inflation, with investors now expecting it will lift them just 25 basis points at its next meeting, rather than the 50 points tipped last week.

Friday also saw the release of data showing a forecast-busting jump in US jobs creation last month, signalling more work is needed to cool the economy. The Fed keeps a close eye on the jobs market as it decides on monetary policy. Inflation figures are due out later this week.

The pledge of support “will bring confidence back to the markets”, Carol Pepper of Pepper International told Bloomberg TV.

“But from the Fed’s point of view, there are additional dangers that need to be reviewed, which will take some time. So I’m hoping that this will help them to have a good reason to pause because frankly creating financial stability is the number one job at the Fed.”



In brief

India to face Australia

AHMEDABAD (Agencies): India secured a 2-1 series win over Australia after the fourth Test petered out into a draw. The tourists batted throughout day five in Ahmedabad and declared on 175-2 with a lead of 84 before the teams shook hands. India secured their place in the World Test Championship final after Sri Lanka's earlier final-ball defeat by New Zealand. They will play Australia for the Test title at The Oval on 7-11 June. The tourists started the day trailing by 91 runs on first innings after India amassed 571, with Virat Kohli scoring a majestic 186. But Australia's batters defied India on a flat wicket as Marnus Labuschagne finished unbeaten with a gritty 63 from 213 balls. Earlier, opener Travis Head made 90 from 163 balls in a partnership of 139 for the second wicket with Labuschagne. Nightwatchman Matthew Kuhnemann was the first wicket to fall for six to Ravichandran Ashwin, with spinners bowling the majority of the overs in batter-friendly conditions. It was India's 16th consecutive series win at home, and will be their second appearance in the World Test Championship final after they lost to New Zealand in the previous final in 2021. Australia's place was confirmed after their victory over India in the third Test in Indore, but India were still battling with Sri Lanka for the second spot. With India avoiding defeat, it means Sri Lanka can no longer qualify even if they beat New Zealand in the second Test of their series, which starts on Friday. The draw also ensured India won the Border-Gavaskar trophy for the fourth successive time.

Guardiola era 'will be judged'

LONDON (Agencies): Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola says his reign will "absolutely" be judged on whether he leads the club to a first Champions League title, although he "doesn't agree" with it. City have won nine major trophies since Guardiola took charge in 2016. Guardiola was asked whether his spell will be deemed a failure if City do not win Europe's premier cup competition. "It doesn't mean I agree with it but, absolutely, I'll be judged on that," said the 52-year-old Spaniard. "Before my first game in the Champions League [with City], people said I was here to win it. I said 'what?' I don't know, but I accept it. As much as I go through, it's not going to change." City will secure a place in this season's quarter-finals if they win their last-16 second leg at home to RB Leipzig on Tuesday. The closest they have come to Champions League glory was when they reached the 2021 final, where they lost 1-0 to Chelsea. A late fight-back by Real Madrid prevented City returning to the final last season, but in Guardiola's first four seasons at Etihad Stadium they failed to progress past the quarter-finals. City were upset by French sides Monaco and Lyon, while suffering agonising exits against Premier League rivals Liverpool and Tottenham, with the latter coming after VAR played a big role in the outcome of a thrilling second leg at the Etihad. In November, Guardiola, who won the Champions League twice as Barcelona coach, signed a two-year contract extension to 2025 and said he wanted "to stay and continue fighting for trophies".

New Zealand beat Sri Lanka in final-ball thriller

CHRISTCHURCH (Agencies): Kane Williamson hit a sublime unbeaten century to lead New Zealand to a thrilling two-wicket win over Sri Lanka off the final ball of the first Test. Williamson's 121 not out saw the Black Caps chase down 285 on a rain-shortened fifth day in Christchurch. The hosts needed eight off the final over and scrambled a bye from the last ball to seal a dramatic win. Defeated ended Sri Lanka's hopes of reaching the World Test Championship final in June. Sri Lanka needed to sweep New Zealand 2-0 in this series to qualify, so India will now face Australia in the final at The Oval. The fourth and final Test between the two sides in Ahmedabad finished in a draw, ensuring India won the series 2-1. The Black Caps started the final day on 28-1, requiring 257 more runs for victory. After the first two sessions were washed out, the umpires ruled there would

be a maximum of 52 overs bowled in an extended final session, meaning New Zealand had to score at nearly five runs per over. They slipped to 90-3 before Williamson combined with Daryl Mitchell for a 142-run stand off 157 balls, with Sri Lanka left to rue wicketkeeper Niroshan Dickwella dropping Williamson on 33. New Zealand wobbled after Mitchell was bowled for 81 by Asitha Fernando, who then also removed Tom Blundell and Michael Bracewell. It left the hosts on 266-6, needing a further 19 runs with 16 balls remaining. Captain Tim Southee also fell, but Williamson managed to take the match to the final over. Matt Henry was run out attempting a second run off the third ball, bringing an injured Neil Wagner to the crease. The fast bowler has a bulging disc in his back and a torn right hamstring and has been ruled out of the second Test. Williamson sliced the

next delivery through point for four to level the scores before Fernando bowled a bouncer that was close to being called wide on height but was ruled a dot ball. With one needed from the last ball, New Zealand ran a bye through to the keeper after Williamson's missed pull shot and he just managed to slide his bat down in time despite a direct hit at the non-striker's end. It is New Zealand's second thrilling Test win in a row, following their stunning one-run victory over England last month. "Seeing how calm Kane is out in the middle keeps us calm as well," said Southee. "He's a world-class player and world-class players are able to perform in different conditions." "The guys were very trusting in what he was going to do and, alongside Daryl, for most of the day it was a great partnership that got us in that great position." The second Test at the Basin Reserve in Wellington starts on Friday.

Oman CG terms Karachi Games as great opportunity for new athletes

KARACHI (APP): The Consul General of the Sultanate of Oman in Karachi Engineer Sami Abdullah Salim Al Khanjari, Monday said the Karachi Games have provided a great opportunity for many new athletes, both male and female, to prove their abilities. He said the high performance that has been shown in various sports was commendable, especially the performance of women players in the game of softball has impressed a lot. On the occasion, Administrator Karachi Dr. Syed Saifur Rehman, Secretary General of Softball Federation of Pakistan Asif Azeem, Organizing Secretary of the event Saleem Tajik, President of Sindh Softball

Association Waseem Hashmi, Secretary Sindh Softball Muhammad Zeeshan Merchant, President Karachi Softball Muhammad Nasir and other personalities related to sports were also present. Administrator Karachi Dr. Syed Saifur Rehman said the presence of Consul General of Oman in the final ceremony was an honour for us. The Karachi Games have provided a sports platform to the youth of the city. This series of events will continue with further improvements in the future to provide a healthy atmosphere for our youth to be inclined to positive activities. Earlier, District Central beat District East by eleven runs in a one-sided final to lift the title of the Karachi

Games Softball event. The winning team scored 13 runs in the allotted three innings, Adina Hasan, and Muskan Shaukat scored 3 runs each while Disha Ramesh and Kainat and Manahil Afzal scored 2 runs each for District East. Noor and Zoha scored 1 run each for the runners-up team. In the third position match, District Keamari defeated District West by 11 runs against 4 and won the bronze medal. From Kemari, Sabin and Farasha scored 3 runs each while Ayesha and Kashf scored 2 runs each. The Consul General of Oman Engineer Sami Abdullah Al Khanjari along with Administrator Karachi Dr. Syed Saifur Rahman distributed trophies, medals and shields among the players.

Pakistan blind team to feature in World Games

ISLAMABAD (APP): After a gap of 16 years, Pakistan blind cricket team would feature in the International Blind Sports Federation (IBSA) World Games scheduled to be held in Birmingham, UK from August 18 to 27. "A 20-member Pakistan team will be sent in the extravaganza after full preparation and selection on merit," Pakistan Blind Cricket Council (PBCC) Chairman Syed Sultan Shah told APP on Monday. He said so far besides Pakistan, three other countries had confirmed participation in the cricket event of the World Games which includes Australia, England

and India. "Pakistan team will feature in the mega event after a gap of 16 years. Prior to it, Pakistan chipped in the event two times in 2002 and 2006. Pakistan team could not participate in the World Games after 2006 as some visa issues had popped up time and again," he said. "But now we are in contact with IBSA and hopefully, our team will go in the World Games this year," he said. Sultan was of the view that a strong Pakistan blind cricket outfit would be sent to the Games, as "we want to win the mega event and make the nation proud". "Pakistan team is very

strong and has already won many laurels for the country. I'm hopeful that the Pakistan team will make the country proud in the extravaganza," he said. The IBSA World Games is the largest high-level international event for athletes with visual impairments, with more than 1000 competitors from more than 70 nations. Staged every four years, the World Games are the pinnacle of the international sporting calendar outside of the Paralympic Games. With three Paralympic and eight non-Paralympic sports, for some athletes, it is the highest level they can compete at.

Sarai Naurang, Lakki Marwat wins Inter-District Kabaddi C'ship

BANNU (APP): Sarai Naurang, Lakki Marwat has won the Inter-District Kabaddi Championship, after handing a shocking defeat to host Bannu in the sensational final. Hundreds and thousands of spectators had turned up at the special Kabaddi ground developed by ex-MPA Malik Riaz, a local political figure and a promoter of the Kabaddi game in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Deputy Speaker National Assembly Zahid Akram Khan Durrani, Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis Sajid Hussain Tori, Adviser to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on sports and Youth Affairs Dr Riaz Anwar distributed prizes among the players. Whereas, Director General Sports Khalid Khan, former MPA Malik

Riaz, Deputy Director Operations Jamshed Baloch, Regional Sports Officer Shafqatullah, RSO Kashif Farhan, DSO Adil Shah, among other important personalities were also present. Like every year, this year with the support of Director General Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, under the auspices of the Provincial Kabaddi Association, former MPA Malik Riaz, organised the Ziyat Akram Durrani Memorial Inter-District Kabaddi Tournament in Mandan Park, Bannu. The final was played between Sarai Naurang and Bannu teams. Despite having a 13-20 lead in the first half, the Bannu team was completely unsuccessful in the second half, mostly dominated by Sarai Naurang. At the crucial stage, the injury of the senior

players led to the defeat to Bannu and so Sarai Naurang won the final by 37-31. At the end of the tournament, the chief guest distributed the prizes among the players. On the occasion, Dr Riaz Anwar and Director General Sports Khalid Khan addressed the ceremony. They highlighted the aim and objective to promote the traditional sport, Kabaddi, in a befitting manner besides other steps for the promotion and development of other games. The government, they said, was working for the development of Kabaddi. They also appreciated ex-MPA Malik Riaz Khan for his role in promoting Kabaddi as a traditional sport in the province, particularly in Bannu by holding tournaments over the years.

Navy Wins National Rowing C'ship

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Navy lifts the Men's title while Pakistan Army grabs women's category crown of National Rowing Championship concluded here at Rawal Lake Islamabad organised by Pakistan Rowing Federation (PWF). Teams of Pakistan Army, Navy, Wapda, Police, HEC, KBC and Islamabad Rowing Association participated in the championships. A number of elite level and emerging athletes (men and women) showed the mastery of their respective skills during the championship. In men rowing events, Navy won 5 gold and 2 silver medals to win the championship while Army got the second position with 2 gold and 5 silver medals. In women rowing events, Army grabbed 7 gold medals to clinch the women's title while Wapda won 7 silver medals, Navy grabbed 5 bronze and HEC grabbed 2 bronze medals respectively.

Atif Butt qualifies for the World eSports C'ship

PESHAWAR (APP): Atif Butt of Gujranwala has qualified for the World eSports Championship by defeating Lahore's Heera in the grand final played on a hot note here at the main arena of the Peshawar sports Complex on Monday. The Championship will be played in Romania. Provincial Olympic Association Secretary Zulfikar Butt participated as a special guest on this occasion and prizes were distributed among the position holders.

Along with them, the General Secretary of the Pakistan eSports Federation Nasr Minullah Butt, Provincial Secretary Muhammad Saqib and other important personalities were present.

The National eSports competition has concluded in which players from all over the country participated Online and Offline. Atif Butt beat Heera in the Tekken 7 final.

In the qualifying round, a total of 1,500 people from all over Pakistan participated in 6 Games Dota 2, CS GO, PUBG Mobile, mobile Legend Bang Bang, Tekken 7 and e-Football.

The Online and Offline round started on February 25.

The Offline event was played at the Peshawar Sports Complex while the winners of the other events will play qualifying rounds at the South Asian level and the winners of which will qualify for the World eSports Championship to be played in Beirut, Lebanon.

Fazil bags National Tenpin Bowling C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): Fazil Maniya grabbed the National Tenpin Bowling Championship at Leisure City Bowling Club Jinnah Park Rawalpindi.

Member National Assembly, Dr. Samina Matloob who was the chief guest at the concluding ceremony gave away prizes and cash awards to the winning players. President, Pakistan Tenpin Bowling Federation, Ijaz ur Rehman, Secretary General,

Muhammad Hussain Chatha were also present on the occasion.

Fazil Maniya got the first position while Ahmar Saldera secured the second position. Muhammad Hussain Chatha and Shabbir Lashkarwala obtained 3rd and 4th positions, respectively.

Around 150 men and women took part in the Championship including inter-school, deaf women, men deaf, amateur, ladies, teams event, men singles, men doubles and Masters.

Punjab, Wapda, Army, HEC move in baseball semis

ISLAMABAD (APP): Punjab, Wapda, Pakistan Army and Higher education Commission have moved in the semifinals of the National Women's Baseball Championship being organized by the Pakistan Baseball Federation at the Pakistan sports Complex. Punjab defeated Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to qualify for the semifinals. In the semifinals, Punjab would face Wapda while Pakistan Army will be up against Higher Education Commission on Tuesday. These teams have

qualified for the semifinals on league basis. In the two matches played on Monday, Punjab defeated Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with a score of 17-9. For Punjab, Samia, Muniba scored three, Nadia, Alishba, Khush Bakht and Muzama scored two, while Amina, Namra and Tayyaba scored one each. Tehbih, Shawal and Faryal scored two, while Parha Ali, Nafisa and Iman scored one each for Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. Earlier, Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa beat Sindh by a score of 9-2 in the other match of the Baseball Championship. For Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Aisia scored two points while Shawal, Faryal, Prakha, Nafisa, Sudra, Rahmeen and Tehbih scored one each. Kawat and Tulsi scored one each for Sindh.

Pakistan Baseball Federation (PBBF) President Syed Fakhr Ali Shah and Pakistan Ten Pin Bowling Federation President Ijaz ur Rahman were also present on the occasion.

Indian Wells 2023 Norrie beats Daniel to reach fourth round

INDIAN WELLS (Agencies): British number one Cameron Norrie came from behind to beat Japanese qualifier Taro Daniel on Sunday and reach the last 16 at Indian Wells. The 10th seed was a set and 4-1 down in California but won the next five games before clinching the second set. The 2021 champion, 27, then saw out the decider to claim a 6-7 (5-7) 7-5 6-2 win over the US-born Daniel, 30.

"I'm happy to be riding the wave right now but I still have a lot of things to work on," said Norrie.

The world number 12 now has 20 wins this season and upset top seed Carlos Alcaraz to win his fifth overall ATP title at the Rio Open last month.

Norrie's only previous Masters 1000 title came at

Indian Wells in 2021 and his latest visit will continue against either the sixth seed Andrey Rublev of Russia or France's Ugo Humbert.

"It was not the prettiest of matches today, but I'll take it," Norrie added.

"I should have won that first set. [I had] lots of chances and I think it carried over a bit into the second set. "But I was able to really play point for point and then really come back and play some of my best tennis."

Alcaraz is again the top seed in California and he beat Australia's Thanasi Kokkinakis 6-3 6-3 to set up a third-round clash with Dutchman Tallon Griekspoor. The 19-year-old Spaniard must win the title to regain the world number one spot from Serb Novak Djokovic, who withdrew as he is unable to enter the US

because he is not vaccinated against Covid-19.

Chilean qualifier Cristian Garin shocked Norway's Casper Ruud 6-4 7-6 (7-2) to hand the world number four another setback in a disappointing season. But there were no worries for the seventh seed, Denmark's Holger Rune, who beat American Mackenzie McDonald 7-5 6-3 while the ninth seed, Poland's Hubert Hurkacz, beat Australia's Alexei Popyrin 6-3 6-3.

In the women's draw, third seed Jessica Pegula of the USA came back for a 3-6 6-4 7-5 win over Russia's Anastasia Potapova to reach the fourth round.

Meanwhile, Tunisia's Ons Jabeur progressed to the third round, with the fourth seed also regrouping to win 4-6 6-4 6-1 against Magdalena Frech of Poland.

National games in Quetta after 19 years will boost soft image of Balochistan: Hazara

QUETTA (PPI): Abdul Khaliq Hazara, Minister for Sports, Culture and Youth Affairs, has said that the arrangement of National games in Quetta after 19 years will definitely boost the soft image of Balochistan province nationally and internationally.

These views were expressed by him while addressing a function held in connected with the opening ceremony of the second phase of first Balochistan Games at Football ground of Ayub Stadium, Quetta here on Sunday. He said that the proposal of declaring "Balochistan Games" as a permanent event to be

held every year had been brought into the notice of competent authority for consideration.

Hazara inaugurated second phase of the game by kicking football. About 3000 players of 40 different disciplines from different divisions of the province including, Quetta, Naseerabad, Mekran, Zhob, Sibi and Loralai division, attended the opening ceremony of the second phase of Balochistan Games to be held from March 12, 2023 to March 23, 2023.

On the occasion, Secretary, Sports and Youth Affairs, Muhammad Ishaque Jamali, Assistant Director

Muhammad Asif Langove, Assistant Director Youth Affairs, Muhammad Mustafa Khan Achakzai, Haji Muhammad Ibrahim Khan Nurzai, President, Balochistan Darts Association/ representative of Darts discipline, Raees Saddam Khan, representative of Archery, Rehmatullah Nurzai, representative of Martial Arts, Qaiser Mehmood, representative of athletics, Mubarak Ali Shan, Muhammad Qasim, representative of Fencing, Ghulam Farooq, Senior Auditor office of the Accountant General Balochistan and others were also present.

Babar, Rizwan, Afridi, Fakhar and Rauf rested for Afghanistan T20Is

LAHORE (APP): The PCB selection committee of the national men's team, headed by Chief Selector Haroon Rasheed, has rested captain Babar Azam, Mohammad Rizwan (wk), Shaheen Shah Afridi, Fakhar Zaman and Harris Rauf with a view to manage workload and future assignments of the senior cricketers and blood young cricketers into the national side.

Shadab Khan has been asked to lead the team in the three T20Is against Afghanistan in Sharjah as a natural choice, as he has been deputy of Babar Azam in the format and is an excellent all-rounder, who has led Islamabad United well in the HBL PSL 8.

The 15-member squad includes the first-timers like Ihsanullah and Saim Ayub, besides Shan Masood, Tayyab Tahir, Abdullah Shafique, Iftikahr Ahmed, Mohammad Haris (wk), Azam Khan (wk), Mohammad Wasim, Faheem Ashraf, Muhammad Nawaz Naseem Shah, Zaman Khan and Imad Wasim, who returns to the national squad on the back of a superlative all-round performance in the ongoing HBL SPL 8 for Karachi Kings, where he scored 404 runs at an average of 170. 46

and grabbed 9 wickets. Abrar Ahmed, Hasseebullah and Usama Mir have been announced as three reserves.

In a press conference at the PCB headquarters here on Monday, Chairman PCB Management Committee Najam Sethi dispelled the impression that Babar Azam was being replaced as the all-format national team captain, adding that all five players have been taken into confidence and rested keeping in view the future assignments including the series against Sri Lanka, Asia Cup and the ICC Men's ODI World Cup in India this year.

Sethi said 'Pakistan has fielded a young side on the tour of Afghanistan to groom and assess new talent "and I have consulted all senior players and taken Babar Azam, Mohammad Rizwan, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Fakhar Zaman and Harris Rauf in the loop on the matter".

The PCB chief said he was least concerned about losing or winning the series against Afghanistan but the series will serve as an opportunity to harness young talent who will serve the national cricket in good stead in future.

About Shaheen Shah Afridi, he said he had never contemplated discussing

captaincy with Shaheen Shah Afridi, adding that Babar Azam is the top performer of Pakistan cricket and he will remain captain of the team in all formats as long as he wishes to lead.

About the Indian stance regarding non-participation in the Asia Cup, to be held in Pakistan, Najam Sethi said that he would take up the issue during the ACC and ICC meetings, adding that Asia Cup and Champions Trophy tournaments are to be held in Pakistan and he will present PCB stance.

He said that the BCCI enjoyed good clout at the ICC, adding that he had sought direction from the government of Pakistan on the matter, adding that he was bound to follow instructions of the patron PCB Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

"If Pakistan government directs me to take part in the ICC Men's ODI World Cup 2023 in India, I will do the bidding," the PCB chief responded. Najam Sethi said that the PCB would not demand any share from the revenue of the three match T20Is series against Afghanistan, adding that Sharjah was a small cricket ground and no big revenues were not expected from the series.



In brief

Admin foils 7 bids to smuggle flour bags

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Food Department Rawalpindi and district police here on Monday foiled seven bids to smuggle 2108 wheat, flour and 15 maida bags besides recovering 23 tons wheat. According to a district administration spokesman, the authorities of the food department along with Potohar Division police conducted raids in different areas and rounded up seven drivers namely Abdul Wahab, Waseem, Ilyas, Abdul Wahid, Amir, Hamid and Kashif and recovered 23 tons wheat, 2108 wheat, flour and 15 maida bags from their possession. He informed that the accused were trying to smuggle wheat and flour bags out of the Rawalpindi division. The Food Department Rawalpindi and district police on the directives of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rawalpindi were strictly monitoring all the exit points of Rawalpindi district to foil wheat and flour smuggling bids, he added. He said, dozens of bids were foiled during the last 10 days and teams recovered thousands wheat, flour and fine flour (maida) bags from the possession of the arrested accused.

Two-day Int'l Islamic moot held

ISLAMABAD (APP): Vice Chancellor Allama Iqbal Open University (AIQU), Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood Monday said that a road map should be defined for reforming the society, following which the new generation can start a good life. He expressed these views while addressing a two-day international conference on "Tradition and Modernity in Islamic Thought: Contemporary and Historical Perspective" organized by the Department of Islamic Thought, History and Culture, Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies, AIQU. At the outset, the VC further said that we must come out of our own confines to listen to others and foster a culture of conversation and that is how the atmosphere of cooperation and equality will be established in society. He congratulated the organizers of the conference and thanked the national and international participants.

Former Chairman, the Council of Islamic Ideology, Dr. Muhammad Khalid Masood was the chief guest at the opening session of the conference while Professor Emeritus, Bath Spa University, UK, Dr. Iftikhar Malik was the keynote speaker.

12 held for possessing illegal arms

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested 12 illegal arms holders and those involved in aerial firing and recovered arms, and ammunition from their possession during an operation, informed police spokesman. During the course of action, City Police arrested two accused Farhan and Anees, and recovered 02 30-bore pistols from their possession. Similarly, Ratta Amaral police recovered 01 pistol of 30 bore from Siraj and 01 pistol of 30 bore from Amjad. While Westridge police recovered 01 pistol of 30 bore from Hamza and 01 pistol of 30 bore from Rafaqat. Following an operation, Wah Cantt Police recovered 01 30-bore pistol from Riasiat. Chontra Police recovered 01 pistol of 30 bore from Shakeel. Kalar Syedan police recovered 01 pistol of 30 bore from Hassan who was allegedly involved in aerial firing and 01 pistol of 30 bore from Badarsin while 22 round pistol of 30 bore from Ikhlal, and 25 round pistol of 30 bore from Zohaib were recovered.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar addressing a key note at National Women Police Conference at Serena Hotel in Federal Capital.

Need to ensure suitable environment for working women: Law Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar on Monday said that it was necessary to provide a proper work environment to women with zero tolerance for discrimination, fear and harassment. He stated this while addressing the inaugural session of the National Women Police Conference organized by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and the Parliamentarians Commission for Human Rights (PCHR) under the theme of "Inspire, Empower, and Transform."

The law minister said that policing for women or by women was a need of the hour, adding that nothing including law and religion stops women from playing an active and productive role in a profession of their choice.

He said that the legislation could give benefit only when the law was implemented in letter and spirit, adding that collective efforts were required for this purpose. The litigants were suffering due to the complexity of the law and jurisdiction issues, he said.

Azam Nazeer said that society needed to bring

changes in its attitudes towards gender issues to empower women. About 80% of women in the country needed cooperation and protection, he said.

Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar and Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah affirmed the commitment of the government to ensure that everyone in Pakistan had access to justice and that women are safe. They emphasized the need for collaborative efforts between government agencies, civil society organizations and other stakeholders to promote gender equality and women empowerment in the country.

During his remarks, US Ambassador to Islamabad Donald Blome emphasized the importance of women's inclusion in policing and the need for innovative policies to ensure equal access to justice.

Highlighting the role of women in policing and acknowledging the challenges they face in their line of work, Ambassador Blome also discussed the need for collaboration and partnership between various stakeholders to ensure women have equal opportunities and access to justice.

Executive Director of

PCHR Shafique Chaudhry briefed the participants on the efforts towards improving gender inclusion and responsiveness in Pakistan police. USIP Country Director Imran Khan shared details about various activities under the U.S. Embassy-USIP Police Awam Sath Sath (PASS) program that USIP is carrying out in partnership with police departments and civil society organizations nationwide. The National Women Police Conference 2023 is part of a broader effort to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in Pakistan.

Speaking at the conference, Minister of Human Rights Riaz Hussain Pirzada, Federal Minister of Planning Ahsan Iqbal, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah and Federal Minister of Climate Change Sherry Rehman also highlighted the importance of gender-responsive policing in Pakistan. The conference concluded with a summary of recommendations and a way forward, followed by closing remarks from U.S. Embassy's International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Director Lori Antolinez.

'Govt taking steps to strengthen employees rights'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Special Committee on Affected Employees Prof. Dr. Qadir Khan Mandokhail on Monday said that the coalition government was taking steps to strengthen and protect the rights of employees working in different government departments.

"The PTI-led government did not fulfil promises made with the government employees," he said while speaking to a private news channel. He said inflation had increased manifold, and poverty and unemployment had reached unprecedented high levels during the last four years.

The PPP had always increased government employees' salaries and pensions, he said, adding that government departments now were facing financial crises.

Replying to a question, he said PPP was always ready for elections but there was a need to work collectively for the welfare of the state instead of creating anarchy in the country. He also urged all political parties to rise above personal agendas for the larger interest of the common man.

ANF recovers 705 kg drugs in four operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) recovered 705 kg of drugs while conducting four operations and arrested three accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. He informed that ANF recovered 2.4 kg charras from a car intercepted near "Tarnol Phatak" on G.T. Road, Rawalpindi.

Two drug smugglers were also rounded up during the operation.

In another operation, ANF recovered 500 grams of heroin concealed in a laptop from the possession of a Sharjah-bound passenger, a resident of Buner, arrested at Faisalabad Airport. The spokesman informed that a bid to smuggle drugs to a foreign country through Gwadar was foiled and ANF recovered 510 kg charras and 21 kg Ice drug buried underground, hidden in bushes at Saji point in the Dasht area of Balochistan.

In another operation, ANF conducted a raid in Pashkan, Gwadar, and seized 155 kg charras and 16 kg heroin.

Floral art, plantation activities vital for mental health: First Lady

ISLAMABAD (APP): First Lady Begum Samina Alvi on Monday said that the promotion of floral art and plantation activities were vital to create an environmental balance and address the issues related to mental health. The first lady, addressing a national show held by the Floral Art Society's Islamabad Chapter, said the floral art was not merely a hobby or pastime rather a form of therapy beneficial for mental health and reducing the stress and anxiety.

She highlighted that rapid urbanisation and massive construction activities were turning the cities into a concrete jungle usurping the spaces for greenery and flowers.

"The promotion of floral art and plantation activities is essential to address the situation. We will have to make collective efforts to beautify our cities and public places. This requires the engagement of youth as well as women to make them part of such healthy activities and

beautify their surroundings," she remarked. The first lady appreciated the President of Orchid Chapter and Floral Society of Pakistan for playing their role to promote and transfer the good practices of healthy activities to the future generations. She also congratulated the winners of the competition and lauded the Society's members for promoting floral art through their dedication and hard work. The first lady said the floral art could help the women express their creativity which also positively impacted the environment.

First Lady Samina Alvi said the Floral Society of Pakistan was providing the women a platform for healthy and creative activities enabling them to showcase their talent and polish their skills.

She congratulated the Orchid Chapter Islamabad on its Silver Jubilee and urged the body to continue working to promote the art of floral arrangement and horticulture in Pakistan.

Sanjrani reviews preparations for Senate's Golden Jubilee Celebrations

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani on Monday presided over a meeting to review arrangements for the upcoming Senate's Golden Jubilee Celebrations. The event is set to take place on March 15, 2023 to mark the 50th anniversary of the Senate.

Sanjrani visited various areas of the Parliament House building where the celebrations will take

place, including the Senate Hall, Photo Exhibition Spot, Lawn Area, and the arrival area for the guests.

He examined the preparations and issued necessary directives to ensure that everything is in place for the historic occasion.

The activities for celebrations include tree plantation, issuance of commemorative postal stamp and coin, and the unveiling

ing of the Senate Anthem. Sadiq Sanjrani highlighted the importance of these activities in celebrating the Senate's contributions to the country's democracy and ensuring a memorable event for all attendees. With only a few days left for the Senate Golden Jubilee Celebrations, Chairman Senate Sanjrani has called for finalization of the arrangements to make the event memorable.

Construction at IJP-Road causing trouble for commuters of twin cities

ISLAMABAD (APP): The commuters in Rawalpindi-Islamabad have been facing severe traffic jams, dust and smoke pollution issues due to the IJ Principal road expansion project which is being carried out to improve the road infrastructure.

The residents hail along IJ Principal Road, I-8, I-9, I-10, and Satellite Town have demanded its early completion as the dust and smoke pollution was causing respiratory diseases in the area and the project has also significantly affected the ecological environment of the twin cities.

The primary concern has been the heavy vehicles that are constantly moving in and out of the construction during peak hours, Rehman Ahmed a road user told APP, adding that long queues and significant delays cause frustration as well as inconvenience for commuters.

Another citizen, Abdul Jabbar said that drivers are violating traffic rules by not following lane discipline and overtaking from the wrong side. This results in further

chaos on the already congested road, he added. He said that commuters are having a tough time navigating through the traffic and reaching their destinations on time.

He said that the road construction project is already causing significant disruptions, and breakdowns of vehicles only worsen the situation.

He said that the situation has become so dire that commuters have started to seek alternative routes to avoid the IJP Road.

A resident of Satellite Town Maaz Khan said the passage of heavy vehicular traffic coming from various parts of the country was causing mental agony for the commuters owing to the traffic jams at various points of the under-construction project. When contacted by the Islamabad Traffic Police, an official informed that the authorities are aware of the problem and have taken measures to address it. However, he said the construction project is expected to continue till 23rd March 2023 and the flow of traffic will be restored.

Largest toll plazas on M-9 highway face traffic management challenges

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Karachi and Jamshoro toll plazas on the M-9 highway, which are the largest toll plazas in the area have become a concern for travellers due to long queues.

Talking to APP here on Monday, an official of the National Highway Authority (NHA) stated that the main reason for long queues was the lack of awareness among road users who enter M-Tag lanes instead of cash lanes

and vice versa, despite prominent displays of lanes on the toll plazas for the convenience of the

road commuters. The official informed that the toll plazas were managed by a subsidiary of Frontier Works Organization (FWO) M/s SCORE, adding they had 24 lane booths, out of which six are at entry and 18 booths have been set for an exit.

He said that to improve traffic management various measures had been implemented including lane partitions with barriers that extend up to 100 metres from the toll plaza, dedicated M-Tag lanes for commuters with sufficient M-Tag balance, and low bal-

ance options. In addition, he said cash lanes were also separated at each toll plaza for facilitating commuters who prefer to pay in cash.

An Electronic Toll and Traffic Management (ETTM) system with M-Tag Facility (One Tag) was also available for M-Tag users/road commuters, which saves time and allows them to pass through the toll plaza in the minimum possible time, he added. The NHA official urged road users to take advantage of the M-Tag facility to avoid long queues.

Two-day Spring Crafts Festival concludes

ISLAMABAD (APP): A two-day 'Spring Crafts Festival', an event showcasing traditional and contemporary crafts in Pakistan, concluded here late Sunday.

The event was an ongoing collaboration between Nomad Gallery and Serena Hotels. Federal Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman also visited the show. Addressing the event, Nageen Hyat, Founder Director, Nomad Gallery, rights and social activist and filmmaker said, "Pakistani art and crafts have a long tradition and history of a very wide range of skills, human practices of creative expression, storytelling and cultural participation. Both highly dynamic and a characteristically constant feature of human life, they have developed into innovative, stylized and sometimes intricate forms."

The crafts were a vehicle through which human beings cultivate distinct social, cultural, and individual identities while transmitting values, impressions, judgments, ideas, visions, spiritual meanings, patterns of life and experiences across time and space, she added.

Nomad Gallery routinely and holistically supported the economic empowerment of women through its activities. "Our focus this year is two-fold: our Spring

Crafts Festival in collaboration with Serena Hotels remains a commitment of our collective belief in the continued pursuit of this endeavor," the Nomad Gallery founder highlighted.

Unprecedented rains last year played havoc across most of the country, resulting in the loss of precious lives and massive destruction. Hyat said, adding that dealing with a calamity of such immense magnitude, through emergency relief operations was a challenge difficult to imagine.

A gigantic task that would require huge resources as well as collective efforts by one and all, and a considerable amount of time, she stressed.

Therefore, in addition to focusing on women's economic empowerment, Nomad Gallery had been working to support the families of the flood-affected areas, Nageen stated.

"We have already conducted successful fundraisers independently, apart from in collaboration with the Pakistan National Council of the Arts and donated all proceeds to PPAF and the Edhi Foundation," she added.

The crafts represented here at the Spring Crafts Festival were made by the women of the flood-hit areas, she said.



ISLAMABAD: A view of massive traffic jam during morning time at Islamabad Expressway.

Govt assisted health centers

LAGHLMAN (Agencies): 18 health centers received one hundred items of medical and non-medical equipment in Laghman. The provincial official of Barak institution in Laghman said that medical and non-medical equipment and the construction of solar networks US were delivered to 18 health centers in Laghman. The governor of Laghman, Qari Zain al-Abidin Abid said that many health centers in the remote areas of this province are facing a lack of equipment and needs helps.

Outdate food collected

KABUL (Agencies): The inspection board of Kabul municipality collected over 3200kgs of low quality and outdated food and sanitary materials from Kabul city. The items include milk, creams, pickles, canned beans and peas, chips, chocolates, biscuits, shampoo, soap, various soft drinks, ketchup, and detergents, which are from the markets of the first district of Kabul city, said a source from Kabul municipality said.

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

MoPH to distribute Covid-19 vaccine

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Ministry of Public Health said that the next doses of Covid-19 vaccination will be provided in 17 provinces within 20 days.

A spokesman for the ministry, Sharafat Zaman Amerkhail, said nearly 2.5 million people will receive vaccination in this round.

According to Amerkhail, more 5,000 Covid-19 patients were registered in 2022 but it has dropped by 8 percent in 2023.

The officials of the Afghan-Japan hospital said that from 350 samples, only 9 positives cases were registered in the last month.

“There is a 20-day campaign in 17 provinces of the country. 2.4 million of our countrymen will be provided with vaccination,” said Zalmi Rishteen, head of the Covid-19 hospital.

According to the officials at the Afghan-Japan hospital, nearly 30 patients are under treatment in the hospital.

“When they brought me, I was in an emergency situation and didn’t know where I was. God bless the doctors,” said Fakhrudin, patient.

“They give us injections and monitor us even more than 10 times a night to see

our condition,” said Rajab Mohammad, patient.

This comes as doctors called on the people to remain cautious and follow medical recommendations to counter Covid-19.

“In February, we took 160 samples, of which two were positive,” said Zalmi Rahmati, a doctor.

“Covid-19 has lessened. The good news is that those who are older, should get a vaccination,” said Inamullah Rahmati, a doctor.

Since the outbreak of Covid-19, more than 12 million people across the country have received vaccination.

Afghanistan exports reach \$1.9 billion, says Ministry

KABUL (TOLOnews): The economic deputy PM’s office said that Afghan exports reached \$1.9 billion in 1401 (solar year), and compared to last year have increased by 63 percent.

The Ministry of Industry and Commerce said they will provide more facilities for traders.

“Our biggest import was linen textiles from different countries, like China and Pakistan, and our greatest exports are coal, dry fruit, and carpets,” said Abdul Salam Javad, a spokesman for the MoCI.

The National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA) said that just in one month (Dalwa), domestic goods worth more than \$176 million have been exported abroad, and the imports were less than \$700 million in one month.

“Restrictions on the banking system is the challenge that traders are faced with,” said Mohammad Halim Rafi, spokesman for the National Statistics and Information Authority.

Meanwhile, the Chamber of Commerce and Investment said that transferring money from banks, and the high customs tariffs, are major challenges for merchants.

According to the Industry and Commerce Ministry, in 1400 exports were \$850 million.

Khalis meets SK’s Chargé d’affaires

KABUL (Agencies): Mawlawi Matiullah Khalis, President of Afghan Red Crescent Society, met with the South Korean Chargé d’affaires for Afghanistan, Moon Sung-hwan in Qatar.

The two sides discussed bilateral cooperation, humanitarian aid, strengthening friendly relations and other matters of interest, ARCS said in a statement.

Mr. Khalis thanked South Korea for its humanitarian aid and asked for further assistance for Afghans in need.

He also sought cooperation in the treatment of patients suffering from mental illnesses and providing training programs for the Afghan people.

For his part, Mr. Sung-hwan promised to cooperate in the fields mentioned by the Afghan official.

Food prices expected to drop further

KABUL (Agencies): The Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MoIC) says the prices of food items and fuel have decreased in the country and efforts are underway to further reduce costs so members of the public can afford to cover their basic needs.

“In the market, the prices of food items have decreased, as you can see, a bag of flour was more than 2,500 afghanis last year and has now come down to 1,850 afghanis, and the price of fuel and rice has also decreased,” said Akhundzada Abdul Salam Javad, a spokesman for the MoIC.

Meanwhile, the Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI) has also said that food prices will drop further.

“We wish the committees would monitor the market as much as possible because this is very important,” said Mirwais Hajizada, a member of the private sector.

In addition, the residents of Kabul say there have been changes in the prices of flour, oil, gas and sugar, but they hope the cost of living will drop even further as people are still struggling to make ends meet.

“Thankfully, it has become a little cheaper and we hope it will be even cheaper in the future,” said a Kabul resident.

Currently, a 50 kg bag of flour costs 1,900 afghanis; 10 kg oil costs 1,050 afghanis; seven kilos of sugar costs 400 afghanis; one kilo of gas costs 58 afghanis; and one liter of petrol costs 66 afghanis.

Afghan forces arrest man with magnetic IEDs



KABUL (Khaama Press): A man was arrested in Kabul’s capital city of Afghanistan with six magnetic Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), according to the Ministry of National Defense on Monday.

The Ministry said that the apprehended capture was made possible based on the intelligence gathered by the 313 Central Corps of the defence ministry.

“A man was arrested along with six 6-ring stick mines and two rifles in the Dehamzang area of Kabul,” the Ministry tweeted, adding that the suspect will be handed over to the relevant authorities after investigation. The arrest came two days after an attack on Friday late evening in Kabul that killed three and wounded four members of the Taliban, the Afghan

Freedom Front, claimed in a news release.

However, the Islamic Emirate confirmed the explosion without casualties and said that only two people were wounded.

Recently, the attack has been increased on the Taliban interim government by Islamic State Khorasan and other militant groups in the country.

Within a week, three

explosions occurred, one in Kabul, claiming three lives, one in Balkh’s governor’s office, which led to his death and another in Tebyan Cultural Centre, killing more than three and other 30 journalists.

Since the Taliban retook control of power in Afghanistan, security has been a significant challenge in front of them amid a humanitarian dire in the country.

Divorce rates dropped in Afghanistan: Supreme Court

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Supreme Court expressed optimism over the reduction in divorce cases, saying that it has recorded 400 cases over the past three months across the country.

“In the past three months, all over the country in all courts of the country, only 400 cases of divorce have been filed, of which 220 have been upheld and 50 denied, the

rest of the cases are being processed,” said deputy spokesman for the Supreme Court, Mawlawi Enayatullah.

Alias Marriam is has been married for more than 20 years but she now seeks to separate from her husband.

She cited family violence as the reason for her divorce.

“It has been 18 months

that I have been going to the court. I made a statement for my divorce. We didn’t have a good life and we couldn’t live together,” she said.

This comes as lawyers said that the process of addressing divorce cases is slower compared to before.

“Cases in the Islamic Emirate’s courts are not as easy as it was in the past.

They (courts) want to investigate and find the roots of the issue and its causes,” said Hibatullah Nagid, a lawyer.

This comes as some women’s rights activists called for fairness in addressing divorce cases.

Domestic violence and economic hardship are said to be the two main issues for the divorce cases in the country.

Sellers of gold says sales are down



KABUL (TOLOnews): Some jewellers said that the gold market in Kabul has cooled down.

They added that due to economic challenges, people are not able to buy gold.

“Our sales have decreased compared with

the past, at the moment we have a lot of people selling their gold,” said Ferdaws, a jeweller. “People are faced with economic issues and can’t buy gold, but they sell their gold,” said Mohammad Edris

Meanwhile, the jew-

ellers’ union in Kabul said that gold sales have decreased by sixty per cent.

“Gold sales decreased to 50 and 60 per cent because most of our countrymen have left the country,” said Mohammad Zakir, a member of the jewellers’ union.

Kabul residents said that due to economic challenges, they sell their gold.

“The economic situation is not good, and people are faced with these challenges and are selling their property,” said Abdul Basir, a Kabul resident.

At the moment, one gram of 750 Egyptian gold is sold for 4400 Afghani, and most of the gold in the markets of Kabul enters the country from the United Arab Emirates.

5 check dams costing 35m afs inaugurated in Wardak



KABUL (Pajhwok): Five check dams costing more than 35 million afghanis were inaugurated on Monday after their completion in central Maidan Wardak province.

The Ministry of Water and Energy in a press release said the check dams were built in Maidan Shahr and Narkh, Syedabad and Daimardad districts.

The dams were inaugurated during a ceremony attended by Maidan Wardak River Authority Maulvi Abdul Samad Halim.

Halim said the dams took nine months to complete with financial support of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) under their supervision.

He said the dams had the

capacity to store 79000 cubic meters of water and irrigate 3390 hectares of agricultural land.

Maidan Wardak governor Muhammad Omari said 20 water storage dams would be constructed next solar year in remote districts of the province in coordination with relevant sectoral and technical departments.

Over 1,000 people killed in natural disaster in Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): Natural disasters have left over 1,000 people dead, and over 2,000 others injured across Afghanistan during the current solar year (1401), according to a Disaster Management Ministry official.

According to the World Bank Report, Natural disasters such as flooding, earthquakes, avalanches, land-

slides, and droughts are exacerbating vulnerability and poverty in Afghanistan.

Since 1980, disasters caused by natural hazards have affected 9 million people and caused over 20,000 fatalities in the country, the report stated.

According to the de facto government, at least 70 people died due to cold weather in January this

year. More than 70,000 cattle are reported to have perished in the Baghlan, Sare-ePul, Frayab, Takhar, Kandahar, Nimroz and Badghis provinces.

Meanwhile, more than 180 people were killed in flooding in the country during August 2022, the report stated.

Last year in June, an earthquake killed at least

1,000 people and injured 1,500 in eastern Afghanistan, according to the document.

Natural disasters have left substantial financial losses to the people suffering in the country. Afghanistan is a natural hazard-prone country, including earthquakes, flooding, landslide, and freezing winters.

Needy families received aid

KABUL (Agencies): Food and non-food items were provided to 5,660 needy families in Samangan, Ghor, Farah and Helmand provinces. Food items were distributed to over 4,000 poor families by World Food Programme in Dara Suf district near Samangan. Meanwhile, cash assistance distributed to 350 needy families in Dolina district of Ghor, where 150 families received 10,600 Afghani and the remaining 200 families received 38,000 Afghani. 810 needy families received food aid in Anardara district of Farah. 500 needy families assisted by Naseer Charity Foundation in Lashkargah city of Helmand.





ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi addressing a ceremony to recognize the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) organized by the Sargodha Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industries, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

EU envoy, KP CM discuss projects

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammed Azam Khan was called on by Dr. Riina Kionka, European Union's Ambassador to Pakistan here on Monday.

Both the dignitaries discussed matters of mutual interest with special focus on public welfare projects being carried out with the cooperation of the European Union in the province. First Secretary Cooperation Mr. Sven Ruesch and Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Imdadullah Bosal were also present on the occasion. Dr. Riina Kionka expressed her condolences and sorrow over the brutal blast in the Peshawar police line that claimed precious human

lives.

The caretaker Chief Minister, while talking on the occasion, said that the European Union is providing support in various social sectors of the province adding that the government and people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa highly valued and appreciated their cooperation. "We are looking forward to the same cooperation in the future as well" the chief minister remarked and said that the provincial government is looking forward to special support from the Union in the newly merged districts of the province.

He said that the government is going all out for the development of merged areas; however, cooperation from the international development partners is of vital importance in this

regard. Muhammad Azam Khan remarked that the people of merged areas had been suffering from multiple challenges for the last forty years due to war in bordering Afghanistan, and added that the people of merged districts need and deserve special focus in order to bring them into the mainstream of development and prosperity.

The difficulties and problems of merged areas can substantially be reduced by focusing on technical and vocational education, rural development, health and other social sectors. Dr. Riina Kionka on the occasion said that the European Union in its upcoming support programs will have special focus on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

PNS NASR carrying relief assistance reaches Syria

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Navy Ship (PNS) NASR carrying relief assistance to the quake-affected people of Türkiye and Syria, reached Syria on Monday.

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on the direction of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, dispatched the first sea cargo through PNS Nasr on February 28, the NDMA said in a post on its Twitter handle. "The consignment contains blankets, generators, dry rations, medicines, and clothing for the quake-hit Syria. After unloading the aid in Syria, the ship will move to Türkiye," it added.

The ship was received by the senior most Syrian Naval Command, government officials, including the education minister and governor of Latakia, Pakistan's Ambassador to Syria Air Marshal (R) Shahid Akhtar, students, and a large number of locals. The attendees of the special ceremony chanted anthems to express their gratitude for the Pakistani nation.

Numbers of Karachi UCs increased

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Sindh government on Monday accepted a demand of MQM-P, notifying an increase in number of Union Committees (UCs) in Karachi Division.

According to a notification issued by Local Government Department, the Sindh government included 53 more Union Committees (UCs) in Karachi Division, taking the total number of UCs from 246 to 299. "The notification will apply prospectively for future local government elections," it added.

Media reports said the increase in number of committees will not affect the results of recently-held local government (LG) elections. Sources claimed that Mayor Karachi will be elected on the basis of 246 Union Committees. The increase in number of Karachi Union Committees (UCs) was another demand of MQM-P tabled at the time when the latter parted ways with PTI and joined PDM.

Pakistan to experience hot days

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has issued a warning that the country is likely to witness higher-than-usual temperatures during the upcoming summer season. The intensity of the heat is expected to be more than normal from this month March to May due to less-than-normal rains, according to the Met Office.

The PMD has stated that due to a decrease of 77% in rainfall in February, the average day and night temperatures of the last month were recorded as 3 to 5 degrees Celsius higher than normal. This has resulted in a possibility of a further increase in the intensity of heat, with temperatures higher than normal predicted not only for March but also for April and May.

Election schedule for KP Assembly Speaker files contempt of court against Governor

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Mushtaq Ghani has filed Contempt of Court petition against Governor Ghulam Ali and Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for didn't announcing schedule for provincial assembly election despite Supreme Court of Pakistan (SCP) decision.

The COC stated that the Petitioner, Speaker of the dissolved Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, very humbly implores kind indulgence of the SCP that the Petitioner, as the calendar of parties in this petition reads, is the duly chosen Speaker of the Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. As the events unfolded, the Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was dissolved by the Contemnor/Respondent No. 1 on January 18, 2023 (As Governor KP) while acting on the advice of the then Chief Minister under Article 112(1) of the Constitution. Upon dissolution of the Assembly, Contemnor/Respondent No. 1 was immediately obligated, as the very first imperative under Article 105(3) ibid to "appoint a date for the holding of a general election thereto, being a date not later than 90 days from the date of the dissolution". As the Constitution enumerates, this obligation of the Governor precedes even his other duty to appoint a caretaker government to perform day to day functions until the election of the next government, in terms of Articles 224 and 224A of the Constitution.

The COC added that it is a matter of record that soon after such dissolution of Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Respondent No. 2 ECP had written a number of letters, repeatedly urging and requesting the Contemnor/Respondent No. 1 to discharge his constitution obligation and appoint the date of poll for the ensuing general election within Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Although the Constitution does not leave any room for doubts or uncertainties and the role of the Contemnor/Respondent No. 1 is merely to appoint a date and nothing more, yet, Contemnor/Respondent No. 1 had been creating and propagating doubts, qualms, fears and misgivings about holding of general elections within the constitutionally guaranteed deadline of 90 days on one pretext or the other. He had been brazenly giving interviews in print and electronic media, maintaining that he does not see elections to happen within constitutional timeframe.

Instead of discharging his constitutional responsibility and living up to

the language of his oath of office, administered to him at time of entering upon his office, under Article 102 of the Constitution and as set out in Third Schedule to the Constitution that he shall discharge his duties, and perform his functions, honestly, to the best of his ability, faithfully, in accordance with the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the law and that he will preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Contemnor/Respondent No. 1 chose to ignore the exalted status of his high constitutional office and while willfully defying of the mandate of Article 5 and exposing himself to the risk of proceedings under Article 6, he had been striving to find loopholes in the Constitutional scheme to avert and indefinitely postpone the general elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. On receiving a chain of letters from Respondent No. 2 ECP, instead of giving a date, the Contemnor/Respondent No. 1 had started exchanging letters with caretaker provincial government and kept asking them to examine law and order situation and other absolutely extraneous considerations and whether elections can be held or not.

The Contemnor/Respondent No.1 clearly appeared in mood of defying the Constitution with a self-assumed sense of impunity, and while the date of general election in Punjab was also not been given, the Petitioner and Muhammad Sibtain Khan collectively approached this Honorable Court through Const. Petition No. 02 of 2023. As the Constitutional timeframe to hold general elections within 90 days was expiring fast and things were not at all moving, the Honorable Chief Justice of Pakistan was, in the meanwhile, also took Sua Motu notice of the matter on 22.02.2023 and fixed the matter before a Larger Bench comprising nine (09) Honorable Judges of this Court on 23.02.2023 alongside the Constitutional Petitions No.1 and 2 of 2023. Some of the Honorable Judges recused themselves and/or dissociated from the Bench, hence the Bench was reconstitution and the case was thereafter heard on several dates and finally decided on 01.03.2023 with a majority of 3:2 required the Contemnor/Respondent No. 1 to appoint a date of general election forthwith, COC argued.

The majority judgment, so read in the open court on 01.03.2023 and uploaded on the website of Supreme Court inter alia reads: "10. On a conjoint reading of the foregoing provisions we conclude and hold as follows: a. In situations where the

Assembly is dissolved by an order of the Governor, the constitutional responsibility of appointing a date for the general election that must follow is to be discharged by the Governor as provided in terms of Article 105(3)(a). These are the situations described in paras 5 and 6(a) above."

In ordinary circumstances the general election to the Punjab Assembly ought to be held on 09.04.2023, the date announced by the President in terms of his order of 20.02.2023. However, we are informed that on account of the delay in the emergence of the date for the holding of the general election, it may not be possible to meet the 90 days deadline stipulated by the Constitution. It is also the case that (possibly on account of a misunderstanding of the law) the Election Commission did not make itself available for consultation as required under s. 57(1) of the 2017 Act.

The Election Commission is therefore directed to use its utmost efforts to immediately propose, keeping in mind ss. 57 and 58 of the 2017 Act, a date to the President that is compliant with the aforesaid deadline. If such a course is not available, then the Election Commission shall in like manner propose a date for the holding of the poll that deviates to the barest minimum from the aforesaid deadline. After consultation with the Election Commission the President shall announce a date for the holding of the general election to the Punjab Assembly. The Governor of the KPK Province must after consultation with the Election Commission forthwith appoint a date for the holding of the general election to the KPK Assembly and the preceding clause (a) shall, mutatis mutandis, apply in relation thereto."

In response, Respondent No. 1 appeared on mainstream media/news channels on primetime and audaciously said that he has not opened the letter as yet and will open it after the weekend and allowed days after days to pass without any progress and thus the constitutional timeline to be violated in most barefaced and insolent defiance of the majority judgment of this court. The COC stated that it is therefore very humbly prayed that the proceedings may very graciously be initiated against Haji Gulam Ali, Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under Article 204 of the Constitution, Section 3 of the Contempt of Court Ordinance, 2003 and Order XVII of the Supreme Court Rules, 1980 and punish him accordingly. Any other relief, not specifically prayed, may also graciously be granted, if appears just, necessary and appropriate.

Alvi for improving quality of medical education

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Monday underscored the need for improving the quality of medical education as well as introducing uniform syllabi to establish an education standard in the field of medicine.

The president, chairing the 5th meeting of the Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Medical University, Islamabad (SZABMU), at Aiwan-e-Sadr, said that medical institutions needed to produce more nursing and para-medical staff to cater to the health needs of the country. Vice-Chancellor of SZABMU, Professor Dr Tanwir Khaliq, members of the Senate and faculty attended

the meeting.

Addressing the meeting, the president emphasized the need for developing partnerships with foreign universities to get access to foreign courses and educational content through online education. He said that establishing partnerships and linkages with foreign universities was the fastest way to improve the quality of education in the country.

He also called for focusing on the prevention of diseases that was far easier and cheaper as compared to curative treatment and would also help reduce the disease burden on the country's health infrastructure. He said that SZABMU should be an exemplary institution and role model

for others in the medical sector, adding that medical institutions should also focus on inculcating the spirit of serving humanity among their graduates.

The SZABMU vice-chancellor briefed the president about the initiatives taken by the university for promoting medical education. Professor Dr Rizwan Taj informed the meeting that measures were being taken to increase the number of nurses in the country. The meeting endorsed the minutes of the 4th Senate meeting held on March 18, 2022. The meeting also approved the appointment of two Deans, Prof Dr Rana Imran Sikandar and Prof Dr Moosa Khan as members of the syndicate under the SZABMU Act 2013.

Imran misguiding youth: Maryam Nawaz

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Senior Vice President and Chief Organiser Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Maryam Nawaz on Monday stressed the need for maximum participation of the youth in the decision-making process at national level, saying that the future of the country was linked with the young generation.

Addressing the party's 'Young Leaguers' ceremony here, she regretted that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan was misguiding the youth and using them for negative activities. However, she added, that the PML-N was making the youth constructive part of society and giving them special role in the country's progress and development.

She said that a so-called leader, who could not own his daughter and who was unable to share the grief of deceased party worker Zille Shah, how he would protect the rights of the youth of the country. Zille Shah was a political worker and she (Maryam) had respect for every political worker, the PML-N leader added. It was painful that the body was abandoned at the hospital, she said adding that the PTI chief did not spare the body of his worker, who sacrificed his life for the party, and played politics over it and tried to get political

mileage out of his death. Maryam said that the political parties should not raise hollow slogans like the PTI was doing, but take practical steps to bring the youth into the mainstream. She said that the youth should have a sizable representation in the parliament and all political parties should take steps in this connection. Political discussion was imperative in society and taking the youth on board was crucial, as they were major stakeholder of the development process in the country.

She said the performance of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), led by Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, was self-evident, as a number of initiatives were taken to make the youth self-dependent during the party rule, besides providing them with all facilities in the education sector. Launching of the Punjab Education Endowment Fund was a historic step of Shehbaz Sharif in the Punjab province under which monthly stipends were given to the deserving bright students besides provision of local and international scholarships.

Launching of the laptop scheme was also a flagship initiative of the PML-N, which enabled the bright students to connect the world through internet. She said that the youth loans scheme was PML-N's vision to provide financial

assistance to the educated youth so that they could establish their own businesses besides extending existing setup to make the youth part of economic activity in the country. During the previous PML-N tenure, starting in 2013, she said that huge foreign investment came in the country which boosted economic activities, whereas several development projects were launched under the leadership of Muhammad Nawaz Sharif.

Prices of the commodities remained under control during the PML-N government and people were happy with the government, she said adding that the PML-N also signed an IMF deal, but it not only completed it successfully but also kept the prices of the commodities under control. On the other hand, she added that the deal, signed by the "corrupt and incompetent PTI government" was never implemented and it caused inflation in the country.

The PML-N left the government in 2018 with growth rate at 6 per cent, while during its four-year rule, the PTI rolled back the economic progress and brought the GDP to around 2 per cent. She said that the PML-N was determined to bring the youth into the mainstream so that they could become an active part of the country's future.

Not striving for personal sake: Imran

LAHORE (Agencies): PTI Chairman Imran Khan is leading an election rally from Lahore's Zaman Park to Data Darbar after the local administration granted permission for it.

The election rally kicked off from Zaman Park on Monday with Imran leading it in a bulletproof vehicle. Imran addressed the rally from inside his vehicle and thanked PTI workers and supporters for their participation. "It is clear from this rally why this imported government did not allow our [previous] rally," he said, referring to the PTI's March 8 plans.

Imran also paid tribute to PTI worker Ali Bilal, also known as Zille Shah, who lost his life on March 8 as the caretaker Punjab government used force to block a rally called to launch the party's campaign for the April 30 elections in the province. "I'm sending a message on my nation's behalf to those people [behind his death] that I and the nation will never forget this or forgive you. Until those police officials and those who tortured him are not brought to justice, [we will not rest] and will get them sentenced."

The PTI chief said he was not striving for his personal sake but for the people. He alleged that the "big criminals" in power were attempting to run away from the elections and registering cases against him and PTI officeholders to "somehow disqualify us from elections". He also addressed the recent public release of the Toshakhana gift records and said it was now made clear "who was actually looting the Toshakhana".

Culminating his address, Imran announced a power show in Minar-i-Pakistan on Sunday at 2pm. "This rally will be in the day and it will be my sixth in Minar-i-Pakistan in the last 12 years," he added. Imran said he would address the rally and explain how to take the country out of its current issues. He called on the

people of Lahore to start preparing for the power show.

Earlier, videos shared by the official PTI account on Twitter showed a large number of supporters and workers thronging the streets as the rally moved toward its destination. A number of PTI leaders — especially from Punjab — along with their supporters are a part of the rally.

Referring to the Toshakhana record made public by the government a day earlier, Khan berated the leadership of the ruling alliance, saying that it has exposed them. Talking about the Toshakhana case, Imran Khan said that he was subjected to severe criticism and character assassination by the leadership of the ruling alliance, however, the record has exposed them. A "gang of thieves" has been imposed on the country, he added. Urging the people to join the party's movement, he said that the nation would have to come out for "real independence" and "accountability of the thieves".

"I'm sending a message on my nation's behalf to those people [behind his death] that I and the nation will never forget this or forgive you. Until those police officials and those who tortured him are not brought to justice, [we will not rest] and will get them sentenced." The PTI chief said he was not striving for his personal sake but for the people. He alleged that the "big criminals" in power were attempting to run away from the elections and registering cases against him and PTI officeholders to "somehow disqualify us from elections". He also addressed the recent public release of the Toshakhana gift records and said it was now made clear "who was actually looting the Toshakhana".



LAHORE: Chairman PTI Imran Khan leading an election campaign rally on way from Zaman park to Data Darbar.

Pakistan is vulnerable to climate change: WB

KARACHI (PPI): Pakistan is highly vulnerable to worsening climate change; building resilience is key to avoiding poverty increases, otherwise there is a significant probability of more frequent and intense events such as droughts, floods, and sea level rise.

This was disclosed by a World Bank high-power delegation led by its Regional Director for Sustainable Development (SD), South Asia, Mr. John A. Roome who met with Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah here at CM House. The meeting was attended by provincial ministers, the chief secretary, the chairman P&D, and others. Through a presentation, the world bank's regional director for South Asia told the meeting that Pakistan's recent poverty reduction was fragile due to macro-fiscal vulnerabilities and low and volatile growth.

The report said that the reduced extreme poverty due to off-farm economic and foreign remittances, growth in per capita GDP has been volatile and low. The structural issues, including circular debt, large and unproductive subsidy regimes, and inadequate tax collection adds to fiscal stress and constrained investment in human capital, basic infrastructure, and services.

According to the report Pakistan has been a low GHG emitter, but there are opportunities in Pakistan's own interests to decarbonize the economy. Pakistan contributed less than one percent of total Green House Gases emissions between 1990-2018. The GHG emissions per capita are low; about one-third of the global average. GHG emissions per GDP are decreasing but at a lower rate than the global average. The GHG emissions are growing fast due to population increases and economic growth, therefore focus may be made to significant decarbonization options in industry, power, and transport that deliver local co-benefits.