

Imran is foreign agent: Fazl
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: JUI-F chief and head of Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) Maulana Fazlur Rehman has alleged that PTI chief 'Imran Khan is a foreign agent' and they will not let his agenda be successful in the country. Maulana Fazlur Rehman said that Imran Khan put his political party against the state and all resources should be used to establish state writ. "Situation is very tense.



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ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Council of Pakistan Newspapers Editors called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Zaman Park clashes: LHC directs police to stop operation till today

L A H O R E / I S L A M A B A D (Agencies): The Lahore High Court (LHC) Wednesday directed police to stop its operation in Lahore's Zaman Park till today morning as the law enforcers tried to arrest Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan, but seemingly failed to do so despite the passage of nearly 24 hours.

The police had started already retreating from the PTI chief's residence before the LHC's orders in light of the Pakistan Super League — which has shifted to Punjab's capital for the playoffs stage. "Police will not advance on Khan's residence until the ongoing Pakistan Super League (PSL) 8 cricket match is over," sources quoted police officials as saying, shortly after which [police and other security officials were seen leaving Zaman Park.

Shortly after the LHC's orders, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) told Khan to move the trial court and provide the lower court with an undertaking that he will present himself on a specific date — meaning that his arrest warrants in the Toshakhana case are still valid. After the withdrawal of the police, the PTI chief came out of his residence, in a mask, and met the workers, a video shared on PTI's official account showed.

Earlier, following the police's failure in arresting the PTI chairman, a large number of Punjab Rangers arrived at the former prime minister's Zaman Park residence to implement court orders. As per the private TV channel, the police and rangers reached the residence of the PTI leader at Zaman Park. The development came after police fired teargas in the area to disperse the PTI workers. On the other hand, hospital sources told media that at least 54 cops and eight citizens have been injured in the clashes that have been ongoing since yesterday.

PTI supporters clashed repeatedly with police overnight while he remained holed up in his Zaman Park

residence, defying attempts to arrest him. Meanwhile, the law enforcers also arrested the PTI workers. Police fought pitched battles with supporters of Khan's PTI near his residence throughout the night, firing fusillades of teargas and dodging rocks thrown by angry crowds. The police action to implement court orders started on Tuesday when a heavy contingent surrounded the area, however, a charged crowd denied the law enforcers any opportunity to arrest their leader.

The IHC did not suspend the arrest warrants in the Toshakhana case and directed the PTI chief to move the trial court. IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq had reserved the verdict after hearing arguments on the plea fixed on an urgent basis. During the hearing earlier, Khan's counsel Khawaja Harris told the court that they have challenged the March 13 order of a district and sessions court in Islamabad. The IHC had earlier suspended the arrest warrant issued by the trial court, he added.

He added that the court had directed the PTI chief to appear before the court on March 13 however he was unable to do so. "Where was he that day?" asked Justice Farooq. The lawyer responded that he was at his home, adding that they told the trial court that the complaint was not maintainable.

"The issue is not of a warrant being issued again. The court had directed him to appear on March 13 or the warrant will be restored," the IHC CJ told the court. Harris then told the court that the complaint was registered incorrectly as the officer who filed the complaint did not have the authority to do so. "As per law, Election Commission can file a complaint," said Harris. He added that the election commissioner or any other officer can be given the authority to file the complaint. "Legal requirements were not fulfilled in this regard. In such a situation, the process of issuing a warrant

is also not valid," the counsel argued.

"It was still necessary to appear in court," observed IHC CJ. The lawyer then told the court that whatever was happening in Lahore was unfortunate, adding that Imran Khan was willing to give an undertaking and appear in court at the next hearing. "Respect and dignity of the courts is very important. It is very important for us that the law should be the same for all," remarked the IHC CJ. He also asked what image of Pakistan was being portrayed. "We use to hear that this happened in tribal areas. What are we trying to show to the world that we will not implement the law?" said the IHC CJ.

"But where will they keep him [Imran Khan] for four days," asked Harris. In the meanwhile, the advocate general of Islamabad told the court that if the PTI chief does not appear in court on March 18 then the charges won't be farmed on Harris. He also asked if he would quit the legal profession if his client does not show up on March 18. "It is the first time that he has given an undertaking for anyone," said the government lawyer. He added that the relief was to be given to the petitioner and his conduct was in front of everyone.

At this point, the additional attorney general interjected and said: "A similar undertaking was given earlier. Even at that time, the high court suspended the warrant, but then he did not appear." He added that the execution of the court order was necessary. "Is whatever happening in Lahore correct?" the judge asked. Khan's counsel responded that it was not right. Justice Farooq then remarked that a political party's workers were attacking the police, adding that it was an attack on the state. "Policemen are performing their duties on behalf of the state," said the IHC CJ. He also asked if anyone in the United Kingdom could touch a policeman's uniform. The court then reserved the verdict.

Sehat Card Plus scheme in KP reviewed

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A meeting regarding Sehat Card Plus scheme was held here on Wednesday with the caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan in the chair which discussed in details various matters to related Sehat Card Plus.

Advisor to Chief Minister for Health Dr. Abid Jamil, Secretary finance Ayaz Khan, Special Secretary Health Ubaidullah Kaka khel, Project Director Dr. Riaz Tanoli and other relevant officials attended the meeting.

While briefing the forum about Sehat Card Plus, it was informed that

under the scheme, free treatment facilities were being provided to 9.7 million households of the province at a cost of Rs 28 billion per annum. The participants were further informed that a total of 1139 health care facilities including public and private hospitals have been empaneled in order to provide quality healthcare services to the citizens.

The forum thoroughly discussed the various aspects of the Sehat card scheme with the purpose to further streamline the operational matters and decided to constitute a high level committee comprising experts from health sector which will submit short and mid term proposals for the purpose. The said committee will come up with short term proposals falling within the mandate of the caretaker provincial government however long term initiatives to this effect would be proposed for upcoming provincial government. Moreover, the committee will also suggest the proposals regarding improvement of services delivery system in the health facilities of rural areas of the province. The chief minister Muhammad Azam Khan has termed Sehat Card Plus scheme as an important step for public welfare and said that the scheme could be further improved by removing the deficiencies from its process.

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Responding to a question on how the political instability affects Pakistan's economy, the minister said: "The deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is made by the previous government, [which] violated that deal with the IMF. "They put Pakistan in an extremely precarious economic situation. [...] Our negotiations are still ongoing and have not been concluded with the IMF. I think that when Pakistan is facing such a perfect storm, some problems of our own creation, but some, like the flood and others, that are of our own, the conversation with the IMF really should take that into account, and I don't think it is at the moment."

He added that whether it is Pakistan's deals with the IMF or the country's own internal economic policy, there's an outsized burden on the poorest of the poor. "There's an outsized burden on the bottom of the pyramid. [...] but we do need a fundamental reform about how we talk about our economy and what decisions we take domestically in order to

PM forms body to work out DISCOs handover to provinces

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday formed a committee to outline the terms of reference (ToRs) for transferring the power distribution companies (DISCOs) to the provinces, in collaboration with the provincial governments, and define the timeline.

The prime minister, who chaired a high-level meeting to discuss the handing over of DISCOs to the provinces, directed the said committee to finalise the strategy without any delay. The meeting was told that transferring the DISCOs to the provinces was a constitutional step that would help curb the power theft considerably.

It was also told that Sindh government was the first to approach the center seeking the transfer of DISCOs. The prime minister told the meeting that the government was prioritising to curb power theft. Besides, the federal government, in collaboration with the provincial governments, had devised a strategy to reduce losses of the DISCOs. Reiterating his resolve to curb the elements involved in the power theft, he said the federal government would also extend technical support to the provinces for their capacity building.

He said an administrative infrastructure for recovery of the electricity bills already existed in the provinces that would play a key role to overcome the circular debt. Former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, federal ministers Ishaq Dar, Engineer Khurram Dastgir and Abid Hussain Bhaiyoo, State Minister Dr Musaddik Malik, Advisor to PM Ahmad Cheema, Special Assistant to PM Jahanzeb Khan, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker CM Azam Khan, Punjab and Balochistan chief secretaries and relevant senior officers attended the meeting.

GB police chief transferred

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Wednesday transferred Gilgit-Baltistan IGP Muhammad Saeed from his post in the wake of the information minister's claim that GB police force was being used against Punjab police in the latter's attempt to arrest PTI chief Imran Khan from his Zaman Park residence in Lahore.

Saeed was ordered to report to the Establishment Division with immediate effect until further orders, according to a notification from the division. A separate notification said that Dar Ali Khan Khattak was now transferred and posted as the GB IGP with immediate effect.

achieve that," FM Bilawal said.

When the host questioned the minister regarding the relations between Pakistan and the United States, particularly in the context of terrorism, he said that whatever happened during the war on terror and the entire period that followed, there's a "fog of war that colours everyone's decision-making, everyone's perception". He insisted that Afghanistan is a reality and that the world must get serious about engaging on the topic.

"I believe that based on the facts on the ground, the position and perspective of Pakistan and the United States, we meet eye to eye. [...] And whatever has happened in the past, we should be able to have honest conversations about that," the foreign minister maintained, adding that it is crucial for the two countries to be working together and strategise the future. "That's what I've been working on with my counterpart, Secretary Blinken," he said.

Bilawal, while talking about the Taliban being back in power, said that even though Pakistan being Afghanistan's neighbour hasn't recognised them diplomatically, but still it is forced to engage with the reality on its border. "We are advocating, not only for ourselves, but for the international community, to also engage with them," he said. Talking about the

Govt to act per ECP's decision on holding polls

PM believes Pakistan dodged default

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said the federal government was committed to fulfill its constitutional obligation of holding election and would act as per the decision of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

"No one should have a doubt on us regarding evading the elections. We will whole-heartedly participate in election and will follow whatever decided by ECP," he told a delegation of Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE) here at the PM House. Shehbaz Sharif said it was up to the ECP to decide over the matter, however, as president of Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), he had directed his party to finalize names of ticket-holders.

He said the government was cognizant of the fact that timely election led to a stronger State and its progress. In the same context, he mentioned that the government had initiated work on census and the funds had been released despite financial constraints.

The prime minister said the country was passing through political and economic challenges, however said that all political parties of the Pakistan Democratic Alliance (PDM) coalition contributed positively towards improvement in situation. During 11 months of the tenure, he said, the government successfully

overcame the shadows of default.

He regretted that the previous government stepped back from the agreement inked with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). He said it was not a private but a State deal, and the non-implementation of which resulted in big loss of the country. He expressed confidence that a staff-level agreement with the IMF would be struck soon.

He dismissed the impression that IMF talked about political instability in the country. Shehbaz Sharif recalled that friendly countries including Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and China extended support to Pakistan in trying times. To control inflation, he said the government was committed to ensuring austerity and providing relief to poor especially during Ramadan.

The prime minister pointed out the "naked defiance" of former prime minister Imran Khan and making fun of the State institutions by his no-show in courts. "First time in Pakistan, a so-called political person is considering himself above law ... Non-appearance in courts is tantamount to violation of law," he said. He recalled that Imran Khan used to hit at politicians with unlawful tactics and was now trying to defy the rule of law.

He mentioned that PML-N leaders including himself, former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and Rana Sanaullah were dragged in

fake cases by the previous government, but still appeared before the courts. Also, senior journalists including AbsarAlam and Matuallah Jan were man-handled during Imran Khan's tenure. "The government is not taking action on its own, but on the court order," he said in reference to yesterday's movement of police with regard to Imran Khan's arrest warrants.

On Toshakhana case, he said Imran Khan who called himself an 'honest person' was in fact a liar, who even sold a wrist watch with model of Holy Ka'aba. He mentioned the change of Toshakhana policy by his cabinet wherein only the gifts up to \$300 could be retained on payment of requisite amount. The prime minister termed CPNE an important link between the government and the masses. He apprised the news editors of the effective steps taken by the government in areas of economy.

Asked if the government was ready to hold talks with Imran Khan, he said though the politicians always resorted to dialogue, however, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) had a history of not responding positively in this regard. He said the PTI even did not join the apex committee meeting chaired by him in Peshawar on the recent mosque blast. The meeting held in-depth discussion on the overall situation in the country in areas of politics, economy, foreign affairs and security.

Police implementing court's orders: Marriyum

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Wednesday that the government had nothing to do with the arrest warrants of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan as police was implementing the court's orders.

"Imran has been giving the impression that the government was arresting him, but media should inform the people about the actual position regarding Imran Khan's arrest warrants," she said while talking to media persons here. "A cowardly person, a foreign agent, a Toshakhana thief, Tyrian's father, a criminal of contempt of court is on the run from the police", the minister said.

Without naming Imran Khan, she said this person

was trying to give the impression that he was disabled and elderly, his leg was plastered and his life was in danger, Marriyum Aurangzeb said. Castigating Imran, the minister said Imran had the habit of telling lies and had been claiming that he was ready for agitation but at the same time he was sick for appearance in the courts.

Terming Imran a hypocrite and cowardly person, she said the liar wanted anarchy and civil war in Pakistan. She said Imran was desirous of creating chaos in Pakistan, and was misleading the people by blaming the government for his arrest order. "If the government had to arrest (Imran), it had the power of the state, the authority was there, which Imran Khan used for the last four years by jailing his political opponents", she said.

This person was hiding behind of children and women using them as a shield, she said, adding this person was using a human bunker and trying to give the impression that the government was arresting him and the government wanted to kill him. The people of Pakistan should know that Imran Khan was wanted in the cases of foreign funding, Tyrian case, Toshakhana, Zeba judge contempt of court, she maintained.

The minister said the court issued the arrest warrant for Imran Khan and directed the police to produce him in the court after arrest. Imran Khan should know that his political obligation had been written as no leader ever tried to take shelter behind women and children. She said so far 65 police personnel had been injured while executing the court's orders.

Bilawal says Pakistan in a 'perfect storm' of crises

KARACHI (Agencies): Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari Wednesday said that Pakistan is facing a "perfect storm" of crises as the country battles with worsening political, economic and security issues.

Speaking during an interview with The Daily Show, Bilawal said: "Unfortunately, Pakistan is facing a perfect storm. Not only do we have heightened partisanship and political polarisation, to the extent that political parties or political stakeholders aren't even in a position to sit in a room and discuss issues amongst themselves, we're also facing an economic crisis."

As the country faces a security threat and crisis following the Afghan government's fall, he said, it is also suffering from the increasing frequency of terrorist attacks and reeling from the aftermath of the biggest climate catastrophe in history. The minister, when responding to a question about the ongoing unrest in Pakistan — owing to the imminent arrest of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan — said that while the country deals with the chaos and simultaneous crises, the PTI chief believes the country's law doesn't apply to him.

Heavy police force reached Zaman Park — Khan's residence in Lahore — in the early hours of Wednesday

after Islamabad police failed to arrest him amid fierce clashes between the PTI workers and the anti-riot force in and around the party chief's residence that left dozens of activists and police personnel injured since Tuesday.

"He's resigned from parliament and run away from the system. In this particular instance, it's not a question of me wanting to arrest Mr Khan [...] I would never want any politician in my country or any country to go to jail for political reasons. In Mr Khan's case, he's under the threat of arrest because of his ego," the minister said, adding that the former prime minister thinks he's "too important and won't turn up to the court". Foreign Minister Bilawal deemed Khan's decisions a "complete mockery of the judicial system in Pakistan, of rule of law, of the Constitution in Pakistan".

"We're caught in a situation where there's this political chaos playing out on the streets and distracting from the real issues that are affecting everyday Pakistanis," the foreign minister said. When asked if the state of democracy in Pakistan is fragile, the politician said "Absolutely. Pakistan has been, for most of our history, under direct military dictatorship."

Bilawal said forces that benefit from "undemocratic rule in Pakistan" didn't like when political parties came

together after the death of his mother and former prime minister Benazir Bhutto. "So they supported Mr Khan and brought him into power. And that's now blown up not only in those individuals' faces, but has had severe consequences for our country," he said.

Responding to a question on how the political instability affects Pakistan's economy, the minister said: "The deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is made by the previous government, [which] violated that deal with the IMF. "They put Pakistan in an extremely precarious economic situation. [...] Our negotiations are still ongoing and have not been concluded with the IMF. I think that when Pakistan is facing such a perfect storm, some problems of our own creation, but some, like the flood and others, that are of our own, the conversation with the IMF really should take that into account, and I don't think it is at the moment."

He added that whether it is Pakistan's deals with the IMF or the country's own internal economic policy, there's an outsized burden on the poorest of the poor. "There's an outsized burden on the bottom of the pyramid. [...] but we do need a fundamental reform about how we talk about our economy and what decisions we take domestically in order to

achieve that," FM Bilawal said.

When the host questioned the minister regarding the relations between Pakistan and the United States, particularly in the context of terrorism, he said that whatever happened during the war on terror and the entire period that followed, there's a "fog of war that colours everyone's decision-making, everyone's perception". He insisted that Afghanistan is a reality and that the world must get serious about engaging on the topic.

"I believe that based on the facts on the ground, the position and perspective of Pakistan and the United States, we meet eye to eye. [...] And whatever has happened in the past, we should be able to have honest conversations about that," the foreign minister maintained, adding that it is crucial for the two countries to be working together and strategise the future. "That's what I've been working on with my counterpart, Secretary Blinken," he said.

Bilawal, while talking about the Taliban being back in power, said that even though Pakistan being Afghanistan's neighbour hasn't recognised them diplomatically, but still it is forced to engage with the reality on its border. "We are advocating, not only for ourselves, but for the international community, to also engage with them," he said. Talking about the

Taliban's ban on women's education, the foreign minister said: "I believe that we were off to a positive start, initially, but given what's happened with women's education and their right to access education, it's becoming incredibly difficult for me or others like me who do want to engage with them, who do want to find solutions to the problems the people of Afghanistan are facing."

He said that the decisions being taken by the Afghanistan's interim government is "not helping us help them", adding that the government's major concern is that whatever happens in Afghanistan, Pakistan is going to be the first people to feel the consequences. Talking about the security situation, Bilawal said that the more the economic situation deteriorates in Afghanistan, the more cannon fodder the terrorist groups over there are going to have, and the more people they're going to be able to recruit to their cause.

Reiterating to engage with the Taliban, the foreign minister requested the Taliban to "let girls learn". Speaking about the climate issue being faced by Pakistan, Bilawal said that the country is still battling with the consequences, however, the domestic attention and political conversation have moved on from this issue.

Referring to the current political situation in the country, the foreign minister said that Pakistan is being distracted from the climate issue that affected over 33 million lives, displaced over eight million people and dented the economy. Bilawal called for the international community to come together to resolve the issue as it is not the problem of only one country.

He said that the world needs to work together to come up with the money to address loss and damage as a result of climate change. "I believe that this is a problem too big for just America to deal with on their own or just China to deal with on their own. This is something that the world has to come together and decide, are we going to be distracted by war and conflict and politics as usual, or are we going to find a solution to this problem?" he questioned.

Thanking the international community for standing with Pakistan during these hard times — one at the COP27 and the second during the Climate Resilient Pakistan Conference in Geneva. Bilawal further said that Pakistan will face far greater flooding from the rivers due to the melting of the glaciers. "We won't be able to provide drinking water to the people that live in my country," he said.



Shaukat Tareen's mother passed away

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Former finance minister of Pakistan Shaukat Tareen & Mr. Azmat Tarin (Former President & CEO SILK-BANK) mother passed away. May Allah rest the departed soul in peace and give family the strength to bear this irreparable loss.

Namaz-e-Janaza of the departed soul will be held tomorrow (March 16, 2023) at 11.00 am, Khalid Masjid, Cantt, Lahore.

WB advisor offers services to PU banking research students

LAHORE (APP): Senior Advisor at World Bank (WB) Deepak Khanna spoke at length on various financial and banking tools that may be utilised for effective risk management and poverty alleviation in terms of Pakistan as well as in the global context.

Participating in a discussion, held under the aegis of the Punjab University Hailey College of Banking and Finance (HCBF) here on Wednesday, he offered his expertise to the HBFC in pursuit of research excellence through college conference and research journal platforms. Principal HCBF Dr Ahmad Muneeb Mehta, Additional Registrar Dr Abbas, faculty members and others participated in the event.

Dr. Mehta thanked Deepak Khanna for sharing his valuable time and presented a souvenir to the key-note speaker.

Workshop on Climate Change Education, Training and Public Awareness

LAHORE (APP): WWF-Pakistan organized a workshop on Climate Change Education, Training, and Public Awareness at the Pakistan Engineering Congress office, here on Wednesday. The aim of the workshop was to bring forth the implementation status of the province's climate change-related awareness policies, plans, and programs, identifying gaps and devising targeted solutions. The interactive working group sessions with experts and participants culminated in the formulation of Punjab-specific critical pathways for the enhancement of education, training, and public awareness of climate change.

While opening the event, the Senior Director Footprint, WWF-Pakistan, Dr. Masood Arshad stated, "The process of the Third National Communication (TNC) is very important for Pakistan as it captures all the existing on-ground challenges and provides targeted recommendations."

He further said, "WWF-Pakistan is working for the past 50 years in the area of nature conservation, and we aim to enhance levels of awareness, capacity building, and gender sensitisation on climate change under this TNC activity."

E&T dept cracks down on token tax defaulting vehicles

LAHORE (APP): The Excise and Taxation Department of Punjab on Wednesday cracked down on token tax defaulting vehicles across the province. Blockades were established at the entry and exit points of all major cities.

Director General Excise & Taxation (DGET) Punjab Muhammad Ali conducted surprise visits at various places in Lahore and checked the performance of the officers. During the raids, the DG visited several points including Thokar Niaz Beg and Sigian Pul and issued instructions that token tax should be collected from defaulting vehicles on the spot, documents of non-paying vehicles should be seized as well besides seizing the vehicles that neither had documents nor paid the tax. He said that the excise officers should ensure the achievement of the set targets and be courteous to the vehicle owners during the campaign.

Both houses of Parliament to continue joint efforts and uphold the constitution: Raja

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Ashraf on Wednesday urged that both houses of the Parliament must work towards protecting the rights of citizens, upholding the Constitution, and ensuring that all parliamentary proceedings are conducted in accordance with the law.

Addressing the special commemorative session summoned to celebrate the golden jubilee of the Senate of Pakistan, the Speaker said, "We have the power to bring about change. Let us use this power wisely and with a sense of responsibility."

He said, as today marks a significant milestone in our country's history, we gather here to reflect on 50 years of the Senate's contribution to strengthening democracy and ensuring national cohesion. This is, he said, a momentous occasion that presented us with a unique opportunity to celebrate the achievements of our parliamentary system and to devise a framework that will further enhance its effectiveness. He said it was that fortunate moment when the 1973 Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan came out with a second House named Senate.

Provincial autonomy was the long-demanded right of provinces brought about by the 18th Amendment to the Constitution that gave a new and dynamic role to the Senate, he added.

The speaker said, the aspirations of the drafters were met vide the 18th Constitution Act, 2010, wherein, the Prime Minister along with his cabinet was made responsible to the Senate; Report of Auditor General of Pakistan relating to the Accounts of the Federation to be laid before the Senate; Number of seats was increased; and NFC was made answerable to the Parliament.

He said that the inclusion of senators in the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) was also a historic development that has not been achieved in a smooth manner rather systematic and consistent endeavors have remained a steering factor in the formation of the Joint Committee on Public Accounts that would further strengthen the democratic system in the country.

"As you all are aware that federalism is a setup most suited to countries with diversity" he added. Being the House of the Federation, the Senate of Pakistan was formed with the principle of 'Chamber of continuity' which symbolizes a process of continuity in national affairs, he added.

Throughout its existence, the Senate has served as a critical check on the power of the executive and has been instrumental in shaping legislative policies that have had a profound impact on the lives of our citizens. "Today, as we reflect on the past 50 years, we take pride in the Senate's accomplishments in promoting democracy, transparency, and accountability," he added. He stressed further strengthening of the Senate to ensure ethnic and provincial equilibrium in the country.

He paid tribute to all those who have served in the Senate of Pakistan over the past half a century, and to those who continued to serve in this august house.

He said, "Your dedication, commitment, and service to the people of Pakistan are greatly appreciated."

He also highlighted the contributions of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and said, "I would like to take this opportunity to honour the contributions of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in this regard. Under his able leadership, the Constitution of 1973 was drafted and adopted, which remains the supreme law of the land to this day."

Govt committed at empowering youth for socio-economic development: Shaza Fatima

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) on Youth Affairs Shaza Fatima Khawaja termed youth as a strength of the country, saying that about 68 per cent of Pakistan's population consists of youth which means that almost two-thirds of people in Pakistan are under 30 years of age. Addressing the launching ceremony of Next Generation Research Report 2023 in London, the SAPM said that the incumbent government was fully cognizant of the problems being faced by the youth and making every possible effort to lead the youth towards mass improvement through various initiatives. The SAPM further said the government and the British Council had been working together since 1948 in a trusted and long-term partnership, with the aim of establishing bilateral relations.

"The Next Generation Report is a timely resource for all stakeholders in Pakistan to formulate policies to address the multi-

ple crises facing Pakistan," she added.

She said that aiming at empowering the youth of the country, the Prime Minister's Youth Program was facilitating youth through various initiatives which include Prime Minister's Youth Business and Agriculture Loan Scheme, laptop scheme, Skills and Qualifications through, Sports Focused Engagement Programs through the Higher Education Commission, and climate change initiatives.

She informed that all these initiatives were under the Public Service Development Fund and linked to development goals which ultimately serve the objective of youth development. The British Council and the government of Pakistan also have collaborated in the higher education sector, such as the Pakistan Education Gateway, gym clubs, collaboration with TVET departments, and promotion of local schools, she added.

Commissioner Karachi visits Flagstaff House

KARACHI (APP): Commissioner Muhammad Iqbal Memon on Wednesday visited the Founder of Pakistan Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah-Flagstaff House- museum and inspected the different sections, here.

He reviewed the progress of the implementation plan for the improvement of the museum and for the establishment of the Public Library to be called "Jinnah Library", according to a news release.

Grandson of the Founder of Pakistan Liaqat Merchant, who is also the vice chairman of Board of Management of the Museum, was also present on the occasion. Commissioner Iqbal Memon was briefed about the plan developed for the improvement and for establishment of Public Library and Audio Visual Centre as per directives of the Sindh government.

The commissioner was informed that the proposed public library, to be called Jinnah Library, will be a great source of books, documents and archives for research, study and knowledge purposes for everyone, particularly for the researchers and students studying Pakistan Movement. He was also informed that Audio Visual Centre would provide authentic knowledge of the Pakistan Movement and the life and personality of Quaid-e-Azam through documentaries and films. The commissioner asked the officials concerned and the Management of the board to work with dedication and commitment. He further asked to carry out coordinated efforts for the improvement of the museum and for the establishment of the library and audio visual centre.



KARACHI: Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety & Chairperson BISP, Ms. Shazia Atta Marri addressing in a dialogue session on unlocking the power of women entrepreneurs at IBA City Auditorium.

One out of every fifth person dies of kidney disease in world: Administrator

KARACHI (APP): Administrator Karachi Dr. Syed Saifur Rahman has said that one out of every fifth person who dies in the world has kidney disease, the tragedy is that kidney patients seek treatment from quacks and when they refer for proper treatment at that time, the kidneys are only functioning at 10 per cent, so they go on dialysis.

He said this while addressing the ceremony organized on the occasion of the inauguration of the Vascular Surgery Department in Karachi Institute of Kidney Disease on Wednesday, on the occasion of World Kidney Day. President Karachi Institute of Kidney Disease Association Masood Nawab, Karachi Medical and Dental College Professor Dr. Nargis Anjum, Senior Director Medical and Health Services Dr. Nadeem Asif and others were also present.

Earlier, Administrator Karachi inaugurated the Vascular Surgery Department at Karachi Institute of Kidney Diseases and inspected the modern facilities provided here.

Administrator Karachi Dr. Syed Saifur Rahman said that the health

sector needs a large-scale improvement for which a strategy has to be adopted in the light of modern research. Karachi Institute of Kidney Diseases is providing excellent services to patients suffering from kidney diseases and here apart from Karachi, patients from inside Sindh and Balochistan also come here for dialysis and treatment of kidney diseases, he said that besides the treatment we also need to take steps to prevent kidney disease.

One can be protected from kidney diseases by adopting better lifestyle and dietary habits, he said that Karachi Institute of Kidney Diseases has urology and lithotripsy department apart from ICU, laboratory and ultrasound clinic facilities, while now here a vascular surgery department has also been established which will provide more convenience to the patients coming here.

He said that the treatment of kidney diseases is very expensive and not everyone can afford it. The good thing is that this institution is providing kidney disease treatment and dialysis facilities to poor and middle-class people. Efforts are being made

to improve this hospital so that the people of the area can get convenience. Speaking at the event, Masood Nawab, president of Karachi Institute of Kidney Diseases Association, said that it is a good thing to serve the suffering humanity and this work is done by those people whom Allah Almighty gives them courage for this, we have to educate people and work in health and education sectors.

We have to run our medical institutions on modern lines and equip them with such facilities that more people can benefit from them. Principal Karachi Medical and Dental College Professor Dr. Nargis Anjum said that kidney health is very important for the human body. Every tenth person in our country has blood pressure, diabetes is also becoming common, it is important to adopt a healthy lifestyle to prevent these diseases, besides this, kidney tests should also be done. It is especially important to undergo medical examination of the factory workers, he said that the Karachi Institute of Kidney Diseases is providing the best medical facilities to the citizens and now more modern machinery and facilities have been provided here.



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Public representatives have to join hands for uplift of Peshawar



PESHAWAR (APP): Mayor Peshawar, Haji Zubair Ali has said that for the uplift of Peshawar, all the public representatives have to join hands and work together irrespective of their political affiliation.

He said people voted their representatives for bringing development to the area and not for doing

politics adding if we remain indulge in politics then our four years tenure will pass in vain and we would not be able to face our people.

Talking to the elected local bodies' representatives of Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf here on Wednesday, the Mayor further said that we have to serve our people without any discrimination

or favor.

The delegation of PTI local bodies' representatives including Chairman Atta Ullah and Imran Khan Salarzai, vice president PTI Peshawar Muslim Taj and others apprised the Mayor about issues confronted by their areas including shortage of wheat flour, law and order, cleanliness and others.

The Mayor assured them that their issues would be resolved on a priority basis and every possible attempt would be made to address the same. He said he considered no one as opposition and all were his fellows adding collective efforts would be made for the wellbeing of the people of Peshawar district.

The Mayor told the delegation that for the uplift of Peshawar, he would take along all the public repre-

sentatives adding the doors of his office were open for all. The representatives on the occasion thanked the Mayor for listening to their issues and assured all out support for the development of Peshawar district.

KP Caretaker govt to reform LG&RD Department

PESHAWAR (APP): KP Caretaker Minister for Local Governments & Rural Development (LG&RD), Sawal Nazir Advocate has said that steps were being taken for introducing necessary reforms in the department and further activating its performance.

He expressed these views during a briefing regarding the Local Government Department here on Wednesday. On this occasion, the Director General (DG) Local Government and other officials gave him a detailed briefing including ongoing public welfare-oriented development schemes and performance of the department.

Speaking on the occasion, the Caretaker Minister said that there is a need for legal manners to introduce reforms and bring improvement in the performance of the department.

He said that the birth registration process would be amended through court to fix a period of one year for the purpose and for making it easy for the people it would be further simplified.

The provincial said that Tehsil Municipal Officers (TMOs) would also be empowered to improve district level performance of the department and accelerate the ongoing uplift schemes to pass-on their benefits to the general public with immediate effect.

ATMC cancels bails of 4 passport office staff

PESHAWAR (APP): Anti-Terrorism and Migration Court (ATMC) here on Wednesday cancelled post arrest bails of four employees of Regional Passport Office who have been charged for forging passports for Afghan nationals.

The decision has been taken by the ATMC headed by Special Judge Rajab Ali after hearing arguments by Assistant Director Legal, Anti-Corruption Circle Junaid Alam and Investigation Officer Naheed Bilal. It was found that a total twenty (20) cases have been lodged against the nominated employees.

The designations and names of detained officials working in Regional Passport Office are Superintendent Mian Majid Ali Shah, Lower Division Clerk Aamir Rohit, Lower Division Clerk Faisal Shabbir, and Data Entry Operator Mian Imad.

Substandard food items recovered

PESHAWAR (APP): A team of KP Food Authority here Wednesday raided godowns on Phandu Road and recovered huge quantity of fake beverages and tomato ketchup.

Spokesman for food authority said that 1000 liters of fake cold drink and 2000 kilogram of tomato ketchup was recovered during the raid. He said that recovered items were discarded on the spot and business owners were penalized.

Food authority also sealed two godowns and warned strict action for those who are minting money by supplying substandard and unwholesome food items in markets.

DG Food Authority, Shahrukh Ali Khan has also directed officials to accelerate ongoing crackdown to end these illegal practices that are unlawful and can create health related issues among people.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan being briefed about Sihat Card Plus Scheme.

KPCE-CVE sign MOU with IM Sciences

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Centre for Excellence on Countering Violent Extremism (KPCE-CVE) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Institute of Management Sciences Peshawar (IM Sciences) to enhance the capacity of its staff. The MoU signing ceremony took place on Wednesday, at the Human Resource Development Centre of the Institute of Management Sciences.

The MoU is intended to enhance the capacity of the staff of the KPCE-CVE through training in research methods and other skill

development programs. The training will include Introduction to Basic Services Laws, Data Collection, Analysis, & Report Writing Skills, with a duration of 2-3 months.

The IM Sciences will provide training to up to 20 officers of the centre for excellence on countering violent extremism, focusing on four modules, including Introduction to Basic Laws, Data Collection Tools & Techniques, Analysis Tools & Techniques, and Report Writing (various formats & templates).

Speaking about the MoU, Dr. Ayaz Khan, Chief Coordination Officer of the KPCE-CVE, said, "This

MOU is intended to train officers shortlisted by the KPCE-CVE to enhance their research skills and other management capabilities for future endeavours." He added, "The total duration of this training shall be 2-3 months."

The Director of IM Sciences, Professor Dr. Usman Ghani, expressed his pleasure in partnering with the KPCE-CVE, saying, "The Institute of Management Sciences, Peshawar is the leading provider of training/courses in Peace & Conflict Studies, Advance Research Methods & Techniques and it offers, among other programs, training in Advance

Research Methods to MS/Phil & Ph.D. scholars."

The MOU signing ceremony was attended by relevant officials, including the Director of IM Sciences, Professor Dr. Usman Ghani, Director General KPCE-CVE Dr. Qasim Khan, and Chief Coordination Officer Dr. Ayaz Khan.

This MoU signing marks a significant milestone in the efforts to counter violent extremism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The KPCE-CVE and IM Sciences partnership will undoubtedly enhance the skills and capabilities of the officers of the centre for excellence on countering violent extremism.

Govt does not believe in political victimization, only implement court orders in Imran case: Faisal Karim

PESHAWAR (APP): Minister of State for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Faisal Karim Kundi here Wednesday said that Government did not believe in political victimization and was only implementing court orders in Imran Khan case.

Talking to reporters after addressing anti drugs awareness conference organised by Malik Awan Foundation here, the Minister said that the Government was bound to implement the courts orders in all cases including

of Imran Khan.

Instead to cooperate with police, he said that Imran Khan was hiding in Zaman park and was using his workers as human shields.

He said that former President Asif Ali Zardari, former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and other leaders of PDM and PPP have faced NAB and other cases in courts with bravery and steadfastness.

Faisal Kundi said that PTI has promoted lawlessness in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during its 10

year rule and failed to deliver for masses besides almost bankrupted the province.

He said that PPP was ready for election. He urged SC to make a review in the cases of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Benazir Bhutto.

Earlier in his address, the Minister said that Government under BISP Program was providing assistance to over 8.9 million people of the country to alleviate poverty and improve their lives.

He said that Rs2000 for each girl and Rs1500 for each boy was also be provided to the children of beneficiaries of BISP to promote education.

Faisal Karim Kundi said that drugs addiction was a social evil and its eradication was possible through collective efforts.

The function was also addressed by former Chief Secretary KP Arbab Shahzad, former Minister Inayatullah Khan, Commissioner Malakand Saqib Aslam, former MPA Samar Haroon Bilour and Malik Tariq Awan.

The speakers said that social and economic imbalances was major causes of drugs addiction that could be eradicated through quality education, employment and healthy activities to people especially youth.

Cloudy weather predicted for most KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Meteorological Center Peshawar on Wednesday predicted that partly cloudy to cloudy weather is expected in most districts of the province.

However, it said Scattered rain-thunderstorm with gusty winds is likely to occur over Swat, Chitral, Lower and Upper Dir, Shangla, Buner, Malakand, Kohistan, Battagram, Torg-har, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Mohmand, Bajaur, Swabi, Mardan, Nowshera, Charsadda, Peshawar, Khyber, Kohat, Hangu, Kurram and Abbottabad districts.

It further said that Isolated rain-thunderstorm with gusty winds is also likely to occur over Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Karak, Orakzai, DI Khan and North and South Waziristan districts.

During the last 24 hours dry weather occurred over most districts of the province.

The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in centigrade at different stations of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were Peshawar City 32/15, Chitral 24/05, Timergara 30/11, Dir 26/06, Mirkhani 25/06, Kalam 19/-01, Drosh 24/10, Saidu Sharif 28/09, Pattan 31/13, Malam Jabba 15/06, Takht Bhai 31/14, Kakul 25/08, Balakot 29/10, Parachinar 21/06, Bannu 32/11, Cherat 35/19, D.I. Khan 30/13.

The minimum temperature recorded in the province was -01 °C in Kalam.

Khan-e-Farhang holds event to highlight poet Hakeem Nizami

PESHAWAR (APP): Khan-e-Farhang Iran here Wednesday arranged a conference to highlight the contributions of famous Iranian poet and storyteller, Hakeem Nizami in promotion of Persian literature.

The conference titled 'Place of Hakeem Nizami' in Persian literature was attended by poets, journalists and people from cross section of society.

Speaking as a Chief, Dr. Taj-uddin-Tajwar congratulated Khan-e-Farhang for holding the event and said that we appreciated efforts of Khan-e-Farhang to pro-

mote literary and cultural related activities in KP.

He said that Iran is the land where renowned poets and philosophers including Saadi, Shirazi, Umar Khayam, Fordousi and Atta Nisapuri were born and Khan-e-Farhang have held various events in past to aware people about their contributions and promote associated philosophies.

He said that Hakeem Nizami is an identity and well known in the world for influencing generations by his poetry. He also highlighted various aspects of Hakeem Nizami poetry and

its imprints on human nature and behavior.

Director General Khana-e-Farhang, Mehran Eskandaryan expressed gratitude to guests for attending the event shed light on poetry of Hakeem Nizami.

He said that poetry of Hakeem Nizami substantiate that he was well versed and adept in diversified fields including literature, philosophy, mathematics and astronomy.

On the occasion, speakers also presented research work and thesis written in life and poetry of Hakeem Nizami.

EZDMC, USAID sign MoU for collaboration in industrial sector

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KP-EZDMC) and MoU signing ceremony was held between KPEZDMC and USAID's Economic Recovery and Development Activity (USAID-ERDA) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) the other day, said a press release issued here on Wednesday

The aim of the MOU was to formalize the collaborative efforts by identifying areas of common interest for joint and synergistic efforts to ramp up the development and operations of industrial estates/economic zones in the

NMDs, particularly by engaging the private sector under Public-Private Partnership (PPP).

KP-EZDMC was represented by its CEO Javed Iqbal Khattak while Chief of Party Mr. Shah Muhammad led the USAID-ERDA Team.

The MoU calls for the parties to work together on a pre-feasibility study for the Development, Operation & Maintenance of the Mohmand Economic Zone under the PPP model.

The study aims to explore the potential opportunities and challenges of the project and pave the way for successful PPP partnership.

Both parties believe that

the partnership will bring together their expertise and resources to ensure the project's success.

The PPP modality will enable the Government to leverage private sector resources and expertise to deliver high-quality infrastructure and services to the public.

The Mohmand Economic Zone Project is set to stimulate economic growth and increase job opportunities in the Newly Merged Districts and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

The initiative is expected to attract both local and foreign investors, promote investment in the area, and enhance the region's competitiveness.



PESHAWAR: People offering funeral of Azan Afridi who lost his live in Turkey boat incident.



PESHAWAR: Director General Khana-e-Farhang Iran Mehran Sikandaryan addressing during a conference on famous Iranian poet Hakeem Nizami.

16th Undergraduate Medical Research Conference begins

PESHAWAR (APP): A two-day 16th National Undergraduate Medical Research (UMR) Conference 2023 started at Peshawar Medical College on Wednesday morning.

Renowned Scholar, Prof. Dr. Mohammad Iqbal Khan Vice Chancellor, Tameer-e-Millet Shifa University inaugurated the seminar. Dean PMC, Dr. Hafeez ur Rahman also accompanied the chief guest. Faculty members and students from PMC and other institutions attended the inaugural session.

Prof Ibal Khan while addressing the inaugural session, denoted the young researchers to undertake research for the betterment of humanity and not for other cheap purposes. "Instead of impact factor, focus on the impact of your researcher on the society," the scholar maintained.

He lamented that unfortunately researchers in the Muslim world were focusing on therapeutic research and ignoring preventive

Health. He cited that in 372 hadiths of the Holly prophet had stressed prevention.

He informed that during last year, 2.5 million research publications along with 43 million citations had appeared globally. He went on to say that only Israel had produced more than 0.1 million publications that were cited by one million researchers.

Gesturing towards the absence of the trend of research in the Islamic world, the scholar informed that Pakistan produced only 798 research publications during 12022.

Dr. Iqbal asked the researchers to establish a proper relationship with science to utilize it for the betterment of humanity. He stressed the need for proper attention to public health to solve our problems. The guest underlined the need for collaboration among research institutions to strengthen their research activities and get better results.

Dr. Haferzurrahman, Dean of PMC while referring to the research endeavors of the undergraduate lauded their enthusiasm in arranging the useful conference. "Youth are our pride and we trust them and in return, they give us amazing results," the Dean said.

Dr. Hala Rajab, Director of UMR, highlighting the aims and objectives of the conference disclosed that it was arranged to facilitate researchers to share their experiences and develop linkages. She informed that young researchers of the UMR had produced 1573 research papers up till now. Similarly, Prof. Dr. Mohammed Irfan spoke on the role, responsibility, and need for a mentor in research.

Moreover, Poster, Verbal, quiz, paper review, and videography competitions also took place at the conference. Prof. Dr. Muhammad Irfan conducted a workshop on "Research: A Potential Career Choice" also.



In brief

16 inmates obtain basic literacy F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: A certificate distribution ceremony of Adult Literacy Programme (ALP) was held under the auspices of the National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) in District Jail Abbottabad with District Education Officer (DEO), Tanvir as chief guest on Wednesday. Besides, Additional Assistant Commissioner (AAC), Ali Sher and Deputy Director NCHD were also present on the occasion. During the ceremony, certificates were distributed among 16 prisoners for completion of a 5-month literacy course. Addressing the ceremony, DEO Tanvir congratulated the successful graduates for obtaining basic literacy and urged them to further enhance their level of literacy and continue it even after release from the prison. Speaking on the occasion, Superintendent District Jail, Hamid Azam Khan hinted at more efforts for continuation of their efforts for enhancement of the technical skills and education level of the prisoners.

FBR seizes illegal cigarettes F.P. Report

MARDAN: Directorate of Intelligence & Investigation (Inland Revenue) during a crackdown against fake and illegal cigarettes has recovered 20 cartons of Golden Flake (2,000 cigarette sticks) during a raid in bus stands at Mardan, said a press release issued here on Wednesday. After the introduction of Track and Trace System by the Directorate of Intelligence & Investigation, the Director (Intelligence & Investigation) Peshawar, Mohammad Nawaz has tightened monitoring on the directives of the Director General (DP) (I&I) to eradicate the business of illegal cigarettes and mitigate loss inflicted to the public exchequer. The payment of duties of Rs.1220,000/- was outstanding against these cigarettes in head of Sales Tax and Federal Excise Duty (FED) against them. Meanwhile, the Directorate of I&I Karachi has also recently taken some stern action in connection with monitoring.

Importance of plantation urged F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: The district administration held a walk at the District Headquarters Complex Tajazai in Lakki Marwat on Wednesday to raise awareness about tree plantation. Jointly led by assistant commissioner Tariq Mehmood and forest department southern circle Bannu Conservator Saleem Khan Marwat, the participants mostly students and boy scouts of government run schools participated. Additional AC Lakki Sultan Nooruddin Ahmer, additional AC Betanni subdivision Awais Khan, SDO Nageebullah Khan, ADEO Ihsanullah, rescue 1122 emergency officer Atif Sardar and other government officials were also in attendance. Along with holding plants in their hands the students also carried banners inscribed with messages highlighting tree plantation. On the occasion, the assistant commissioner and forest department conservator distributed free plants among students following the directives of local deputy commissioner Abdul Hadi. They urged the students to sow saplings in schools, homes and surrounding areas and protect them so they could become healthy trees.



SWABI: First Lady Begum Samina Arif Alvi inaugurating Teachers Training Facility at AA Training Center at Rashid Memorial Welfare Organization.

International TB day observed

F.P. Report

PABBI: International Day on TB has been observed at Pabbi in which Director TB Control Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Dr. Mudassir Shahzad participated, on Wednesday. According to details, International Day on TB awareness program has been observed at every district headquarters hospital. In this regards a conference has scheduled on 17th March at Khyber Medical University. The chief guest of the conference would be Caretaker Advisor to Chief Minister on health Dr. Abid Jameel while Secretary, Vice Chancellor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Dr. Zia Ul Haq and Dr. Sahib Gul respectively along with WHO representative Dr. Babar Alam will participate in the seminar. Meanwhile, District TB Control Programme Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa in collaboration with Association for Community Development (ACD) here held an awareness seminar and walk to mark International Tuberculosis (TB) Day in Swabi. The seminar was held at District Health Office and attended by concerned officers of Health Department, TBPC, representatives of ACD and people from all walks of life. Addressing the participants, Provincial Program Officer TBPC Dr. Shaheen Iqbal said that every year approximately 573,000 people are affected from TB in Pakistan among which 370,000 persons were diagnosed while remaining 203,000 were living without diagnosis. He said worrisome fact is that about 44,000 people lost their lives every year due to avoiding cure of the disease. He informed that two or more weeks of cough, mild fever, sweats during night sleep, loss of appetite and weight loss are



the symptoms of TB, adding if someone feel these symptoms, he should get a free sputum examination from a government or private laboratory for the diagnosis of TB and get himself examined by an authorized doctor. He said that TB disease can be eliminated by taking treatment for six months, consecutively. He urged people and authorities to come forward and play their role for eradication of TB from our society so that maximum human lives could be saved.

Senior SS defends Ph. D thesis



F.P. Report

NEWSHERA: Senior Subject Specialist Zar Muhammad has successfully defended his Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D) thesis from International Islamic University Islamabad. The Ph. D scholar declared his success to prayers of his parents, friends and especially to efforts of teachers. He dedicated Ph. D degree to his apostle Allama Qari Bashir Ahmad ul Madani.

Rs5m stolen money recovered F.P. Report

MULTAN: Police recovered Rs50 lakh which was stolen from the showroom of stitching machine and arrested alleged culprit in the premises of Delhi Gate police station 04 days ago. The money was handed over to the owner. According to details, A few days ago, Izmir, a resident of Officer Colony, reported to the Delhi Gate police station that when he came to the showroom, the locks were broken. He said that on checking, it was found that Rs 50 lakh had been stolen from the showroom. The police registered a case number 191/23 police station Delhi Gate in time and started the action. Under the supervision of SP City Division Rana Muhammad Ashraf, SDPO Delhi Gate Sadia Saeed headed by SHO Delhi Gate Muhammad Kabir along with other police officers of the police station arrested the accused Shehbaz and the stolen money was 50 lakhs. The accused was employed by the plaintiff. The recovered money was handed over to the owner who was overjoyed to get his money back. Talking to the media on this occasion, CPO Multan Mansoor-ul-Haq Rana said that the citizens should keep an eye on their surroundings and prove that they are responsible citizens by reporting any suspicious persons to the nearest police station or 15.

The day was an opportunity to promote basic rights of all consumers; they added and said it also provided people a chance to protest against the market abuses and social injustices. Later on banners were fixed at the offices of AC and City Mayor to inform the people of their rights being consumer guaranteed by the law.

World consumers' day commemorated

F.P. Report

JAMRUD: World consumers protection day was observed in Jamrud on Wednesday aimed to raise global awareness about consumers' right and needs. Every year on March 15 the consumer movement celebrates World Consumers Rights Day (WCRO), raising global awareness of consumer rights, consumer protection and empowerment. In this connection a walk was organized by Assistant

director industries and consumers that was led by Assistant Commissioner, Jamrud Irfan Usman, while Assistant Director Industries and Commerce, Khyber Arafat Afridi Tehsil Chairman Said Nawab, tribal elders, traders, representatives of law departments including District Food Controller, Tehsil Municipal Officer, Civil Defense were among the participants. The partakers highlighted the importance of the day and said the rights of the

consumers had been protected in the country through the consumer Act 1997.

measures inside the court by placing dead body on GT Road. Later police held dialogues with protestors and assured them of strict action against culprit and improving security situation after which they dispersed peacefully and the body was moved to mortuary.

Man shot dead in Katcheri

SHEIKHUPURA (INP): An accused of murder was shot dead by rival inside district Katcheri here on Wednesday. Police held the murderer along with murder weapon.

According to detail, accused of murder identified as Ghulam Qadir was brought to district Katcheri

to produce before the session judge. Rival, Zain gunned down Ghulam Qadir and attempted to flee from the scene of the incident but was held by police along with murder weapon.

Heirs of the deceased held protest demonstration against poor security

measures inside the court by placing dead body on GT Road. Later police held dialogues with protestors and assured them of strict action against culprit and improving security situation after which they dispersed peacefully and the body was moved to mortuary.

Tank cops directed to ensure people-friendly environment

F.P. Report

TANK: Regional Police Officer Dera Ismail Khan (DI Khan) Abdul Ghafoor Afridi chaired a high-level meeting of police officers at District Police Office Tank on the occasion of the visit. He issued special instructions to the participants of the meeting while reviewing the law and order situation, crime rate, efficiency of the police and counter crimes in the district tank.

District Police Officer Tank Waqar Ahmad, SP Investigation Yasir Aman and other senior police officers on his arrival at Tank. RPO Dera also addressed a large Durbar along with police officers and Jawans at DRC Hall Tank. A large number of officers and youths of all ranks of various units, including the district tank, participated in the Durbar.

Addressing the Durbar participants, RPO Dera said that restoring law enforce-

ment is one of my top priorities. He said that we are the protectors of people's lives, wealth and honor, always support the truth with courage and bravery, make service to citizens and prevention of crimes our motto. There will be no compromise on the dignity of the police force. Your welfare will be fully taken care of.

On this occasion, he urged the senior officers of the police to maintain a friendly and loving attitude towards the police officers under them and to take special care of their self-respect and welfare. Paying tribute to the bravery and sacrifices of the Tank Police, he said that the Tank Police Force has made eternal sacrifices in the war against terrorism. This is the reason why people value the sacrifices of the police. You are offering your sacrifices in all kinds of situations with honesty and bravery for the sake of

people's lives and property and honor. There are many difficulties in the current situation but they will be overcome soon. You can submit your legitimate problems to me without recommendation and without hesitation.

Meanwhile, he informed about the problems of the policemen and issued orders on the spot to solve them. RPO Dera along with DPO Tank also visited Gul Imam Police Station and Gul Imam Chowki. Where he met with the youths and inquired about their problems and issued immediate orders to solve them. And besides ensuring the safety of people's life and property, he also issued special instructions to prevent all kinds of crimes and in view of the current situation, all officers and men should take precautionary measures and perform their duties with great bravery and manliness.

KFUEIT, GIKI join hands for joint research activities

F.P. Report

SWABI: Khwaja Fareed University of Engineering and Information Technology (KFUEIT) Rahim Yar Khan and Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute of Engineering Sciences and Technology signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Wednesday to promote joint academic and research and development activities of mutual interest in accordance with their respective needs and objectives.

The MoU was inked by Prof Dr Fazal Ahmad Khalid, GIK Institute Rector and Prof Dr Muhammad Suleman Tahir, Vice-Chancellor of KFUEIT on Wednesday. Pro-Rectors, deans, heads of departments and directors also graced the signing ceremony. They agreed to

exchange scientific, academic, and technical information and appropriate academic materials and other information of mutual interest for which each party hold intellectual property rights; conducting collaborative Research; Joint training; exchange and use of research centers and laboratories; visits and exchange of faculty, staff and students for research, teaching, and discussions and academic/research information and materials; joint cooperation in delivery of courses and programmes; organization of conferences, seminars, webinars, symposium and workshops; graduate thesis evaluation and supervision and launching joint research projects.

In order to carry out the above-mentioned activities, both the parties will, on the

basis of mutual consultations as to achieve the outlined objectives. Under the MoU none of the party shall make use of any Intellectual property of the other without the express written consent of the other and neither party shall use the name or logo of the other party for any purpose whether in relation to any advertisement or other form of publicity without obtaining the prior written consent of the other party.

The agreement came into force soon after it was signed by heads of the two institutions and will continue initially for three years. Both Prof Khalid and Prof Tahir termed the MoU beneficial for the two institutions while exchanging knowledge and experience to achieve the objective of conducting result-oriented research.



MINGORA: KP Caretaker Minister for Works and Communication Muhammad Ali Shah inspecting the construction work on Tukhta Band Bridge.

Women's role vital for country's development

Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: The Punjab government is committed to bring women in mainstream so that they can play their vital role in progress and prosperity of the country as well as to enable women to get jobs in industrial units. This was stated by Principal Government Vocational Training Institute for Women Sukheke Mandi Madam Khalida Rafiq while addressing orientation ceremony of enrolment campaign.

She said that admission in different trades including Vocational Metric, fashion designing, beautician, computer applications, domestic tailoring, skin and beauty therapy is started in the institute.

She said that less educated women could get admission in different trades for enabling to earn their livelihood in respectable manner to start their own work as well as to play their important role in boosting industrial production. She said that training in different demand-based courses were also being imparted on priority basis so that women could get jobs in factories situated near to their homes as well as meet the needs of skilled workforce

for industrial units.

Punjab culture day observed: Punjab Culture Day also celebrated in the district Hafizabad. In this connection, a walk was taken out from District Complex led by Deputy Commissioner Umar Farooq Warraich. Chief Executive Officer Education Wazir Ahmad Agha, ADCR Imtiaz Ali Baig, ADCG Ishfaq Ahmad, DO Education Mian Abdul Majeed, teachers, officers and citizens belong to different segment of society participated in the walk. Chief Executive Officer Education Wazir Ahmad Agha tide traditional Punjabi cotton turban to DC Umar Farooq.

While talking on the occasion, DC Umar Farooq Warraich said that Punjab Culture Day was celebrated to create awareness among people especially students and youth regarding Punjabi Culture, customs, local values and traditional as well as to keep alive ancient Punjab Culture.

Different functions were also arranged in the schools and colleges of the district to celebrate the day. Teachers and students attended the classes to wear Punjabi address.

Book fair held F.P. Report

MARDAN: A book fair held at Sarhad University Sub campus Mardan to promote reading habits among the students. The event was organized by National book foundation in collaboration with Sarhad University Mardan campus, on Wednesday.

Chairman Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Mardan Fareed Ahmad Khattak along with Director Sarhad University Mardan Campus Naseer Afridi and Deputy Manager Customer Relations Rahatullah, Gender Coordinator Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cities Improvement Project Muslim Khan inaugurated the book fair.

While speaking on the occasion Fareed Ahmad Khattak said that unfortunately students are ignoring the good habits of book reading due to emergence of social media which is an alarming sign towards the creativity and cognitive thinking of the students of Modern Era. He said that such events would help to revive the propensity of reading amongst the students.



Honduras will seek ties with China, spurning Taiwan

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras (AP): Honduras President Xiomara Castro announced that her government will seek to establish diplomatic relations with China, which would imply severing relations with Taiwan. The switch would leave Taiwan recognized by only 13 countries as China spends billions to win recognition for its "One China" policy. Castro said on her Twitter account that she instructed Honduran Foreign Affairs Minister Eduardo Reina to start negotiations with China and that her intention is "expand frontiers freely in concert with the nations of the world."

Castro said during her presidential campaign in 2021 that she would look for ties with China if elected, but once in power, her government backtracked on those comments. In January 2022, the foreign affairs minister told The Associated Press that Honduras would continue strengthening ties with Taiwan and that establishing a diplomatic relationship with China was not a priority for Castro. Reina, the Foreign Affairs Minister, had said the government weighed up the benefits that Honduras had received from a good relationship with Taiwan and decided that there was no reason to change at that moment.

In Taipei, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said it had "expressed serious concerns to the Honduran government. Our country has made it clear to Honduras many times that Taiwan is a sincere and reliable cooperative partner to our allies. Honduras is requested to consider carefully and not fall into China's trap or make wrong decisions that damage the long-term friendship between Taiwan and Honduras." Beijing has not commented on the issue China claims self-ruled, democratic Taiwan is part of its territory, to be brought under its control by force if necessary, and refuses most contacts with countries that maintain formal ties with Taiwan, and threatens retaliation against countries merely for increasing contacts.

China expelled Lithuania's ambassador, downgraded diplomatic ties and blocked trade with the Baltic country of 2.7 million people after it boosted relations with Taipei in Oct. 2021. Lithuania has since closed its embassy in Beijing and opened a trade office in Taiwan. It's not clear what made Honduras' government change its mind. However, China, which is building a massive dam in Honduras, generally uses trade and investment as incentives for switching ties, as it has done successfully with Costa Rica, Panama, El Salvador, Nicaragua and, most recently, South Pacific nations including the Solomon Islands. Taiwan supplies its dwindling number of formal diplomatic partners with agricultural experts, vocational training programs and other forms of economic aid.



Castro

However, budgetary restraints imposed by the democratically elected legislature prevent it from splashing out on sports stadiums, conference halls and government buildings as China does. China's multi-billion dollar "Belt and Road" initiative has also offered developing nations ports, railways, power plants and other infrastructure, funded by loans provided at market rates. The loss of Honduras would leave Taiwan with formal diplomatic ties just 13 sovereign states, including Vatican City. In Latin America, it also has relations with Belize and Paraguay, with most of its remaining allies being small, poor island nations in the Caribbean and South Pacific.

It's sole remaining African ally is Eswatini, formerly known as Swaziland, whose Prime Minister Cleopas Sipho Dlamini visited Taiwan this month and expressed support for the island's re-admission to the United Nations and its agencies. Despite China's campaign of isolation, Taiwan retains robust informal ties with more than 100 other countries. Earlier this month, Micronesian President David Panuelo accused China of "political warfare" in a letter to other national leaders and discussed switching diplomatic allegiance from China to Taiwan in exchange for \$50 million to recharge the tiny Pacific island nation's trust fund.

Panuelo said China had been spying on Micronesia, offering bribes and acting in a threatening manner in an effort to ensure that if it goes to war with Taiwan, Micronesia would be aligned with China, or at least abstain from taking sides. Panuelo said Micronesia would also receive an annual \$15 million assistance package and Taiwan would take over various projects that China had begun, including a national convention center, two state government complexes, and two gymnasiums. China denied the allegations, calling them a "smear."

China's diplomatic offensive has begun raising concerns in the US as its rivalry with Beijing rivalry sharpens. China won over former Taiwanese Pacific allies Kiribati and the Solomon Islands in 2019, signing a security pact with the latter that would permit Chinese navy ships and security forces to maintain a presence in the country. The move drew concern from the US, Australia and New Zealand, as well as opposition politicians within the country. Alarmed by such Chinese gains, the Biden administration is proposing to spend billions to keep three Pacific countries in the US orbit.

President Joe Biden's proposed federal budget released on Thursday includes more than \$7.1 billion in funding for the Marshall Islands, Micronesia and Palau. The money is included in the \$63.1 billion request for the State Department and the US Agency for International Development. The money, to be paid out over 20 years, would extend agreements with the three states under which the US provides them with essential services and economic support in exchange for military basing rights and other preferential treatment. Those deals were due to expire later this year and next, and US officials say China has been trying to exploit extension negotiations for its own advantage. The White House said the payments are part of its strategy to "out-compete China" and strengthen America's alliances and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific.

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Putin rejects theory about Ukrainian role in blasts

MOSCOW (AP): Russian President Vladimir Putin dismissed allegations that Ukrainians could be behind the blasts that damaged the Nord Stream gas pipelines in the Baltic Sea last year, and insisted the US was to blame. Putin spoke after The New York Times, The Washington Post and German media published stories last week citing unidentified US and other officials as saying there was evidence Ukraine, or at least Ukrainians, may have been responsible. The Ukrainian government has denied involvement.

Germany's Die Zeit newspaper and German public broadcasters ARD and SWR reported that investigators believed five men and a woman used a yacht hired by a Ukrainian-owned company in Poland to carry out the attack. German federal prosecutors confirmed that a boat was searched in January but have not confirmed the reported findings. Putin rejected the notion as "sheer nonsense." "Such an explosion, so powerful and at such depth, could only be conducted by experts backed by the entire potential of a state that has relevant technologies," he said in televised remarks.

The Russian leader insisted that he was convinced the US was behind the explosion, saying it had an interest to halt supplies of cheap Russian natural gas to Germany and to provide it with more expensive liquefied natural gas. The Kremlin last week described the claims about Ukrainian involvement in the explosions as part of a cover-up by the West. September's explosions that hit the Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 pipelines rendered them inoperable and caused significant leaks of gas that was idle in the pipelines. No one claimed responsibility.

US officials initially suggested that Russia may have been to blame. Russia blamed the US and Britain. Investigations by European nations, including Denmark, through whose waters the pipeline travels, and Germany have yet to yield conclusive results.

Hungary party seeks delay in Nordic NATO ratifications

BUDAPEST (Reuters): Hungary's ruling party lawmakers want to postpone next week's parliament session, which means a further delay in its ratification of Finland and Sweden's NATO admission. An opposition party lawmaker, Agnes Vadai, of the leftist Democratic Coalition, said in a Facebook post on Tuesday she had received a letter from Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjen informing her that the ruling Fidesz and the Christian Democrats want to postpone the session which would have started on Monday.

The ruling Fidesz party confirmed to Reuters that parliament would not hold a session next week, which they said was due to a "delay in negotiations with Brussels." Hungary is mired in a dispute with the European Commission over the release of EU funds. "The (Fidesz) parliamentary group will decide about the Finnish and Swedish NATO accession after a delegation of lawmakers (who visited the two countries) give an account of that visit," Fidesz's press office said. Sweden and Finland applied last year for membership of the transatlantic military alliance after Russian forces invaded Ukraine. All 30 NATO members must ratify the applications, and Hungary and Turkey have held back their approvals.

Parliament's press office declined comment. Parliament could convene again only on March 27. Prime Minister Viktor Orban's Fidesz party has said it intends to back the ratification, but last week a Fidesz lawmaker Csaba Hende said he would still need to work more to address concerns some of his fellow parliamentarians have. Hungary's ratification process has been stranded in parliament since July, and in February Orban accused Finland and Sweden of spreading "outright lies" about democracy and rule of law in Hungary.

Ned Price; An excellent story teller; conducts his last press briefing

Jaill Afridi

WASHINGTON: Monday was last press briefing conducted by Ned Price at US State Department. Ned Price mentioned himself that in his first meeting with Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, he was told that he needs to tell the story of America to the rest of the world as a Spokesperson of US State Department.

In a few months of interaction with Ned Price, I found him to be an extremely well read and an excellent story teller. He explained the US point of view in the most selected choice of words and in an articulate manner.

Two of my favorite aspects of Ned Price were that he was an extremely well read of not only the present situations around the world but he had read history as well and he would use excellent metaphors during his briefings to the journalists. I asked him several times if he was reading some book especially meant for metaphors, but he always said no and he said that they come out natural. In his last briefing he used a metaphor "two feathers of



Price

the same bird." US State Department Spokesperson is the face of America to the rest of the world and Ned Price kept that face elegant and as transparent as possible. Ned Price treated foreign journalist with utmost respect during and after the briefings and not a single journalist complained about his attitude. He gave every journalist a chance to ask their question which means American point of view reached their audience.

Although President Biden and Secretary Blinken can be criticized on

several fronts during their days in power but Ned Price certainly tried his best to pay the way for clarity and he did it in dignified manner. I remember the days when former President Trump had models as US State Department Spokesperson and beside good looks they had nothing else to offer on US foreign policy. I did want to ask Ned Price whether change in Foreign Policy every five years gives a good impression to the US allies around the world, but I guess I will ask him this question some other day at some other place!!!!

Russian blogger charged with spying

TIRANA (Reuters): A Russian self-proclaimed blogger arrested last August in Albania on spying charges has applied for asylum in an attempt to escape extradition because she fears persecution in Moscow, her lawyer said. Svetlana Timofeeva, 34, was arrested together with another Russian and a Ukrainian on charges of entering the former communist military factory of Gramsh, some 80 km (50 miles) from the Albanian capital Tirana.

Timofeeva has said the factory was abandoned and there was no sign suggesting any military facility and people and animals were moving in and out freely. She said the only reason she was visiting the area was her desire to film abandoned buildings from the Cold War era. "She is seeking asylum because if she is

extradited she will be persecuted by the Russian authorities," her lawyer Isuf Shehu said. "The Russian state prosecutor is on a blacklist from Western countries including our state also." The request for asylum said Timofeeva has openly criticized Russian President Vladimir Putin for the invasion of Ukraine.

On Friday a court is expected to rule on whether to extradite Timofeeva or not. In February the Albanian Ministry of Justice approved a request from Moscow to extradite Timofeeva where she faces similar charges. Albania, as have most European countries, joined the European Union in putting sanctions on Russia for the invasion. "The prosecution in Albania has no facts to incriminate and punish her on espionage charges... she was only taking photos of

old and destroyed buildings," Shehu said.

When Albania was under communist rule, the Gramsh plant produced Russian-designed AK 47 rifles. The ministry's website says the plant now provides manufacturing services for the defence industry. In the past, it was also used to dismantle small arms and ammunition. Known as Lana Sator, Timofeeva has more than 250,000 followers on her Instagram page where she has posted for years photos of abandoned buildings including forgotten, old and rusted military installations. "Two countries, Albania and Russia, accuse Lana of espionage because she takes artistic photos of abandoned places. As ridiculous as it sounds this is a Kafkian reality for Lana," her Instagram account says. The account is maintained by Timofeeva's friends, it says.

SA court orders healthcare workers to end strike

JOHANNESBURG (Agencies): The South African Labour Appeal Court has ordered striking state healthcare workers to end a weeklong walkout that has affected services in some of the country's big hospitals, the health department said. The court interdict on Monday will help stabilise services at the affected hospitals, the department said. Striking workers have been ordered to go back to work by Tuesday morning, it added.

"The strike has disrupted provision of essential healthcare services in the country, leading to untold suffering and frustrations amongst the public who have desperately needed healthcare and life-saving treatment," said South Africa's

Health Minister Joe Phaahla. Since last week, the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU) members have been on strike after wage talks with the government failed. The health department said on Sunday that clinical operations were hamstrung by a low nursing and administrative support staff turnout.

The labour relations act prohibits essential services workers from engaging in strike action which is detrimental to healthcare services with a risk of loss of life, he told a press briefing. Union leaders could not be immediately reached for comment. The union has been demanding a 10 percent wage hike, but the government offered 4.7

percent, according to local media SABC News. The union said in a statement on Sunday that "no amount of litigation or intimidation by the government will deter us from this noble worthy cause that we have embarked on".

NEHAWU leader Zola Saphetha told a news conference that the government's demand to end the dispute "is another demonstration of how far government is prepared to undermine and collapse collective bargaining and the dispute resolution mechanism by imposing their will on workers". The South African military said it had deployed medics to help in the affected hospitals at the request of the health department.

1 victim's life still in danger after Hamburg shooting

BERLIN (AP): One victim's life is still in danger after last week's shooting at a Jehovah's Witness hall in Hamburg in which a former member of the congregation killed six people and then himself, authorities said. Police and prosecutors said they are still working to pin down the motive of the shooter, a 35-year-old German who has been identified only as Philipp F. in line with local privacy rules.

Officials say nine people were wounded in Thursday evening's shooting during a service, including a woman who lost her unborn child. Seven had gunshot wounds. Senior police official Uwe Stockmann said six were still in hospitals on Tuesday and one person's life was still in danger. The Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany have said that the man police

identified as the gunman was a former member who left the church voluntarily two years ago. Investigators said last week that his departure from the church was "apparently not on good terms."

Hamburg prosecutor Arnold Keller said that, so far, investigators have come across nothing that pointed in advance to any plans for a rampage like Thursday's shooting. They are still looking into a website registered in his name and a self-published book it links to titled "God, Jesus Christ and Satan." "In view of the previous history regarding the relationship between Philipp F. and the Jehovah's Witnesses, it at least can't be ruled out that Philipp F. acted out of hatred toward this community," Keller told reporters in Hamburg. "It

cannot be said conclusively today whether the motive for the crime is ultimately to be found here." Stockmann said everything points to the perpetrator having acted alone, and that there were no indications that he was involved in any network or had far-right views.

The Hamburg congregation that was holding a service when the attack happened currently has about 60 members and is one of 47 in the port city, which is home to almost 4,000 denomination members, according to the Jehovah's Witnesses. The Jehovah's Witnesses claim a worldwide membership of about 8.7 million, with about 170,000 in Germany. The religious movement was founded in the United States in the 19th century and is headquartered in Warwick, New York.

Aukus submarine deal: Is conflict with China getting closer?

LONDON (BBC): China has reacted with predictable anger to this week's official announcement of the so-called Aukus pact. The details, unveiled on Monday in San Diego, bind together Australia, the UK and the US in a far-reaching defence and security alliance aimed at confronting Chinese military expansion in the Indo-Pacific region. "Going down a dangerous road", "disregarding the concerns of the international community" and even "risking a new arms race and nuclear proliferation" are just some of the accusations being levelled by Beijing at this trio of western allies.

Not since the US Congressional leader Nancy Pelosi made her controversial visit to Taiwan last summer has China expressed such intense disapproval of Western actions. China, the world's most populous nation, with the world's largest army and navy, says it is starting to feel "penned in" by the US and its allies in the western Pacific. In response, President Xi

Jinping announced recently that China would accelerate the expansion of its defence spending and named national security as the primary concern of the coming years. Little wonder then that UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak spoke this week about a dangerous decade ahead and the need to gear up to meet the growing security challenges. So how did we get to this point and is the world drawing closer to a catastrophic conflict in the Pacific between China and the US and its allies?

The West got it wrong on China. For years there was a naïve assumption in foreign ministries that China's economic liberalisation would inevitably lead to an opening up of society and greater political freedom. As western multinational companies set up joint ventures and hundreds of millions of Chinese citizens began to enjoy a higher standard of living then surely, the reasoning went, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) would loosen its grip on the population, allow some modest demo-

cratic reforms and become a fully-fledged member of the so-called "rules-based international order". But it hasn't worked out that way. Yes, China has become an economic giant, a vital, integral part of the global supply chain and the most important trading partner for countries all over the world. But instead of coupling this with a shift towards democracy and liberalisation, Beijing has embarked on a course that has alarmed both Western governments and many of its neighbours like Japan, South Korea and the Philippines. Militarily, China today is a force to be reckoned with. In recent years its People's Liberation Army has made enormous strides in technology and innovation as well as numbers. China's Dong Feng hypersonic missiles, for example, can travel at speeds in excess of Mach 5 (five times the speed of sound), armed with either a high explosive or nuclear warhead. This is giving the US Navy's 7th Fleet, based at Yokosuka, Japan, pause for thought as

to just how close it is prepared to risk sailing to China's massed missile batteries onshore.

On nuclear ballistic missiles too, China has embarked on a programme of rapid expansion, aiming to treble its number of warheads as it builds new silos out in remote western regions. None of this though, means that China wants to go to war. It doesn't. When it comes to Taiwan, it would much prefer to exert enough pressure on it that it capitulates and submits to Beijing's rule without a shot being fired. On Hong Kong, the Uyghurs and intellectual property it knows that over time the criticism will die down because trade with China is simply too important for the rest of the world. So although tensions are high right now, and there could well be flash-points still to come, both sides - China and the West - know that a war in the Pacific would be catastrophic for everyone and despite the angry rhetoric, it is in absolutely no-one's interests.

Armenia raises peacekeeper 'problems' with Putin, fears escalation

YEREVAN (AFP): Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said Tuesday he had complained to President Vladimir Putin about "problems" with Russian peacekeepers in Nagorno-Karabakh, warning of an escalation in the restive Caucasus region. Armenia and Azerbaijan have fought two wars for control of the Armenian-majority region and the latest conflict in 2020 ended with the deployment of Moscow's forces.

Pashinyan's comments are the latest sign that Armenia, which relies on Russia as a security guarantor, is growing frustrated with the Kremlin whose attention is focused on Ukraine and confrontation with the West. "In

a phone conversation with Putin yesterday, I spoke of a possible escalation in Nagorno-Karabakh and said that there are problems in the zone where Russian peacekeepers are responsible," Pashinyan said during a press conference. "Azerbaijan's rhetoric is becoming more and more aggressive every day," he said, denouncing a blockade of the so-called Lachin corridor, which is Karabakh's sole land link with Armenia.

Since mid-December, a group of self-styled Azerbaijani environmental activists has barred traffic in the Lachin corridor to protest what they say is illegal mining. Pashinyan on Tuesday described the disruptions

along the route as "preparation for ethnic cleansing of Armenians." Yerevan has claimed that the blockade has led to a humanitarian crisis and was aimed at driving Armenians from Karabakh, which Baku has denied.

Armenia, which hosts a permanent Russian military base on its territory, is a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) that includes several pro-Moscow ex-Soviet republics -- but not Azerbaijan. Last week Yerevan refused to assume the rotating top post in the security bloc -- partly in a show of frustration over the peacekeepers' failure to prevent Karabakh's blockade. "It is not that Armenia is

leaving the CSTO, the CSTO is leaving Armenia, which is of a great concern to us, Pashinyan said. Yerevan's distancing from the bloc marked another sign of Russia's waning authority in its traditional sphere of influence.

At least three Armenians died in the latest border clashes at the beginning of March. "I want to underline that this happened in the zone of responsibility of Russian peacekeeping forces. This worries us," Pashinyan said Tuesday. Pashinyan also said that Armenia recently received Baku's response to proposals for a full peace treaty, which Yerevan submitted in mid-February.

The Frontier Post

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National institutions and evil of encroachment

RECENTLY, the Senate Standing Committee on Housing and Works held its session on Tuesday and deliberated multiple issues relating to the service accommodation allotted to government servants, encroachment, and misuse of government land. According to the details, the lawmakers sought details of illegal construction on government-allotted accommodation and directed strict action against the encroachers.

Illegal construction and encroachment are a social evil, which is growing unhindered across the country and the national capital is equally affected by the unethical living and criminal behavior of some of its inhabitants who badly damaged the living conditions in the national capital. Unfortunately, illegal construction and encroachment have grown up in posh sectors of the capital and Federal government housings where the residents pulled over into streets and shopkeepers blocked foot-paths and parking areas in the markets. There had been regular complaints that government employees have constructed illegal shops and rooms adjacent to their government-allotted accommodation and rented them to common people illegally. The CDA, an executive arm of the Federal Capital could not maintain its standard and went through acute operational depletion, and corruption, that encouraged lawlessness and ungoverned constructions, and various Kuchi Abadies, illegal plazas, and mosques on green belts were raised in Islamabad. Realistically, the encroachment has shaped a serious social, administrative, and Security challenge for the government, while the anti-encroachment and law enforcement departments and their employees are equally responsible for making up for this upheaval.

Over half a century ago, the idea of Islamabad was conceived as a model capital city, that not only meets the global standards of living, beauty, and cleanliness but also presents national prestige and a great Islamic legacy to the world. Meanwhile, the CDA, an autonomous body was raised and tasked to build and maintain the national capital. The government made all possible efforts to provide a modern living environment, maximum comfort, and luxuries to its citizens, through judicial use of available space, and urban planning. But, the traditional corruption and slackness of government institutions, particularly the CDA could not preserve the social and living environment in Islamabad, and it turned into a hub of administrative and social problems over the past years.

In fact, the degradation and untidiness of Islamabad is another story of our overall institutional impoverishment and decay that our nation witnessed over the past decades through which multiple magnificent national projects and institutions slumped into unproductiveness and became a liability for the country. No implementation of the law, corruption, political interference, and nepotism are the major reasons that ruined every aspect of national life. Interestingly, Pakistan's private real estate and property sector grew sharply, while high-rise and iconic buildings present scenarios like Modern Europe and Dubai, whereas state-owned enterprises usually have no competition with their private competitors.

At the helm of all national and provincial institutions, our Political leadership failed to preemptively diagnose and tackle the issue in a right and apolitical manner, rather a majority of politicians hurt government efforts through unlawful support of their voters, supporters, and relatives. That not only multiplied the problems but also open new avenues of corruption and misuse of authority by the bureaucracy and lower staff. In fact, the problem lies in the no implementation of the law, no fulfillment of responsibility, and no accountability of the corrupt, criminals, and crooks. Until and unless public representatives, government officials, and the masses do not uphold the constitution and implement the law, no positive change could be envisioned in this country.

‘Stop the boats’ shows how Britain is really being governed by Tory campaign leaflet

Rafael Behr

THE government's bill for stopping boats will stop no boats. But its job is already done. The mission was accomplished on Monday night when opposition MPs voted against the proposed law at second reading in the Commons. There are more legislative hurdles to clear, yet Suella Braverman was exultant. Keir Starmer's party, the home secretary said, had proved that it wanted "open borders and unlimited migration".

That isn't even a distortion of Labour policy. It is a falsehood animated by a fantasy of the party Braverman and her colleagues want to fight at the next election. For as long as there is an argument over the bill, the Tories will present themselves as the last defence against a migrant armada and its accomplices. The fifth columnists were named in Monday's debate by Scott Benton, MP for Blackpool South: "lefty lawyers and celebrity do-gooders". Which of those is Theresa May? She is famous, but not in the field of liberal pieties around migration. And yet, even May, author of the home office "hostile environment" policy, thinks Braverman has gone too far. May is exercised over

clauses in the bill that undermine the 2015 Modern Slavery Act, which was the compassionate part of her legacy.

The new law would deny anti-slavery protections to anyone who entered the country illegally, which is the normal route for those who are smuggled by traffickers. It takes a Kafkaesque flourish of spite to withdraw help from desperate people on the grounds that they committed the crime of which they are the victim. That is one of many sinister absurdities in a policy made for use on a campaign leaflet. Pledging to stop the boats is considerably easier than stopping the boats. There is no evidence of any deterrent effect from previous efforts to strip charity out of Britain's asylum system. There is also no mechanism for dealing with all the people who will have their claims to sanctuary automatically and irreversibly invalidated (in breach of the UK's commitments under international conventions on refugee rights). They will end up in legal limbo, pending removal to Rwanda, or some as yet unidentified country. Without mass deportations, the bill condemns asylum seekers to internment or destitution. The cost will rise; the boats will still

come.

But for Conservative MPs that is a problem for someone else, or for their future selves, on the other side of an election. Only a handful of Tories, grantees who are beyond ministerial ambition and dissidents with plans to quit parliament, recognise that this is a bad way to make law. Bad in the moral sense that thinks democracies should not be wantonly cruel, and bad in the constitutional sense that parliament is supposed to do more than scrawl campaign slogans on to the statute book so it can say the opposition wants to erase them. This isn't new. Governments have often passed ill-conceived laws with unforeseen consequences because they lacked the time or imagination to draft better ones. The Commons is a theatre where success is measured in performance, not quibbling over the script. Parliamentary votes have been called before to force the opposition (or sometimes the government) to cross some line that puts them on the wrong side of public opinion.

But the illegal immigration bill represents a new stage of constitutional degradation. It takes the most dysfunctional ele-

ments of Westminster process and applies them as the deliberate instrument of government policy. A number of factors have come together to make this possible, but Brexit is the catalyst. Years of legislative trench warfare over implementation of the referendum result bred fear of parliamentary scrutiny in the headline Eurosceptics. That faction is as scornful of Britain's obligations under international human rights law as it was of the case for frictionless trade with the EU, smelling subordination to foreigners in both spheres. They see due process as a trap and the Commons, even with a Tory majority, as a place where the will of the people can be ambushed and emasculated by unpatriotic liberals.

In that view, Boris Johnson was right to attempt an illegal suspension of parliament in September 2019 because MPs wouldn't do his bidding. He was right, too, to pass a Brexit deal that he had no intention of honouring, because the terms of the treaty were unimportant compared to the principle of emancipation from Brussels. Brexit demanded a separation in the Conservative mind between ideological ambition and

practical government. To prioritise the latter was an offence against the former. The two spheres move further apart the clearer it gets that none of the purported benefits of leaving the EU is real.

The election of Liz Truss as Tory leader last summer expressed the party's determination not to have the bubble of its fantasies pricked. Rishi Sunak was summoned to the job, in deference to gravity, because the bubble burst. But the years of wilful flight from seriousness have had a lasting effect. There is a glibness baked into British politics; a reflex recoil from hard questions. Public debate struggles to escape the gravitational pull of Twitter-led culture wars, a safe space for people who find technical policy boring but like to argue about politics in grandiose, moralising terms.

By that mechanism, the future of Britain's asylum policy ended up subordinate to a debate about Gary Lineker's tweets. The fitness of BBC social media guidelines has had more scrutiny than a bill awarding the home secretary enhanced powers to detain children. On Monday night, parliament considered the question of whether Britain was still a country that

recognised the universality of rights that were codified after the second world war. Most Tory MPs decided it was not, although few who supported the bill had the courage to put it in those terms. They say they are stopping the boats. Some of them probably believe it too. They think that saying it must be done is the same as getting it done. When it turns out that it can't be done, not their way, and the consequence is chaos and misery, they will blame the people who warned them it would be so. That has been the cycle of British politics since 2016.

There was a moment, when Sunak became prime minister, that a different path was visible. He styled himself as the man to restore responsibility and sobriety to government, which was a low bar to clear after the Truss debacle. He restored grownup diplomacy in relations with the EU and was rewarded with a deal on Northern Ireland. But he also reapportioned Braverman to the Home Office and hitched his electoral prospects to a migration policy built to fail with flamboyant cruelty. He has made "stop the boats" a test of his credibility, at which point he decided he was not serious about being serious.

The Guardian

Nigeria’s young voters aren’t done yet

Rinu Oduala

AS the sun began to rise over the bustling city of Lagos, Nigeria, a group of young people dressed in t-shirts and jeans were already gathered outside a polling station. Joining the slow-moving queue, these young, educated voters had one common goal - to make a difference.

They had grown up in a country plagued by corruption, poverty and political instability, and were tired of waiting for change to come from the top. They remember the day, in October 2020, when the sound of gunshots and screams filled the air as the military opened fire on unarmed protesters in Lagos, the second-largest city in Africa - in what became known as the "Lekki toll gate shooting." At the time, young Nigerians, who had been peacefully protesting against alleged police brutality for weeks, faced violence at the hands of security operatives. Many were injured, some maimed, and others lost their lives.

Fast forward to Nigeria's recent controversial presidential election, and the memory of those protests lingered for young voters like those lining up in the early morning sun. Young voters carry with them the scars of the violence that they faced in 2020. They remember the tear gas, gunshots and violence, and the friends and loved ones who were injured or killed. The protests were both a critical moment and the culmination of years of

anger and disillusionment with the system, which has failed to address the needs and aspirations of Nigeria's youth. But despite the trauma and tragedy of those days, they remain determined to make their voices heard. These young Nigerians are driven by a sense of justice, a determination to hold those in power accountable for their actions and a belief in the power of collective action to bring about change.

As a 24-year-old Nigerian, I am part of one of the largest youth populations in the world. We are energetic, ambitious and full of hope for our future. However, we face politicians who are older, are often disconnected from our reality, making decisions that affect our lives without our input. We are constantly told that we are the future of Nigeria, but when it comes to decision-making, our voices are silenced. Living in Nigeria often feels like watching a poorly executed movie, except it's not entertaining - it's real life. I grew up in a system where the odds have always been stacked against me, and where young people like me are left with no other option but to survive by any means necessary.

As I grow older, I've grown tired of constantly fighting for survival. What I need urgently is a country that operates efficiently, with functional systems and institutions. I need a future where becoming a leader is an achievable dream, rather than an elusive one. To live in a coun-

try where I can finally breathe easy. Despite being the most populous country in Africa and having vast natural resources, Nigeria has been struggling with a multitude of challenges that make life difficult for its young population.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the unemployment rate in Nigeria stood at 33.3%, as of the fourth quarter of 2020, with youth unemployment being even higher at 42.5%. The monthly minimum wage in Nigeria for government employees is currently set at ₦30,000 (equivalent to around \$65). Despite these challenges and more, young Nigerians are a powerful force for change. As shown in the recent election, they have placed themselves solidly at the center of the political landscape, demanding a government that understands their struggles and puts their interests first. They are not motivated by any particular political party or candidate; they are motivated by a desire to build a more equitable and democratic Nigeria.

The role of online spaces in empowering young Nigerians cannot be underestimated, and is likely to continue to shape the country's political landscape for years to come. Social media has enabled young Nigerians to build networks, share information and coordinate political activities in ways that were not possible before. Gone are the days when

only a few people have the power to control national conversations. Today, we are creating our own tables where we put issues on the front burner, through the democratization of social media.

Such an amount of democratization of public discourse in this generation was unexpected by politicians whose regular answer to the complaints of young Nigerians is "vote us out." Well, young Nigerians decided to vote. The 'Peter effect'

During the presidential campaigns, the Labour Party candidate Peter Obi became popular among young voters because of his focus on addressing issues like economic inequality, unemployment, education, healthcare and poverty and the need for transparency and accountability in government. His supporters even earned the nickname "Obididents." Although he is not a newcomer to the political system, Obi was seen as atypical contender with a decent shot at the top job, in a political arena dominated by older, more established rivals. The former Nigerian governor's reputation for fiscal responsibility attracted voters fed up with corruption and a political system that is out of touch.

Within a span of nine months, his effective use of multiple communication channels and engaging presence on social media allowed him to attract millions of followers. This approach helped him to

reach voters who are already active in these digital spaces, thereby establishing the legitimacy of young people's concerns. By rallying behind Obi, young Nigerians made it clear that their needs and concerns can no longer be ignored. These "keypad warriors" have taken on the established power structures in Nigerian politics, which have historically marginalized young people and prevented them from holding positions of influence. By claiming digital spaces, young Nigerians are now pushing to advance their political aspirations, shaping the future of Nigerian politics.

However, the electoral process has cast a shadow over the election results - which are now being challenged in court by the opposition. Nigeria's independent national electoral commission (INEC) declared Bola Ahmed Tinubu, of the ruling All Progressives Congress party, the winner in an election tarnished by allegations of corruption, violence, technical failures and the lowest voter turnout in Nigerian history, at 29%.

Concerns about the lack of accountability in Nigerian politics could further undermine the already fragile state of Nigerian democracy, and send a negative signal to other countries in the region, where about ten other countries will soon be conducting presidential elections and some, parliamentary elections. Nigeria's status as the largest economy in Africa - along with its population of

over 210 million and projected growth to nearly 400 million by 2050 - positions the country as a significant player in both regional and global politics. The country has the potential to drive economic growth and development throughout the continent.

While the flawed voting process may have left many young Nigerians feeling that their votes did not count, we cannot give up the spaces we have already claimed. It is important to maintain faith in the power of our collective voices to bring about the changes necessary to strengthen our democracy. Beyond voting, we can participate in shaping government policies, by using social media to drive conversations, advocating for our aspirations for the future, and promoting a culture of democracy through peaceful and productive means.

The country's politicians must understand that a new generation of active citizens has emerged. In just a few days, Nigerians will again head to the ballot box - this time, in state elections, to choose state governors and state house of assembly representatives, who have immense influence in the running of essential services. The road ahead is a challenging one. And the fate of Nigeria and Africa's democracy depends on the young people who will cast their ballot in the direction of justice, peace, stability, employment, equity, fair representation and above all, a promising future.

Israeli protesters could be the key to peace

Yossi Mekelberg

FOR a very long time, the silent majority in Israel was exactly that - completely inaudible, at least in public. This allowed an almost unbroken 18 years of Prime Minister Netanyahu-led administrations to erode the democratic system and all but kill off any chance of peace with the Palestinians. The consequences of this apathy are very quickly catching up with Israeli society and, for the first time in the country's history, hundreds of thousands of people from all walks of life are taking to the streets to protest Netanyahu's latest government's unscrupulous attempts at a judicial coup. They are doing this with great passion and creativity, such as declaring last Thursday "Resisting Dictatorship Day." By any standards, these protests are unprecedented and a watershed in the country's history.

It is not as if Israelis have shied away from expressing dissatisfaction with their leadership and the direction that the country has been taking on many different issues for a very long time. But such dissent has been aired mainly in the con-

finer of what are known as the "Friday night chats," when families and friends gather in homes or in cafes and bars, and hardly at all in any organized, purposeful manner. They have tended to be endless whining sessions rather than genuine attempts to change Israeli politics. Those with the ability, character and skills to bring about positive change avoid this arena because they see it as corrupt and stagnant, where much energy is spent for very little outcome, while they could use their talents much more effectively in other avenues open to them in Israel, or even continue their discourse abroad. Yet, below the surface, there has festered a growing malaise, especially among those who feel that their contribution to the economy and society exceeds by far those who are better represented in government yet make only a marginal contribution to Israel's wealth and well-being.

Arguably, those who have been taking to the streets countrywide every week for the last 11 weeks, including in some of the settlements, have had reason to do so for many years. Nevertheless, something about this sixth Netanyahu government

has touched a raw nerve in those who are the backbone of Israeli society. It is the makeup of this coalition and the combination of the greedy and destructive nature of its far-right components, not to mention their lowering of the level of discourse to way below the lowest common denominator, that gets under so many people's skin. It is also most obvious that, although Netanyahu does not really believe in the judicial reforms, he is nevertheless prepared to compromise every value and principle that he once held - and with it the country's democracy and interests - to save himself from his corruption trial and its consequences.

For now, there is no clear leadership of this protest movement. However, it is very well organized and continues to gather momentum. As of yet, in order to maximize its support, it has focused on a limited agenda of opposing the judicial reforms and "defending democracy against dictatorship." At this stage, unity in the ranks is perceived as more important than having a clear agenda. The focus is on defending and guaranteeing the independence of

the judicial system and ensuring that the basic tenets of the democratic system, including civil liberties for all, remain intact. These protesters, whom Netanyahu and his political partners, including his son, label as "anarchists" and "terrorists," are truly the salt of the earth and they are raising their voices because the democratic system is dear to them. They are worried that the damage caused by the weakening of the system's checks and balances will give politicians more power at the expense of the judiciary, especially the Supreme Court, and will thus affect each and every one of them.

These people are those who keep the economy going and pay taxes, only to witness a government full of representatives of yeshivot (rabbinical seminars) students who do almost nothing to generate wealth and instead feed from the public purse. There is a consensus that the proposed judicial changes will badly harm what is regarded as a very vibrant and successful economy. They are also angry that the burden of military service is not shared equally and there are too many in this government who have

never served, but who are pushing for further confrontation with the Palestinians in a conflict that the protesters as reservists - and their children as conscripts - will have to face. One particular practical-legal aspect worries those who serve in the army, be they full-timers or reservists, and it was recently highlighted by former Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit. He warned that, as long as the judicial system is perceived by the international community as independent, Israel enjoys relatively little scrutiny of the issue of war crimes in its military operations.

However, if this judicial independence is harmed, it is likely that the International Court of Justice in The Hague and international prosecutors will step in.

What is still kept at the margin of the protests - mainly to attract the support of those on the soft right who oppose the government's attacks on democracy - is the Palestinian issue. As a result, many Palestinian citizens of Israel have been absent from the protests. Although sidelining the issue and the ills of the occupation may ensure more people are out on the streets, it is

a complete eclipse of common sense on the part of those protesters who do not or will not understand that a major reason for the constant erosion of Israel's democracy is that democracy cannot prevail if at the same time it oppresses millions of Palestinians, deprives them of their rights and installs among them a population of settlers who enjoy rights and privileges that are not bestowed on their Arab neighbors. This is not the only reason for the frail state of Israel's democracy, but it is a crucial one. At present, the protesters' fervor is showing no signs of diminishing and it might be the case that Israel, on the eve of the 75th anniversary of its founding, is in need of a major crisis that will redefine what it means to be democratic. These brave protesters, who face constant and vile abuse from both government ministers and, at times, police violence, could be the agents that both preserve Israeli democracy and, if they push themselves further intellectually, bring peace with the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, therefore ensuring the equality and dignity of those who live on both sides of the Green Line.

How the war has changed Russia

Nigel Gould-Davies

WHEN Russian President Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine, he expected a quick victory. His failure transformed the Kremlin's main task from managing his re-election in 2024 to mobilizing Russia's human and material resources to win a major war of aggression. This fundamental policy shift has breached long-standing Kremlin agreements with both Russian society and Russia's elites. It is also straining the resources needed to fight the war and maintain domestic control.

Before the war, the regime struck a clear authoritarian bargain with the population: stay out of politics and the state will leave you alone. Despite a decade-long decline in real incomes, this remained a compelling proposition for most Russians, especially as repression grew more severe. The war has led to even greater repression. Opposition politics and independent media are effectively outlawed. Laws criminalize even the mention of "war" with up to 15 years in prison. Online censorship and surveillance, including the use of software to identify those who post anonymously, have intensified.

But the biggest change is one not of degree but of kind: the regime now seeks not to demobilize the population from politics but to mobilize it behind the war. This demand for active support, not merely acquiescence, marks a fundamental shift from authoritarianism to totalitarianism. State media and the Orthodox Church now serve up a vitriolic and hysterical diet of wartime propaganda, while educational facilities inculcate such messaging in the nation's youth. The militarization of

Russian society is underway. But despite public (and sometimes shrilly performative) expressions of support, there are few signs of genuine mass enthusiasm for the war. Escalating repression suggests the Kremlin lacks confidence that the war is - or will remain - popular.

The fact that the regime began the September 2022 "partial mobilization" of over 300,000 conscripts so late and kept it so short shows the state's sensitivity to public anxiety. Even in this repressive environment, the Kremlin's internal polling suggests that a majority of the population now favors peace talks. Elite opinion matters more than public opinion in Russia. The regime needs the elites to fulfill essential functions, and the elites, in turn, are better placed to protect their interests than ordinary citizens. Their pre-war bargain was obedience in return for relative wealth and security, including the ability to travel and send their money and families to the West.

By decisively subordinating stability and prosperity to geopolitical obsession, the war has broken this agreement too. State control over the economy is growing as it moves toward a war footing and businesses come under pressure to produce materiel for the war effort. Sanctions are harming economic growth, disrupting supply chains, and have cut off Russia's elites from the West. The domestic business environment is becoming more unpredictable and violent. Armed crime has risen by 30%. Some elites, notably the siloviki, have internalized Putin's justification for the invasion. Politicians express public support

by visiting the front lines in order to advance their careers, but a large part of the elite has been unhappy with the war from the start despite continuing to work for the system that launched it.

More informed and less susceptible to propaganda than the general public, but also subjected to growing surveillance, Russia's elites continue to work for the regime out of fear and, in some cases, a conviction that they are serving the people rather than the regime. The war has strained Russia's resources. Real incomes are falling; Russia has just recorded its second-highest budget deficit since the break-up of the Soviet Union; and nearly a million citizens, many highly educated, have fled the country.

At the same time, war-fuelled federal spending rose by 58.7% over the past year. Nearly one-third of the federal budget now goes on defense and domestic security. Reflecting these difficulties, much economic data has been classified. As the regime is more concerned about defeat in Ukraine than domestic instability, it will continue fighting the war by demanding even more of its people while offering them steadily less. But to avoid provoking a dangerous adverse reaction it will, where possible, calibrate resource mobilization - habituating the population to the war and preparing the ground for further escalation.

The war has made Russia more repressive, intrusive, secretive, and isolated from the West, as well as poorer. In all these ways, it increasingly resembles the Soviet Union. But three differences suggest that Russia will find it harder to manage the stresses that war

imposes. Firstly, for all its repression, the state is still less controlling than in Soviet times. There is no ruling party to penetrate and monitor every institution (though the Federal Security Service is a functional equivalent) and no coherent ideology to legitimate the regime. And while the state's role has deepened, private ownership remains the basis of the economy.

Secondly, for all its isolation, Russia is still more open to the outside world than the Soviet Union ever was. Russians can access the internet - including, with a VPN, blocked websites - and can for the most part leave the country without difficulty. Curtailing these freedoms would be the obvious next step. The war has also stoked unprecedented public infighting, albeit within limits defined by Putin, among silovik structures. Even state television propaganda shows occasionally air views critical of the war. Thirdly, Russia is much weaker in relation to the West than the Soviet Union was during the Cold War. As former finance minister Mikhail Zadornov recently noted, the West's resources are "incomparable." If the West grants Ukraine the means to win the war, the contest will be very unequal.

In short, Russia's capacity to mobilize and indoctrinate its citizens is weaker, and the resources it needs are greater than those of the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Against this background, Putin has launched the country's most costly aggression since the 1939-40 Winter War against Finland. There are no signs yet that the Kremlin's breaking of key social contracts is bringing the system close to crisis. But the strains it faces will deepen.

The Moscow Times



Russia's next civil war has already begun

Richar Kemp

ONE of the bloodiest battles in modern European history is taking place in Bakhmut, with reports of more than 1,000 soldiers dying in a single day. But more significantly for the Kremlin, it may also be the site of an extraordinary Russian civil war, playing out on Ukrainian soil between different factions. At the heart of it are two of the most significant parts of the Kremlin's war machine: the Wagner Group and the Russian ministry of defence.

reaction from the ministry of defence has been unforgiving. A new report from the Institute for the Study of War says that Russian generals could be using the Bakhmut death trap as an opportunity "to deliberately expend both elite and convict Wagner forces... in an effort to weaken Prigozhin and derail his ambitions for greater influence over the Kremlin".

In other words, they could be holding back Russian forces and depriving Wagner of ammunition in order to inflict maximum attrition on Prigozhin's mercenaries. This would be an astonishingly self-interested strategy in the midst of an existential battle for the Russian regime and could be slowing down the advance on Bakhmut. It would mean that the Russian ministry of defence is now prioritising domestic power struggles over the invasion. Such a zero-sum strategy could hardly be conducted without Putin's blessing - and indeed it is just the latest in a series of moves by the ministry to diminish Prigozhin and remove Wagner from the order of battle.

Wagner, for example, has hitherto depended largely on convicts taken from Russian jails and labour camps, which make up 80 per cent of its forces in Ukraine. But at the start of the year, that source of recruits was cut off by the Kremlin, with the Russian army reportedly taking them for themselves. These moves would correspond with Putin's behaviour in the past. He's been known to exploit the friction

among leaders of the various parts of the defence establishment to ensure that their personal power remains limited - a somewhat similar tactic to that used by Hitler to keep in check the rival Wehrmacht and Waffen SS.

Early in the war, to the anger of Shoigu and General Gerasimov, the Russian president sided with Prigozhin, supporting Wagner with ministry of defence resources to alleviate the Russian army's initial losses. But now, seeing the bombastic Wagner leader as a threat, Putin may have shifted gears. It appears to be Shoigu who has the upper hand again, with Prigozhin having his wings clipped at every opportunity. Even military victories he claims for Wagner have been formally attributed to the ministry of defence. But while that trick has worked for Putin in the past, it is a big gamble this time - the risk being that he loses control of his disparate fighters. Other mercenary groups, including Shoigu's own private military company and Ramzan Kadyrov's Chechen army, are presumably watching and learning. It may also be too late to suppress Prigozhin, who enjoys notable support among top officials and is constantly lauded in the patriotic media. Prigozhin's popularity reached new heights last autumn when he gave public approval to the killing of a Wagner defector, who was then battered to death by a sledgehammer. If those are his tactics, Putin had better hope the civil war in Bakhmut doesn't reach Moscow.

The Telegraph

Donald Trump looks set to shock the world again

Ross Clark

IF Donald Trump was not already beyond the pale, his behaviour on 6 January 2021 made sure that he became so. He will not and cannot return for a second term. For goodness sake, even his former vice president, Mike Pence, has denounced him, telling an audience of political journalists: "What happened that day was a disgrace, and it mocks decency to portray it in any other way."

That just about sums up the view this side of the Atlantic, not just on the Left but among most conservatives, too. Trump, once widely seen as a grave threat to the world, has all but disappeared off our radars because we cannot conceive of how any decent human being could possibly vote for him following the manner of his departure from office last time around. What support he retains, we like to believe, is on the fringes of US politics. We couldn't be more wrong.

There is still a year to go before Republicans start to pick their candidate for next year's p-presidential election. But anyone taking a bet against Trump being the victor in 2024 would be foolish. Slowly but surely, the former president is building a campaign which, like last time around, reaches the parts few other politicians can reach.

In November, the Republican party appeared to have, in Ron DeSantis, a force which would end for good any lingering hope Trump might have of

saying things like he did yesterday, that banning trans surgery for teenage children would be "close to sinful". Trump knows that it is the issue of China which offers the most fertile political ground among America's overlooked mass. Putin's invasion of Ukraine has renewed fears of malign dictatorships - and in China we have one which not only threatens global peace, if it invades Taiwan, but which continues to threaten US jobs through what many voters perceive as unfair trading practices and currency manipulation. Trump's potential winning narrative is this: of all recent presidents, I was the only one who avoided foreign wars. How? By squaring up to the world's bad men before they caused us problems. Look how I handled Iran and North Korea. And see what happened once sleepy Joe came to the White House? Putin decided it was safe to complete his invasion of Ukraine, which he had started under Obama.

I am no fan of Trump. I'm with Pence on Trump's fitness for office following 6 January. But I have to say that Trump's claim to be able to control the world's dictators has some truth to it; as a fellow narcissist, he understood them. A tough line on China will certainly appeal to his core vote in a time of global angst. We would do ourselves a favour by taking Trump seriously now rather than being caught out if, as is very possible, he wins a second term next year.

France's unions have put up one hell of a fight - and sent a message to rest of Europe

IF French democracy were in a healthier state, Emmanuel Macron's pension reform legislation would have already been scrapped by now. Broadly unpopular from the outset, his plans to raise the country's retirement eligibility age from 62 to 64 have triggered a protest movement - historically large even by French standards - lasting nearly two months.

Many in the streets view the bill as a breach of the social contract: workers in France contribute a hefty share of earnings over the course of their careers to support a relatively generous and effective retirement system. Lifting the eligibility floor amounts to a very real cut in benefits, and one that will disproportionately hurt the least well-off. If you talk to the protesters, they'll tell you this reform is cruel and unjust. But with the government ignoring those voices - week after week after week - unions now say they have little choice but to ratchet up the pressure. Ahead of final votes in the senate and national assembly that could come as early as this Thursday, they have shifted from a strategy built around single-day protests to one that incorporates more disruptive, open-ended strikes. As Fabien Cros, a CGT union representative at a TotalEnergies biofuel refinery near the Mediterranean city of Martigues, told me, "Our goal is to destabilise the economy in an intelligent way."

It's an uphill battle for sure, but if executed correctly, the approach

could prove decisive. In short, the disruptions could complicate a legislative path already riddled with obstacles: President Macron lacks an absolute majority in the national assembly, and needs votes from the rightwing Les Républicains party to pass the reform. Otherwise, his camp could be forced to trigger the controversial Article 49.3, a tool to approve legislation without a vote that can only be overridden by a motion of no-confidence. The more outside pressure there is, the greater the chances are of parliamentary revolt. To the extent that unions share a gameplan, it's as follows: they are focused on strikes that generate outsized disruptions for business and the general public alike - work stoppages at choke-points such as public transit, waste collection, ports and refineries, where they believe they can mobilise members. Under normal circumstances, strikes like these run a high risk of alienating potential sympathisers. But these are not normal circumstances. Roughly seven in 10 people oppose the pension reform in one poll, while another found 56% of respondents backed an open-ended strike to defeat the bill.

As a longstanding hotbed for worker militancy, the national rail system is a major piece of the union strategy. Last week, rail unions authorised what's known as a "renewable strike", providing legal backing for workers to stay off the job until they decide other-

wise. Fabien Dumas, a national secretary at the SUD rail union, told me the state of play looks more favourable than it did in 2019, during the last major strike wave in France. "Right now, we're not alone," Dumas said. "Everything is in place for this movement to last." Rail workers - along with oil refinery workers, who have also launched strategic actions that may soon be felt at the petrol pump - have been joined by dock workers at the major ports, from the Channel to the Mediterranean; rubbish collectors in Paris; truck drivers deliberately slowing traffic or blocking highways; and employees at electricity providers, who have pushed the bounds of the law to impose headline-grabbing blackouts, targeting everything from an Amazon warehouse and the 2024 Olympic village to the home town of the labour minister.

Of course, the disruption may not be enough. Macron knows that a defeat could inflict lasting damage on the rest of his second term, transforming him into a lame duck less than a year after his re-election. That calculation sets the bar very high for unions. French unions are also not as uniformly powerful as outsiders seem to think. Observing France's strike wave of 1995, also over pension reform, a pollster and a sociologist developed the theory of the grève par procuration, or "proxy strike", the notion that some workers were striking on behalf of supporters

who lacked the financial means or militant culture to take action themselves. The idea appealed to trade unionists grappling with their declining influence, but since then, it has also served as an excuse for their failure to recruit and energise the rank-and-file. What's the point of mobilising if you can just count on the familiar bastions of union strength to carry the load? While few openly advocate the proxy strike as a strategy, the underlying logic still holds sway in certain corners of the labour movement.

For all of the parts of the economy where unions are flexing their muscle, there are many other key industries - from aviation to logistics - where they've struggled to turn out in force. Teachers have been reluctant to engage in open-ended strikes, and wield their obvious disruptive power. If French unions do manage to defeat Macron, it would make for a remarkable victory. But in many respects, they have already surpassed expectations. Forging unity on the national level, they've shown they can still plausibly claim to speak on behalf of the country's working class, gaining tens of thousands of members in the process. They've also put opposition to the president's agenda in sharp focus. And no matter what happens in the coming days, they'll have sent a strong message to the rest of Europe, as politicians across the continent mull over similar reforms: instead of debating cuts to retirement benefits, it would be much wiser to reflect about how to expand them.

Fighting cancer war in sub-Saharan Africa

Miriam Mutebi

NONCOMMUNICABLE diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes and obesity, kill 41 million people per year, with 77 percent of these deaths occurring in low- and middle-income countries. In sub-Saharan Africa, noncommunicable diseases are now responsible for about 37 percent of deaths - up from 24 percent in 2000. Cancer is one of the top three diseases driving this increase, accounting for more than half a million deaths in 2020. And this number is expected to double by 2030 if the status quo is maintained.

As with other noncommunicable diseases, many cases of cancer could be prevented by addressing behavioral risk factors, such as tobacco and alcohol use and obesity, which contribute to more than 40 percent of all cancer deaths worldwide. Other cost-efficient measures include widespread vaccination against the human papillomavirus, which causes most cervical cancers, and against hepatitis B, which, along with hepatitis C, contributes to liver cancer. In Africa, cancers associated with infections accounted for about 27 percent of all cancers in 2018 - the highest of any region monitored by the World Health Organization.

Furthermore, many common cancers, such as colorectal, breast, prostate and cervical cancer, can now be treated successfully if detected early. But they remain among the deadliest in Africa, because patients there are typically diagnosed too late with advanced disease and frequently do not complete their care. There are multiple reasons for this, including a combination of financial, health system and sociocultural barriers, as well as chronic underfunding that impedes the ability of African public health agencies to provide timely, value-based quality care. Many African

countries also lack the resources, infrastructure and workforce needed to implement effective vaccination and population screening programs. And, despite improvements over the last few years, many countries do not have access to safe and timely diagnostic and treatment services.

Regional disparities are another major concern, as many cancer patients must travel long distances to reach treatment centers, which are generally located in urban areas. The need to find accommodation and manage work or childcare concerns can deter many patients from completing routine screenings or treatment, while out-of-pocket costs for screening services, where available, also tend to limit their routine uptake. Even when care is available, social and cultural norms may prevent people from seeking it. For example, social stigma often discourages many patients suffering from cancers affecting sexual and reproductive organs. Similarly, "cancer fatalism" leads many to believe that the diagnosis is a death sentence and that treatment is futile. "Collectivism," whereby the community decides about a patient's ability to access care, also ultimately results in poorer outcomes.

Consequently, cancer survival rates in low- and middle-income countries are abysmally low compared to high-income countries. For example, while the five-year survival rate for breast cancer in richer countries is above 84 percent, it drops to 40 to 60 percent in low- and middle-income countries. Survival rates for colorectal cancer, which can reach 76 percent in high-income settings, are lower than 25 percent in low-income countries. And, owing to low HPV vaccination rates and the lack of effective testing, low- and middle-income countries

account for 90 percent of all cervical cancer deaths, underscoring the need for urgent action. A recent Lancet Oncology Commission report on cancer in sub-Saharan Africa that I co-authored emphasizes the need for African governments to invest in local data collection and research to support and develop resource-efficient cancer detection and treatment programs tailored to their countries' specific needs and funding requirements. We also recommend that governments start to think of innovative ways to expand universal healthcare coverage to include cancer services such as early diagnosis, targeted treatments and supportive care.

Kenya, Nigeria and other African countries are already moving ahead with initiatives to expand access. By mobilizing international support and engaging local stakeholders, these countries could invest in prevention and early detection strategies, including mobile screening units, community outreach programs, self-examination kits, in vitro diagnostics, and telehealth, thus improving prevention and early detection. But diagnosis is not enough. System preparedness is essential and the infrastructure and skilled workforce to provide treatment for detected cancers must be expanded in tandem with any early diagnosis.

Moreover, to ensure equal access to health services, African countries should train primary care physicians to identify the early signs of cancer and facilitate timely referrals. A patient in sub-Saharan Africa sees four to six healthcare providers, on average, before a cancer diagnosis is made. Governments should also integrate resources meant for COVID-19, HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases toward comprehensive strategies - for example,

providing cervical cancer screening for patients with HIV. While integrated clinics capable of treating both infectious diseases and non-communicable diseases would be ideal, policymakers must be pragmatic and consider the shortage of healthcare personnel, particularly in densely populated areas, and develop models and innovations that can help bridge some of these access barriers.

Countries such as India, Pakistan and Jordan have shown that investing in building local capacity makes developing world-class cancer facilities possible, despite limited resources. African policymakers, too, are increasingly aware of the need for local cancer detection and treatment capacity, as evidenced by an increase in the number of countries with national cancer-control programs and the expansion of oncology training centers and infrastructure for care. Rwanda, where a widespread HPV vaccination program and expanded testing could make the country one of the world's first to eliminate cervical cancer, also provides a useful model for improving health outcomes in low-resource settings. Given this continent-wide trend, we have a unique opportunity to enhance our regional collaboration and develop centers of excellence for knowledge-sharing, research and coordinated, evidence-based treatments for patients. But to realize the promise of recent advances in diagnostics and care, from vaccines and immunotherapy to precision medicine and multi-cancer early detection tests, we must ensure that the basics of cancer care are readily available and that life-saving treatments are distributed equitably. To paraphrase the activist and U2 co-founder Bono, where you live should not determine whether you get to live.

Arab News

Important Notice

The Frontier Post will not be responsible for the comments in the articles and letters. The Frontier Post requests the writers of articles and letters to please make sure that they write their email addresses and mention the names of the cities, towns, districts or tehsil of their residences at the bottom of their articles and letters.



SIALKOT: Federal Minister of Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar and Federal Minister of Defense Khawaja Muhammad Asif addressing members of Chamber of Commerce.

Sialkot businessmen playing role for good image of country

SIALKOT (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar on Wednesday said that the business community of Sialkot had a name globally which was earning a lot of foreign exchange for the country by producing the best quality products and raising the good image of Pakistan.

He expressed these views on the inauguration of a factory, Cap Mount

Impex Pvt Ltd, located at Pasrur Road, Sialkot.

Speaking on the occasion, the Federal Minister said that export was the only way that could steer the country out of economic crisis.

He said that Sialkot was playing an important role in strengthening national exchequer by earning billion of dollars through its exports.

The Minister congratulated

the chief executive of the factory, Gul Sher Khan, and Director Khan Shehbaz Khan on the inauguration of the factory and prayed for the expansion of their business.

On this occasion, former secretary Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Nawaz Ahmed Toor, Hasan Toor, Zafar Ali Shah, business community and factory employees were also present.

Lucky Cement completed more schools and vocational centers in Pezu

F.P. Report

PEZU: Lucky Cement Limited has announced the successful completion of their project to build two schools in collaboration with The Citizen Foundation. The Abdul Razzak Tabba Block Lucky Cement Limited Pezu Campus-I will provide primary education, while the Muhammad Yunus Tabba Block Pezu Campus-II will provide secondary education. This project is in line with the UNSDG "Quality Education" and aims to provide access to quality education to children in the community.

Lucky Cement Limited is also committed to providing skill-based training to the youth of the region through their vocational training program in collaboration with NLC (ATINs). The previous two batches of students have completed their training and have been employed in the factory in their respective fields.

Moreover, the provision of scholarships to students from District Lakki Marwat to support their academic pursuits, including intermediate scholarships and higher education scholarships for university students in top business and engineering universities of Pakistan, is another significant contribution of Lucky Cement Limited towards education in the region.

In a statement issued by the company, Mr. Amin Ganny, Chief Operating Officer said "Lucky Cement Limited is confident that their initiatives in the area of education and skill development will have a positive impact on the lives of the residents of District Lakki Marwat and will enhance the education standard in the rural area.

cooperate with each other in agriculture, science and technology, information technology, industrial sector and other fields to share expertise with each other and achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.

He said that many sectors of Pakistan's economy offer great prospects for foreign investment including oil & gas, mines & minerals, energy, automobile and urged the Lithuanian investors to explore investment and JVs in Pakistan.

He urged Lithuania to open its embassy in Pakistan that would help boost trade and economic relations between the two countries.

Speaking at the occasion, Ricardas Degutis, Ambassador of Lithuania said that the bilateral trade between Lithuania and Pakistan is quite low which can be improved by promoting business linkages between the private sectors of both countries.

LSMI production goes up by 1.48%

ISLAMABAD (APP): The output of the Large Scale Manufacturing Industrial (LSMI) sector witnessed an increase of 1.48 per cent during January, the first month of the calendar year 2023, as compared to December 2022, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

However, according to the provisional quantum indices of LSMI for January 2023 released by the PBS, on a year-on-year (YoY) basis, the big indus-

try production went down 7.90 per cent in January 2023 when compared with January 2022.

Overall the LSMI showed a decline of 4.40 per cent during July-January 2022-23 when compared with the same period of last year.

The main contributors towards overall negative growth of 4.40 per cent were food (0.32%), tobacco (0.55%), textile (2.71%) garments (3.81%), petroleum products (0.69%), cement (0.86), pharmaceuticals (1.22%), and automobiles (1.55%).

The production in July-January 2022-23 as compared to the same period of the corresponding year has increased in wearing apparel (44.47%), leather products (4.98%), furniture (73.80%), and other manufacturing (48.26%).

The provisional quantum indices of LSMI for January 2023 with the base year 2015-16 have been developed based on the latest data supplied by the source agencies, including the Oil Companies Advisory Committee, Ministry of Industries and Production, Ministry of Commerce and Provincial Bureau of Statistics (BoS).

Court Notice

In the court of senior civil judge/illaqa Qazi judge family court Swat. Case No.49/FC Institution 03/03/2023. Hearing date 30/03/2023. Mst jehan wala bibi VS Ihsan Ullah Khan etc. Notice to: Ihsan ullah khan s/o sultan kabal r/o Bar Kanju tehsil kabal district Swat. Presently Abroad. Whereas the above named defendants cannot be served in ordinary manner it is therefore proclaimed or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court on 30/03/2023, at 8.30 am. Ex-parte proceeding will be initiated against you.

Court Notice

In the Court of Saima Ehsan Civil Judge II/Allaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Case No. 333/1. Institution 16/12/2021. Date of hearing, 21/3/2023. Tajbar Khan VS Mst Bibi Zahida etc. Notice to no. 4. Bakhti Mohammad. 5. Hazrat Ahmed. 6. Mumtaz Ahmed sons of Gul Ahmed. 8. Said Alam s/o Mohamada Shah resident of Hashamsar Elai tehseel Daggar district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 21/3/2023 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte.

Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Court Notice

In the Court of Saima Ehsan Civil Judge II/Allaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Case No.66/1. Institution 16/12/2021. Date of hearing, 24/6/2021. Mst. Sher Banu VS Bahadur Notice to no. 1. Bahadur s/o Qadar. 5. Gul Khan s/o Bahadur Khan resident of Topdara tehseel Daggar district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 3/4/2023 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Faad Waheed said that Pakistan and Lithuania have good potential to

annual imports are over USD 30 billion and Pakistan has good opportunity to export many products to Lithuania including pharmaceutical products, electrical equipment, plastics and articles. He expressed these views while talking to Ricardas Degutis, Ambassador of Lithuania, based in Turkiye, during his visit to Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Ms. Vaida Stankeviciene Deputy Head of Mission and Masud Khan Honorary Consul General of Lithuania in Pakistan also accompanied him at the occasion.

He said that Lithuania's

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In brief

National Jujitsu Championship

PESHAWAR (APP): The 14th National Jujitsu Championship will start from March 18 in Peshawar in which male and female teams from all over the country will be taking part. Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Jujitsu Association told media men here on Wednesday. The Championship will continue for two days, said Tehsinullah. He said that the Championship will start from March 18 at Peshawar sports Complex under the aegis of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Jujitsu Association with the strong support of Pakistan Jujitsu Federation. He said all the teams of the four provinces besides all the other affiliated departments with Pakistan Jujitsu Federation would take part. He said all the arrangements for the Championship have been completed and the official inauguration held on March 18 with Syed Abid Ali Shah, President of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Jujitsu Association, grace the occasion as guest.

Nadal aiming to make comeback

MONACO (AP): Rafael Nadal is aiming to make his comeback from a hip injury at the clay-court Monte Carlo Masters next month, organizers said Wednesday. The 22-time Grand Slam champion has been sidelined with a left hip flexor or injury since the Australian Open, and pulled out of hard-court tournaments at Indian Wells and Miami. The Monte Carlo Masters begins on April 8 and tournament director David Massey is optimistic Nadal will play. "Rafa was the first (player) to be registered," Massey said in statement. "He really wants to play at the Monte Carlo Masters and is giving himself every chance to take part in the tournament he's so fond of." Nadal has won the tournament a record 11 times, including an Open Era record streak of eight consecutive titles from 2005 to 2012. The 36-year-old Spaniard uses the event as a key part of his preparations for the French Open, which takes place May 28-June 11. Nadal has won 14 of his major titles on clay at Roland Garros, including last year while dealing with chronic pain in his left foot. In January, Nadal hurt his hip flexor during a second-round loss to Mackenzie McDonald of the United States at the Australian Open. An MRI exam the next day revealed the extent of the injury.

Police return a silver medal

CAIRO (Agencies): Egyptian police said on Wednesday they have recovered a silver medal which was stolen from the home of Liverpool striker Mohamed Salah. The theft took place on March 2 and police were able to identify the two thieves, including a former security guard in the residential complex, the Ministry of Interior added in a statement. All the stolen goods were seized, which include a silver medal, a number of sports shoes and TV receivers. A security source confirmed to Reuters that the player intended in the statement is Salah. The photo, published by the police on Facebook, showed that the silver medal was for the African Cup of Nations. Salah finished on the losing side in both the 2017 and 2021 Cup of Nations finals. Egypt captain Salah, 30, is due to visit his home country next week as he will lead the national team in a double-header against Malawi in African Cup of Nations qualifying, a home game on March 24 and the away match four days later.

Multan decimate Lahore to reach third consecutive PSL final



Multan Sultans' Sheldon Cottrell celebrates the wicket of Lahore Qalandars' Abdullah Shafique during the PSL T-20 cricket qualifier match.

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Earlier this week, Lahore Qalandars coach Aqib Javed told ESPNcricinfo about how other teams in the PSL prioritised power hitters, while the Qalandars wanted to go for the best bowlers. Today, Multan Sultans

demonstrated to them the value of power hitters lower down the order, as Kieron Pollard and Tim David dug deep against an imperious Qalandars bowling showing to post 160. The Sultans then went about taking apart the defending champions' batting

line-up in astonishing fashion, with Sheldon Cottrell bowling away the top order as the Qalandars folded for 76. It seals Sultans' place in the PSL final for the third successive season - the first team to do that, while Qalandars drop down into

Friday's eliminator to keep their title defence intact.

Chasing a total down against the Qalandars' bowling lineup has become the most daunting challenge in the PSL, and the Sultans were sensible enough to be flexible. They won the toss and batted first for the first time this season, and just the fifth time in their history. But they tend to pick these moments well; they won three of the previous four.

That victory seemed anything but assured for much of the first innings, with the Qalandars at their imperious best with the ball, stifling the Sultans in the first 15 overs. The average first innings score this season here was 193, but it became obvious fairly soon the Sultans wouldn't get anywhere near that. They managed just 46 in the powerplay, and while the Qalandars hadn't picked up any wickets, it didn't seem as if they needed to.

Haris Rauf, at his fear-some fastest, struck the first blow, though the ball he cleaned Usman Khan up with was a slower one. Zaman Khan got rid of a scratchy Rilee Rossouw cheaply, a huge wicket, particularly given Rossouw's imperious record against the Qalandars. Rashid Khan prised Mohammad Rizwan out with a wrong'un to reduce the Sultans to 90 for three, and Qalandars only tightened their grip on the game.

It was a sensational lower order counterattack from Pollard that dug his side out of a hole, though it wasn't without its chances. Sam Billings dropped a skier fairly early on in the onslaught, with Shaheen Afridi and Hussain Talat missing chances to get rid of him. In the meantime, he was grinding through the gears, pushing up the Sultans total to a defensible level, never more so than when he powered

three sixes off Shaheen in the penultimate over; the 20 the Qalandars captain conceded made it his most costly PSL over. It also brought up a 33-ball 50 for Pollard, winning him the Player-of-the-Match award.

Haris hit back with a scintillating final six balls, hitting speeds in excess of 150 regularly and cleaning up both Pollard and Khushdil Shah. It saw just six runs scored and clawed a bit of momentum to the Qalandars way, turning the task over to the batters.

But Cottrell, newly arrived at the PSL, wrenched the game out of the Qalandars hands before they'd even had the opportunity to get the chase off the ground. A double-strike in his second over, making prodigious use of inswing to the right-handers, put paid to both Mirza Baig and Abdullah Shafique, while Anwar Ali from the other end seemed one beautifully to knock back the top of Fakhar

Zaman's off stump. Cottrell wasn't done with the ambush yet, returning to dispatch Shaheen with a wild swing off the second ball he faced finding Usman Khan at cover.

There was more trauma about to be inflicted on a shell-shocked Qalandars. Pollard, their tormentor in chief with the bat, saw two wickets fall in his first over, sloppy running catching Talat out before a sensational running catch from Abbas Afridi brought the curtains down on Sikandar Raza.

Qalandars' thoughts were already turning to Friday's eliminator. Billings and Rashid fell in quick succession, before a few lusty blows from David Wiese and Rauf gave a packed, partisan home crowd something to cheer for. It was to be ephemeral, however, with Abbas Afridi delivering the knockout blow as Haris feathered one through to the keeper.

Top seeded advance in BoK National Women Squash C'ship

PESHAWAR (APP): Easy sailing for top seeded in the ongoing Bank of Khyber National Women Senior Squash Championship played here at Qamar Zaman Squash Complex on Wednesday.

The top seeded secured victories against their respective rivals in the first round and successfully moved to the second round.

In the Wednesday matches Naheed Faiz defeated

Manahil of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in straight sets, the score was 11-4, 11-6 and 11-8, second seeded Zphra Abdullah of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa defeated Rubab Shahid of KP by 3-0, the score was 11-9, 11-7 and 11-3, Kainat Amir of KP beat Raheela Shahid of KP by 3-0, the score was 11-6, 11-6 and 11-7, Hira Aqeel beat Sara of KP by 3-0, the score was 11-6, 11-8 and 11-8, Manahil Aqeel

ZTBL beat Sahar Noor of KP by 12-10, 11-9 and 11-8, Rushna Mehbob of ZTBL beat Maliha Shah of KP by 3-0, the score was 11-5, 11-7 and 11-9, Umm-e-Kulsoom of KP beat Nashia Shahid of KP by 3-0, Sana Bahadur of Pakistan Army beat Mashal Khan of KP by 3-0, the score was 11-3, 11-4 and 11-8, Wajeeha Altaf of KP beat Rida Hussain of KP by 3-0, the score was 11-9, 11-7 and 12-10.

Acting BHC meets Pakistani Commonwealth Games medal winners

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The Acting British High Commissioner (BHC) Andrew Dalgleish on Wednesday met with Pakistan's medals winners in the 2022 Commonwealth Games to celebrate the UK and Pakistan's shared relationship through the Commonwealth.

This coincides with a week of Commonwealth events which started on Monday 13 March with 'Commonwealth Day', with King Charles III leading a multi-faith service at Westminster Abbey in London, said a news release issued by the Embassy.

During his meeting with the Commonwealth Games medal winners, Andrew Dalgleish discussed with them their experiences at the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games, what the Commonwealth means to them,

Commonwealth youth engagement and their future plans for the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Victoria, Australia.

The Acting British High Commissioner said, "Celebrating our shared Commonwealth connections with medal winners from the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games has been an absolute pleasure. The Commonwealth is this year focused on youth engagement. It not only offers young people avenues of development through sport, it is also investing in harnessing their strengths to deepen trade and investment partnerships, respond to the global threat of climate change and champion democratic values.

The Commonwealth's offer to young Pakistanis is a strong one." Arshad Nadeem, a Pakistani javelin thrower who won a Gold medal at the 2022 Birmingham

Commonwealth games. He created a new national and Commonwealth Games record with a throw of 90.18m and became the first-ever athlete from South Asia to breach the 90m mark.

Muhammad Inam Butt, a professional wrestler from Gujranwala. Inam won a silver medal for Pakistan in the 2022 Commonwealth Games. He had also won gold medals at the 2010 and 2018 Commonwealth Games.

Zaman Anwar, a Pakistani professional wrestler. He won a silver medal for Pakistan in 2022 Commonwealth Games and gold at the 2016 South Asian Games. He also participated at the 2014 Commonwealth Games. Muhammad Sharif Tahir, a 20 years old Pakistani wrestler. He competed at the 2022 Commonwealth Games, winning a silver medal in the men's freestyle 74 kg event.

Bucks seal NBA playoff berth, Nuggets fall to 4th straight defeat

LOS ANGELES (Agencies): The Milwaukee Bucks became the first team to clinch an NBA playoff place on Tuesday after holding off a late rally from the Phoenix Suns to complete a 116-104 road victory in Arizona.

Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 36 points with 11 rebounds and eight assists as the Bucks brought up their 50th win of the regular season to cement their grip on first place at the top of the Eastern Conference.

Antetokounmpo was backed by 21 points from Brook Lopez while three other Milwaukee players finished in double figures.

The Bucks now lead the Eastern Conference by three games from Boston with a 50-19 record as the regular season enters its final stretch.

But it needed a late burst of scoring by Milwaukee to make sure of victory, the Bucks stitching together a 24-9 run in the final seven minutes of the fourth quarter to pull clear after the Suns had edged into a 95-92 lead

with 8min 47sec remaining. Devin Booker led the Suns scorers with 30 points while Deandre Ayton finished with 16 points for the hosts.

At the top of the Western Conference, meanwhile, the Denver Nuggets slumped to a fourth straight defeat as Fred VanVleet kept the Toronto Raptors' playoff hopes alive with a virtuoso display in a 125-110 victory. Toronto point guard VanVleet finished with 36 points, including eight three-pointers, with seven assists and three steals to give Toronto a crucial win as they aim to remain in contention for a place in the postseason.

The Raptors went on the front foot from the outset, pouring in a franchise record 49 points in a remarkable first quarter to leave conference leaders Denver shellshocked.

Although a late rally saw Denver close to within six points in the fourth, Toronto went on a late run to pull away once more and complete a wire-to-wire victory at the Scotiabank Arena.

Denver coach Michael Malone had stern words for his team after the defeat. "I need to find some guys who are ready to fight with me, because right now we're in chill mode," Malone said.

"And we can't be in chill mode with 13 games to go in the season. We've got to find a way to get our swagger back and get back to playing Denver Nugget basketball." In other games Tuesday, the Los Angeles Lakers got back to winning ways after Sunday's defeat to the New York Knicks with a comprehensive 123-108 road win over the New Orleans Pelicans in the Big Easy.

With LeBron James sidelined, Anthony Davis once again stepped up for the Lakers with 35 points and 17 rebounds while Malik Beasley put on a three-point shooting clinic, making 7-of-12 attempts from beyond the arc in a 24-point haul.

The win keeps the Lakers firmly in contention for a playoff place with just under four weeks of the regular season remaining.

Pak Army win National Women Baseball C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Army won the 17th National Women Baseball Championship after outclassing Pakistan Wapda by 19-10 in the final at Pakistan sports Complex Islamabad on Wednesday.

The higher education Commission finished third and fourth respectively.

Pakistan Army's Humira scored four runs and Ansa and Samia scored three runs each, while Atiya, Madiha, Waheeda scored two runs each.

Rashida, Asia and Zahida scored one run apiece.

Wapda's Zainab, Umm-e-Hani and Ayesha scored two runs each, while Madeeha, Sidra, Anila and Maimoona scored one run each. In the match played for the third position, HEC defeated Punjab with a score of 16-6.

HEC's Tasmia, Momina scored three runs each and Aram, Asia, Taslim and Manahil scored two runs each, while Nisa and Alina scored one run apiece. Punjab's Nimra, Asia, Nida, Kulsoom, Amna and Ramsha scored one run each for their team.

Director General Pakistan Sports board Muhammad Abrar, who was the chief guest at the closing ceremony, distributed the prizes along with Pakistan Federation Baseball's (PFB) President Syed Fakhr Ali Shah.

President PFB said that a training camp would be organized for the players who had performed well in the championship.

The camp will help prepare the national team for the Women's Asia Cup, to be held in Hong Kong, next month.



INDIAN WELLS: Rebecca Peterson of Sweden congratulates Coco Gauff after their match during the BNP Paribas Open.

Indian Wells Alcaraz, Fritz, Gauff into quarterfinals

INDIAN WELLS (AP) : Carlos Alcaraz is three victories away from returning to the world's top ranking, having reached the quarter-finals of the BNP Paribas Open on Tuesday.

Alcaraz, ranked No. 2, advanced when Jack Draper retired with the Spaniard leading 6-2, 2-0 after 46 minutes of play. It was Alcaraz's 101st ATP Tour victory. "I would say I returned well, I hit great shots," Alcaraz said. "I finished the match with confidence in my shots, to come into the next round with more confidence."

Draper was affected by an abdominal injury that first surfaced in his win against Andy Murray a day earlier. The injury affected the Brit's serve, which dropped well below 100 mph, and his movement. A trainer visited him between sets and Draper won just one point in the first two games of the second set before quitting.

Top-ranked Iga Swiatek moved on with a 6-3, 6-1 victory over Emma Raducanu. Coco Gauff ral-

lied from a break down in the third set to beat Swedish qualifier Rebecca Peterson, 6-3, 1-6, 6-4 and reach the quarterfinals.

Down 2-4, Gauff fought her way back and saved three break points while serving at 4-all before closing out the match in the next game. Four years ago, Peterson routed a then-14-year-old Gauff at a Challenger tournament in Michigan.

"She whooped me really bad," Gauff said on court. "I think today was really a mental thing, just staying in the match. I wasn't playing my best in some moments and I wasn't serving as well as I'd like to, but I think that my mentality kept me in."

The sixth-seeded American next plays No. 2 seed Aryna Sabalenka, who beat 16th-seeded Barbora Krejickova 6-3, 2-6, 6-4.

No. 3 Jessica Pegula lost to 15th-seed Petra Kvitova 6-2, 3-6, 7-6 (11) after the American blew four match points. "When the match like this, very exhausting," Kvitova said. "Up and down. Definitely it's one of

the best matches I've played."

Sorana Cirstea took out No. 5 Caroline Garcia 6-4, 4-6, 7-5, No. 7 Maria Sakkari beat 17th-seeded Karolina Pliskova 6-4, 5-7, 6-3, and No. 10 Elena Rybakina defeated Varvara Gracheva 6-3, 6-0.

On the men's side, defending champion Taylor Fritz moved into the quarters with a 6-4, 6-3 win over Marton Fucsovics.

No. 5 Daniil Medvedev overcame a swollen right ankle and outlasted 12th-seeded Alexander Zverev, 6-7 (5), 7-6 (5), 7-5.

"When I rolled my ankle, I rolled it pretty hard," he said. "At the moment I rolled it I was like 'OK, I'm going to stand up and it's going to be fine,' but then I continued to stay on the ground because the pain was only growing. It was definitely a crazy match." Medvedev took a medical timeout to have his ankle taped in the second set before going on to notch his 17th consecutive match win and improve to 22-2 this year.



In brief

IRSA releases 91,900 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 91,900 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 64,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1430.28 feet and was 32.28 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow in the dam was recorded as 22,300 cusecs while the outflow as 43,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1100.10 feet, 50.10 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 21,200 cusecs and 28,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 47,300, 33,200, 30,600 and 7,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 11,400 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 3,000 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

IG NHMP calls on Minister Asad

ISLAMABAD (APP): Sultan Ali Khawaja, after assuming charge as National Highways and Motorway Police acting Inspector General, called on Federal Minister for Communication Asad Mehmood, here on Wednesday. The minister expressed confidence that Motorway Police would perform well under the supervision of Sultan Ali Khawaja. The minister directed the IG to use modern technology for enhancing the performance of NHMP, and taking steps to reduce accidents on the motorways. Secretary C o m m u n i c a t i o n Captain (Retd) Muhammad Khurram Agha was also present in the meeting.

No one to be allowed to indulge in violence: CPO

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani here on Wednesday said that no one would be allowed to indulge in violence and block the roads during the protest. He said that no compromise would be made on the rule of law and the protection of lives and properties of the citizens was the out most responsibility of the police. According to a police spokesman, 28 accused who indulged in violent protest were rounded up by New Town, Sadiqabad, Rattamral, R.A.Bazar, Wah Cant, Race Course, Waris Khan, Saddar Wah, Westridge, Bani and Gungmandi police. He informed that the accused netted under MPO-03 were being sent to jail. Talking about the protest by a political party, he informed that Waris Khan and City police had registered cases against those indulged in violent protests, blocked roads and resisted the police trying to maintain law and order. Cases were registered against the protestors in Waris Khan and City Police Stations, he added.

PNCA opens solo show

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) here Wednesday opened a solo exhibition "Journey, discovery and fusion" at the National Art Gallery by Samina Afzal. The show is vibrant, flowing and emotional. While completing her Master of Fine Arts during the 1970s from the Punjab University, she remained a student of great artists like Anna Molka Ahmed and Zubaida Javaid. Samina paints using Dry Pastels, Acrylics and Watercolors as preferred media.

Sherry alleges Imran for risking others' lives to avoid his arrest

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change, Senator Sherry Rehman on Wednesday alleged that Imran Khan was risking the lives of his party workers and policemen to avoid arrest.

In a series of tweets, the federal minister said no political leader has ever put up such a drama to avoid arrest as the cowardly Khan has put up.

Sherry Rehman said Imran Khan, who preaches the rule of law, and his baton-bearing force were flouting the law since yesterday. "Arresting in a dignified manner increases the stature of a politician. Our leaders have always believed in their workers and fans. Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Shaheed Mohtarama Benazir Bhutto, Asif Ali Zardari and others always faced the law and court with a smile and gave arrests," she added.

President Asif Ali Zardari welcomed

those who came for his arrest with respect and treated them with tea, she said.

"President Zardari had a smile on his face and a dignified manner. He got arrested in such a way that the eyes of the arresters were ashamed. Today, when Imran Khan is hiding from arrest, I remember the time when President Zardari was encouraging us while going to jail," Sherry Rehman said.

Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Mohtarama Benazir Bhutto, Faryal Talpar and others were arrested without question or resistance, she said, adding, "Hiding from the police and arrest, Imran Khan has made fun of himself. Which political leader shields workers and women to avoid his arrest?" Sherry Rehman added that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf has held Zaman Park hostage since yesterday, adding, "Only a selfish leader plays with people's lives."

Golden Jubilee celebration of Constitution to be kicked off from 23rd March

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Parliamentary Advisory Committee to oversee the preparations for the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Constitution 1973 in its fourth meeting approved the media strategy for the celebrations and decided to start the celebrations from 23 March.

The committee also approved designs for the commemorative stamps and coins. Moreover, the meeting reviewed the progress regarding the construction of the Constitutional Monument, and restoration of its old National Assembly Hall in the State Bank building in Islamabad. Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb while sharing details of the media strategy for the coverage of the commemoration said that all

departments of the ministry including PTV, Radio Pakistan, DEMP, PID, EP Wing, PEMRA had planned certain activities related to the celebrations.

Some of which were airing of special programs, documentaries, podcasts, exhibitions, quiz contests, mushairas, publications of articles, news supplements etc, she added.

It was shared that all activities would be given ample coverage on print, electronic and digital media both in private and public spheres with special emphasis on regional channels. The Chair of the Committee Senator Mian Raza Rabbani and other Members lauded the comprehensive strategy and also gave their input, where required, to make it more inclusive and comprehensive.

Finance Ishaq Dar apprised the Committee that matters related to the restoration of the old Assembly Hall at the SBB building had been addressed, and hopefully would be completed in a few months.

The Committee proposed to declare the said Hall a national heritage. Moreover, he also shared sample designs for the commemorative coin, one of which was approved by the Committee. The Committee lauded the speedy response of the Minister concerning dedicated tasks. Additionally, the meeting also took cognizance of the reports of the Sub-Committees on Education and Declarations, the construction of a constitutional monument, and finances related to the event among others.

Commissioner urges parents to vaccinate children against polio

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Laiqat Ali Chhatta on Wednesday urged parents to vaccinate their children against the deadly polio virus. He said this while visiting the area of Westridge to review the performance of anti-polio field teams.

The commissioner himself administered the polio drops to children under five years of age and directed the officials concerned to remain present in the field and ensure the monitoring of polio workers so that no child could miss immunization.

On the occasion, Laiqat informed that

around 379,246 children had been administered the polio vaccine so far.

He said that around 3,723 polio teams, including 3,272 mobile teams, 289 fixed points, 214 union council medical officers, and 765 area incharges, were participating in the drive to complete the task of vaccinating over 947,000 children in the district. The commissioner urged the citizens, particularly the parents, to come forward and play their role in eliminating the crippling disease from society.

The campaign which started on Monday will continue till March 19.

PWD renovates 2,104 houses, flats in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Works Department (PWD), Ministry of Housing and Works has upgraded and renovated as many as 2,104 houses and flats in various sectors of Islamabad, during the last five years.

"The PWD has carried out EM works of as many as 1,119 flats and houses, while civil work is executed on around 985 of different categories, an official in the ministry told APP. The official said the ministry owned as many as 5,253 houses and

flats of categories-I to categories-V located in various sectors in the federal capital.

To a question, he said the CDA was responsible for the maintenance and renovation of Pak Secretariat, Islamabad, therefore, no fund had been spent on ministry's renovation. He said the Finance Division had already slashed the budget while making allocations. Hence, no funds had been surrendered to Finance Division, and all the funds allocated during 2021-22 in relevant heads were utilized

by the general section, he added. The official said the PWD had started sending notices to the allottees of government accommodation in Sector I-9/4 about payment of electric meter bills for water motors installed at residential blocks. He said the Finance Division had allocated funds for payment of utilities in the relevant heads of accounts of the users while utility bills of the residential accommodation, including hostels, rest houses and judicial residences should be paid by the users.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications, Molana Asad Mehmood calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

'Khan using party workers as shield to avoid arrest'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N) Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Maiza Hameed on Wednesday lashed out at Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan for allegedly using his party workers as a "shield" to avoid arrest.

"Imran Khan needs to appear before the court like other political leaders and get his case proceeded as per law. He should not worry if he is not involved in any crime," she said while talking to a private news channel.

"The PTI supporters are creating a serious law and order situation by not following court orders and harassing the law enforcers and damaging state machinery," the MNA said.

"Imran Khan is known for leveling baseless allegations against political opponents and the PML-N's top leadership was victimized during his four-year tenure," she added.

"The government will make an example out of anyone who tries to take the law into their own hands," she said in response to a question.

ANF recovers 9000 intoxicated tablets; arrests 2

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting four operations in different areas of the country managed to recover 9000 intoxicated tablets, eight charas-filled capsules, and 278 grams of Ice drug and arrested two accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday. He informed that ANF in an operation conducted a raid near Zero Line, Torkham border area and recovered 9000 intoxicated tablets.

In another operation at Peshawar International Airport, an Abu-Dhabi-bound passenger resident of Waziristan going on flight no PK-217 was rounded up with eight charas-filled capsules.

The spokesman informed that in the third operation near Karachi Main Super Highway area, 250 grams of Ice drug was recovered from the possession of an accused resident of Karachi. 28 grams of Ice drug was also recovered from a parcel booked for Australia at a private courier office in Karachi.

Ashrafi for a combined strategy, plan of action against Islamophobia

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Special Representative for Interfaith Harmony and Middle East Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Wednesday said the world should devise a combined strategy and plan of action against Islamophobia.

Addressing a gathering of religious scholars and leaders in connection with International Day to Combat Islamophobia, he urged the international community to take serious notice of burgeoning incidents of Islamophobia particularly in European countries, Canada, Great

Britain, the United States, Australia and India to maintain peace and tranquility in the comity of nations on this planet.

Ashrafi who is also the chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council said Islam was free of all kinds of terrorism and extremism and made it clear that the Islamic concept on the 'call of Jihad' was particularly meant to fight against the evil forces and help the helpless people in the society. Emphasizing on the certain parameters of Jihad, he mentioned that Islam did not permit killing of any innocent as "the murder of a human being is to be con-

sidered the murder of all humanity". He expressed his fear that there were certain elements who were trying to disrepute Islam and Muslims by distorting the actual meaning of Jihad.

Ashrafi, the sensitizing need of the hour, urged the Muslim community to portray the soft image of Islam with its sound character as its loud and clear message was 'to do good and to be good'. "Keeping in view the significance of this day, let's pledge to eradicate the Islamophobia and disseminate the true teachings of Islam at every nook and cranny of the world," he maintained.

Khurram for provision of minimum load-shedding

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Power Division Khurram Dastgir on Wednesday expressed his hope that the duration of power load-shedding would be minimum in the coming summer as compared to last year owing to the addition of 2000 MW from Thar coal to the national grid station.

Addressing at a press conference here, the minister said since April 2022, as many as 2000 MW of additional electricity has been injected the national grid system.

A new transmission line was also under construction to evacuate power from Thar coal power projects, he said.

He expressed the hope that National Transmission and Despatch Company (NTDC) would complete the transmission line before the summer season.

The minister said an

agreement has been inked with Iran for the provision of 100 MW to Gwadar which was a good omen for the people of Gwadar. 29 kilometer long transmission line has already been laid to import 100 MW electricity from Iran to Gwadar which would bring prosperity in the entire area, he added.

He said work on the transmission line was kicked off in June 2022 and it was completed in a record time. The prime minister would shortly inaugurate the transmission line, he said.

He said it would also ensure provision of round the clock electricity in Gwadar which would also attract foreign investors to invest in various projects. He said it would also help provide employment opportunities in Gwadar.

Khurram said 765 KV grid station at Manshera

was also being construct to evacuate power from Dasu and Diamer Basha dams projects. Land has already been acquired for the grid station and World Bank has provided funds for the project, he added.

He said the grid station would be completed in next 30 months and it would supply clean, green and affordable hydel energy from Dasu and Diamer Basha power projects.

To a question, the minister said that Pakistan's share in carbon emission was very minimum and stood at around 0.8 per cent but suffered worse due to climate change during last year. We placed this challenge before the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) countries, he added.

To another question, he said bidding for first 600MW solar projects would be held next month.

Senate promoting national cohesion and harmony among federating units

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senate is promoting national cohesion among federating units and this House being a symbol of democracy and solidarity has protected the rights of people by maintaining balance in parliament.

These views were expressed by the former and incumbent lawmakers in the special commemorative session summoned to celebrate the golden jubilee of the Senate of Pakistan. A motion was carried unanimously to convert the House into Committee of the Whole from time to time during the special commemorative session for the address of the honourable guests.

At the beginning of the session, the Chairman Senate Sadiq Sanjrani said the Senate of Pakistan has an important role in legislation and the promotion of national cohesion. He said the Senate of Pakistan was formed in 1973 to ensure equal representation of all the federating units.

The Chairman highlighted the constitutional history of the evolution of the Parliament from the first session of the first Constituent Assembly of Pakistan held on 10th August 1947 in Karachi to the approval of the third Constitution of 1973 that was approved on 10th April 1973 and lead to the creation of the Senate.

The Leader of the House in the Senate, Senator Ishaq Dar said this occasion was important to highlight the achievement made by the Senate over the past five decades and also to reflect on its rich history. He underlined that the gathering of national and provincial leadership on the occasion showed the much-cherished unity of all federating units.

"We must acknowledge the visionary

leaders who opted for the Constitution of 1973. Let's renew our pledge for a pluralistic and dynamic Pakistan," he added.

Senator Ishaq Dar said the country's progress, stability and prosperity were in the continuity of the democratic system and collaborative sustained efforts.

Senator Abida Azeem on the occasion said the Upper House represented all the provinces and it allowed raising their voice. She added that there was less representation of women in the Upper House that needed to be improved.

Senator Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar said there was a need to look into our past and foresee our future. He said the founders of the Constitution of 1973 created the Senate to give representation to small provinces and communities.

Former Senator Raja Zafar ul Haq said he considered the Senate as a family due to its representation of all federating units and the respect it gave to everyone.

He suggested that there was room to increase the powers of the Upper House in the financial matters of the country as at present only the National Assembly could approve the budget. Raja Zafar said economic justice and the growth of economic institutions would lead to the strengthening of the democratic system. Former ANP Senator Ilyas Ahmad Bilour urged the political leadership to demonstrate political wisdom at this critical juncture and sit together to evolve a joint strategy to bring the country out of the current economic crisis. He informed the house that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the front-line province in the war against terrorism, is again facing a wave of terrorism.



ISLAMABAD: Heavy machinery being used in development work at Islamabad Expressway.

Work begins on railway lines

KABUL (Agencies): The Afghanistan Railway Authority (ARA) was directed to initiate practical work on these railway lines on a trial basis. The cabinet meeting mandated Kabul municipality to regulate the high-rise owners of the houses that encroached on the neighboring properties. After regulating the price of the additional land and paying it to the land owner, allow the rest of the construction work to be completed.

8 held for criminal offenses

KUNAR (Agencies): Security officers have arrested eight people in connection to murder, robbery, and drug trafficking in Kunar province of Afghanistan on Wednesday. Local security officials told this news agency, that the arrests were made as part of ongoing efforts to combat crime in the region. In the past, security forces have apprehended several other individuals in connection to similar offenses in Kunar province.

17 gold miners killed, 7 injured in bus crash

TAKHAR (Khaama Press): According to authorities on Wednesday, at least 17 gold miners were killed, and seven others were injured in an accident in Takhar province of Afghanistan.

The Bus overturned in Takhar province's Chah Ab district when the bus carried them to a gold mine in the Anjir area.

According to Mullah Zamanuddin, the Chah Ab

district governor, the dead and wounded were gold mine workers. The accident occurred between the Chah Ab centre and the mines in the Anjir area when the bus diverted the road and overturned.

The injured people were transferred to the nearby hospital for medical treatment, and the condition of the injured is reported to be serious.

According to the World Health Organization's 2020 Road Traffic Accident report, Afghanistan reached 6,033 or 2.6% of total deaths. It ranked 76 in terms of accident fatalities in the world.

Hundreds of people die on Afghanistan's roads yearly due to underdeveloped highways, irresponsible driving, and poorly maintained vehicles.

IEA officials call for more vocational training programs

KABUL (Agencies): In order to fight poverty and reduce unemployment in the country, there is a need to expand vocational training programs, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's (IEA) deputy minister of labor and social affairs said.

Speaking at the graduation ceremony of 400 young people from an Afghanistan-Korea vocational training center in Kabul, Din Mohammad Haqbin expressed hope that they can boost vocational training in the country with the help of international institutions.

"Projects should be launched to provide vocational training. A bag of flour or a can of oil will not help. One becomes a sponger with it. We don't want spongers," Haqbin said.

A number of participants at the ceremony stated that they are ready to cooperate with the Afghanistan-Korea vocational training center in terms of developing skills in the country.

Officials of the training center also emphasized that economic development of the country is not possible without the expansion of vocational training programs.

"Most developed and developing countries are moving rapidly towards vocational training and have used the strategy of vocational training in their plans and policy-making," said Bashir Zaland, a professor at Afghanistan-Korea vocational training center.

Ministry: Exodus of young people 'tragic'



KABUL (TOLOnews): Officials of the Culture and Information Ministry said that the high number of young people leaving the country is a tragedy, and the Islamic Emirate is trying to prevent it.

At a conference, Mohammad Yunus Rashid, the deputy of youth in the Ministry of Information and Culture, said that they are working on an economic plan to decrease unemployment and provide work opportunities for youth.

"We can say that the fleeing of the young generation is a tragedy and unfortunately most of our youth are immigrants and are in prisons in most countries," said Mohammad Yunus Rashid.

According to Mohammad Yunus Rashid, an educational center for young

people will be opened in Kabul so that after training young people can freely take on international projects and earn an income.

Meanwhile, some Nangarhar residents asked the government to focus on retaining youth.

"The solution is to find jobs for them based on their profession, and then they should be given as much as they need," said Mohammad Bilal, a student.

"The fleeing of educated young people is not good for our country, because the government invested in them for years," said Shafiqullah, a Nangarhar resident.

At this conference, some accused foreign countries of providing the means for educated young people to escape from Afghanistan, who are then forced to do physical labor.

Nearly 500 students get access to free education



B A D A K H S H A N (TOLOnews): The department of information and culture of Badakhshan province said that it has provided the opportunity of a free education for nearly 500 students in the province.

According to the department's officials, male students who could not afford to pay for education in private educational centers have been provided with free education for six months.

"Those who are poor and cannot afford to pay for the courses—it is hoped that they will learn here, and we

have outstanding teachers to teach them for free," said Mazduddin Ahmadi, head of information and culture of Badakhshan.

"We have a 12-month and 6-month English system here, in which 360 young people are learning, and we are trying to add many programs in the coming year," said Attaullah Adeeb, a teacher.

Officials said that this facility provides training in computers, the English language, calligraphy, and religious education.

Students who study at the center welcomed this opportunity.

"There are young people who cannot afford to attend classes, they cannot pay seven hundred to eight hundred afghanis to study a computer program," said Ainuddin Farrakh, a student.

"This opportunity has been given to young people so that they may learn about technology in many areas," said Maqsoodullah Salehi, another student.

In the past year and a half, many children have turned to hard labor to make a living rather than attending school due to poverty and unemployment.

UNHCR launches new appeal to support refugees

KABUL (Khaama Press): The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and humanitarian partners have launched a response plan to support 7.9 million refugees, including 5.2 million Afghans and 2.7 million of their local hosts across the region, according to a statement.

The UN refugee agency stated that the new appeal for the Afghan situation in 2023 seeks \$613 million to support Afghan sheltering in five neighbouring countries, including Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Around 8.2 million Afghan refugees live in the neighbouring countries, including over 2 million registered refugees. Many

have been in the region for decades, mainly in the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan. Meanwhile, more than 1.6 million have sought refugees in the region since 2021.

According to the document, Afghanistan is severely suffering from a dire humanitarian crisis; an estimated 28.3 million people comprise two-thirds of the country's population, including women and girls needing urgent humanitarian aid.

Since the last August, the humanitarian situation has further deteriorated due to the new decree introduced by the Taliban authorities, in which women are banned from education and working with NGOs.

Since most civil society

organizations are women-led, the ban on working women in international organizations further disrupts the aid process.

The ban on female staff working with the international community has been criticized by most international organizations, including the UN and other regional countries, and urged the de facto authorities to reverse their policies regarding women and girls' fundamental rights.

The United Nations appealed to the international community to support the people of Afghanistan by delivering assistance and protection inside Afghanistan and in the region amid a humanitarian crisis.

New package of aid arrived in Kabul

KABUL (Agencies): Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB) announced the arrival of a new package of 40 million dollars of humanitarian aid to Kabul.

DAB said that a package of 40 million US dollars in cash aid arrived in Kabul and was transferred to one of the country's commercial banks.

Da Afghanistan Bank welcomed the humanitarian aid of the international community and called for more cooperation in this field.

The bank thanked the international community for its support of Afghanistan and asked for further cooperation with the war-torn country.

Meanwhile, since the beginning of humanitarian cash aid to Afghanistan, this is the 61th aid package that reaches Kabul in the form of cash and is delivered to one of the commercial banks in the country.

Since the beginning of the process of delivering humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, nearly 2 billion US dollars of humanitarian aid has reached the country.

Acting Minister visits Kandahar

KANDAHAR (Agencies): Acting Minister of Mine and Petroleum, Sheikh Shabuddin Delawar travelled to Kandahar province and met the mining and petroleum officials of the province.

The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum in a statement said that Sheikh Shabuddin Delawar, talking to the officials of Mines and Petroleum officials of Kandahar said that they should work professionally for the legal and effective extraction of mines.

Meanwhile, Mr. Delawar announced the inauguration of the Shurandam Cement Factory in Kandahar and said that the factory will provide job opportunities for 5,000 people in the province.

The trip of Mr. Delawar to Kandahar comes as engineers of the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum discovered Chromate mines in the province a few days ago.

Thousands of Afghan refugees 'arbitrarily detained' in UAE: HRW

KABUL (Khaama Press): The United Arab Emirates was accused of arbitrarily detaining between 2,400 and 2,700 Afghan refugees in a miserable accommodation for more than 15 months, Human Rights Watch said on Wednesday.

Many Afghan refugees who escaped to the UAE in August 2021 were eventually relocated to the US, Canada and other countries; however, "between 2,400 and 2,700 Afghan asylum seekers remain arbitrarily detained in the UAE," according to HRW.

"Emirati authorities have kept thousands of Afghan asylum seekers locked up for over 15 months in cramped, miserable conditions with no hope of progress on their cases," said Joey Shea, United Arab Emirates researcher at Human Rights Watch. "After enduring significant trauma fleeing Afghanistan, they are facing further trauma now, after spending well over a year in limbo in the UAE," the report said.

HRW interviewed 16 Afghan refugees in UAE all complained about their freedom of movement, lack of access to fair and effective refugee status, lack of adequate access to legal counsel, and inadequate education and services for their children.

"Many adults and chil-

dren are suffering from depression and other mental health conditions," the report added.

"The camp is exactly like a prison," one Afghan said. Another expressed extreme frustration at the indefinite nature of his detention, saying, "The big problem is we do not know our future, and we do not know our destination."

HRW described the condition of Afghan refugees as horrible and said detained Afghans suffer "prison-like conditions" with no freedom of movement and around-the-clock surveillance. It described a "mental health crisis" in the camp, adding that it learned of at

least one suicide attempt. "Governments should not ignore the shocking plight of these Afghans stranded in limbo in the UAE," Shea said.

HRW urged the US to immediately step up and intervene to evacuate Afghan refugees from the UAE.

"The US government should leverage its influence with UAE authorities to urge them to release detained Afghan evacuees. The US government, Immigration services and other relevant agencies should also urgently expedite the processing of pending US asylum, humanitarian parole, or other visa applications by Afghans in the UAE."

Foreign companies, businessmen invest in Afghanistan: IEA

KABUL (Agencies): Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, the deputy prime minister, met with Chinese businessmen in Kabul and called on them to invest in Afghanistan.

According to a statement issued by the Islamic Emirate, the Chinese businessmen expressed their satisfaction with the security in Afghanistan, and noted there were investment opportunities in a number of areas.

They said they are "ready to continue cooperation with Afghanistan in the economic sector."

"Now that the capacity and scope for work is available, the Islamic Emirate wants to invest in the construction of roads and highways with the cooperation of Chinese and commercial



companies," the statement read. Kabir welcomed the Chinese businessmen and said that "the Islamic Emirate is committed to

providing facilities for investors."

He also said relations with China were good and that Afghanistan is opti-

mistic about investment possibilities from China and invites all companies and businessmen to invest in Afghanistan.

Azizi calls for stronger trade ties during meeting



KABUL (Agencies): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's minister of industry and commerce has called for stronger economic relations with Iran.

Addressing businessmen at a meeting in Iran on Tuesday in the Sistan and Baluchestan province of Iran, Nuruddin Azizi is keen on establishing joint

projects with Iran he said, noting that the two countries enjoy a common border, culture, and religion.

Azizi's meeting comes amid growing trade ties between the two countries.

Last week, Tehran opened a permanent trade and expo center in Kabul to showcase Iranian products which aims to encourage

bilateral trade between the two countries.

Azizi, who attended the opening ceremony, highlighted the country's hopes of expanding trade between the two nations. Officials from both countries said that development of sustainable trade and exports was the most important task of this new center.



ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner-designate of Malaysia to Pakistan, Mohammad Azhar Mazlan, presenting his credentials to President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Hundreds of PTI leaders, workers booked in several cities

LAHORE (INP): Police have registered cases against hundreds of PTI workers in several big cities of the country, including in Karachi, Rawalpindi and Islamabad, for protesting against the possible arrest of the former prime minister and PTI Chairman Imran Khan.

Around 250 PTI workers, including party's Karachi division Vice President Dr. Masroor Sial, were booked in Karachi in connection with protest against the possible arrest of Imran Khan on the National Highway. The case was registered at Shah Latif police station of the city.

As per the text of the FIR, Dr. Sial instigated the PTI workers to resort to violence. Saeed Afghani Qalandar, Masood Qazi Zafar, Naimat Swati, Ihsan Khattak, Taus Khan, Ghulam Mustafa Rashid Badeshi and Saeed Afghani were among others nominated in the case. The FIR further read that traffic had to be suspended as the PTI workers went berserk, pelted the police personnel with stones and even smashed cars' windowpanes.

Police in Tarnol area of Islamabad registered a case against three PTI leaders, including Amir Mughal, besides 60 unidentified party workers. Similarly, police also booked the PTI workers who hurled stones at cops on Expressway that resulted in injuries to three police personnel, including Khana police station SHO, under terrorism charges.

Police have prepared lists under the MPO and raids were being carried out in different parts of the federal capital and suburbs till last reports came in. Likewise, in Rawalpindi, a case was registered at City police station against PTI workers for attacking policemen during their protest. The case was registered on the complaint of DFC Hasnain Raza Bhatti. Former members of the Punjab Assembly Wasiq Qayyum Abbasi, Ejaz Jazi, Umar Tanveer and Asif Mehmoed were among 14 party leaders against whom the case was registered. Similarly, 16 unidentified PTI workers were also booked in the case.

Meanwhile, more contingents have

reached PTI Chairman Imran Khan's Zaman Park residence where a stand-off between party supporters and law enforcers has been going on for more than 20 hours for the arrest of former prime minister in Toshakhana case. A tense situation prevailed in Lahore in the early hours of Wednesday as police made a fresh attempt to arrest former prime minister Imran Khan but they were facing resistance from hundreds of his supporters gathered outside his residence in Zaman Park Lahore.

Police and security personnel made a fresh attempt to arrest the former premier in connection with the Toshkhana case early morning on Wednesday. For more than 15 hours, PTI workers engaged the Islamabad police aided by their Punjab counterparts and later Rangers personnel in pitched battles that continued late into the night with no signs of relenting. So far, the police have suffered around 30 casualties during the clash, while at least 15 PTI men have been detained.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) workers and supporters on Tuesday night took control of Zaman Park Lahore following hours-long face-off with police, who arrived to arrest former prime minister Imran Khan. The police failed to arrest the former premier despite the passage of 19 hours as PTI workers laid siege to the path leading to Imran Khan's residence as well as Canal Road.

After the deployment of Rangers, the PTI chairman, in a series of tweets on Wednesday claimed that the "real intent is to abduct and assassinate him" as the police have "now resorted to live firing". "From tear gas & water cannons, they have now resorted to live firing. I signed a surety bond last evening, but the DIG refused to even entertain it. There is no doubt of their mala fide intent," he said. In another video shared on PTI's Twitter account in the wee hours of Wednesday, the PTI chief said that his arrest was part of the "London plan".

The former prime minister also claimed that in order to "avoid anar-

chy", he had signed an undertaking and his counsel Ishfaq A Khan tried presenting the surety to the Islamabad police deputy inspector general (DIG) sent to arrest him.

In a statement on Tuesday the Islamabad police spokesperson said that they have reached Lahore to arrest PTI chief on court orders. Later, party workers and police officials clashed outside his Zaman Park residence in Lahore. The Islamabad police used water cannons and tear gas to disperse PTI workers gathered outside party chief Imran Khan's Zaman Park residence in Lahore.

Police and other law enforcers withdrew from around Imran Khan's Zaman Park home on Wednesday, putting a halt to clashes that had erupted after police tried to arrest the former prime minister for not appearing in court in the Toshakhana case.

Law enforcement personnel were seen leaving the Lahore neighbourhood after clashing with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) supporters as renewed attempts were made earlier today to arrest party chairman Imran. Police resumed firing tear gas rounds and used water cannons against defiant PTI workers and supporters as fresh skirmishes broke out in the morning after law enforcers intensified their operation in a stand-off that lasted almost 24-hours.

CCPO Lahore Bilal Siddique Kamyana and DIG Operations Lahore Afzal Kausar have also reached the area to lead the operation. A large contingent of Punjab Rangers - in riot gear - is assisting the police. On Tuesday night, the provincial government had sought three companies of Punjab Rangers to reinforce the police contingent.

The official PTI Twitter handle stated that open firing had begun by the Rangers and police with Imran's residence under "extreme attack". Videos showed "bullet marks" on the gates of Zaman Park, as the party claimed that "tyrants" were "once again going to the extremes of cruelty". Meanwhile, a group of lawyers is also marching toward Zaman Park.

Imran: Real intent behind arrest to abduct, assassinate

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman and former prime minister Imran Khan claimed the real intent of the LEAs behind the entire episode was to "abduct and assassinate" him.

In a series of Tweets, Imran Khan wrote: "Clearly arrest claim was mere drama because the real intent is to abduct & assassinate. From tear gas & water cannons, they have now resorted to live firing." "I signed a surety bond last evening, but the DIG refused to even entertain it. There is no doubt of their mala fide intent," Imran Khan wrote on Twitter.

In another video shared on PTI's Twitter account in the wee hours of Wednesday, the PTI chief said that his arrest was part of the "London plan". The former prime minister also claimed that in order to "avoid anarchy", he had signed an undertaking and his counsel Ishfaq A Khan tried presenting the surety to the Islamabad police deputy inspector general (DIG) sent to arrest him.

A tense situation prevailed in Lahore in the early hours of Wednesday as police made a fresh attempt to arrest former prime minister Imran Khan but they were facing resistance from hundreds of his supporters gathered outside his residence in Zaman Park. The police failed to arrest the former premier despite the passage of 19 hours as PTI workers laid siege to the path leading to Imran Khan's residence as well as Canal Road.

Khalilzad says Imran's arrest will 'deepen' crisis

WASHINGTON (Agencies): Former US special envoy for Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad on Tuesday said that arresting Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan would "deepen" the crisis, calling for serious "soul-searching and bold thinking".

Taking to Twitter, Khalilzad explained three issues being faced by Pakistan — political, economic, and security — and called for serious strategising to avert the crises. Furthermore, the former US envoy said that the "sequential cannibalising" of political leaders through jailing, execution, and assassination was the wrong path. Urging the Pakistani government to take necessary steps to prevent the country from a meltdown, Khalilzad said that a date should be decided for the national elections in early June.

He said, meanwhile, the government should make a plan to rescue the country and put it on a path to stability, security, and prosperity. "Whichever party wins the election will have a mandate from the people on what must be done," he added.

By-polls for NA: PHC extends status quo

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) has extended status quo till 18th March for by-polls scheduled on 16th and 19th March in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa challenged by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), on Wednesday.

During hearing PHC divisional bench comprised of Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan and Justice Ishfaq Ibrahim was informed that Election Commission of Pakistan and Speaker National Assembly didn't submitted reply before court.

However, ECP's lawyer requested for provision of further time for submission of comments while PHC has adjourned further hearing till 18th March. PTI's counsel Barrister Gohar Khan didn't appear before court due to other engagements while he was represented by Bilal Khalil Advocate before PHC.

The divisional PHC's bench comprising of Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan and Justice Ishfaq Ibrahim extended status-quo to 18th March for by-polls scheduled on 16th and 18th March while ordered Speaker NA and ECP to submit reply.

Pak-US reaffirm commitment to promote eco growth

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the United States on Wednesday reaffirmed their commitment to promoting economic growth, energy security, partnership in long-term flood rehabilitation efforts, and strengthening their overall relationship.

The bilateral ties were discussed in a meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and visiting Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Energy Resources at the US Department of State Geoffrey Pyatt, a PM Office news release said. Geoffrey Pyatt is leading a delegation to Pakistan for the Pak-US Energy Security Dialogue.

The prime minister appreciated the holding of the Pakistan-US Energy Security Dialogue on promoting energy security that would be beneficial for both countries. He encouraged further investment in the country's energy infrastructure which would also help transition towards clean energy. The US assistant secretary appreciated Pakistan for its forward-looking renewable energy policy.

Prime Minister Shehbaz welcomed the ongoing dialogues and cooperation between Pakistan and the United States in areas such as trade and investment, health, security, and climate change. The Pak-US Energy Security Dialogue is a joint initiative aimed at promoting energy security and serves as a platform for high-level discussions between the two countries on bilateral energy priorities, advancing the renewable energy transition, and exploring

economic and commercial opportunities in the energy sector.

Assistant Secretary for Oceans, Environment, and Science of the US State Department Monica Medina, who is also in Pakistan on an official visit, informed the prime minister during the meeting that she was leading a delegation for meetings of the Pak-US Climate and Environment Working Group. She praised the commitment and dedication with which the Government of Pakistan had responded to the consequences of the last year's devastating floods.

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for South Central Asia Elizabeth Horst, and Chief Climate Officer, Development Finance Corporation (DFC), Jake Levine, as well as US Ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome also attended the meeting. The senior US diplomats affirmed the Biden Administration's desire to enhance Pakistan-US cooperation in the areas of trade and investment, health, security, and climate change.

The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Ishaq Dar, Minister for Economic Affairs Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman, Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for Power Engineer Khurram Dastagir, Adviser to the PM Ahad Cheema, Minister of State for Petroleum Musadiq Malik, and PM's special assistants Tariq Fatemi, Jehanzeb Khan and Syed Fahad Hussain.

Only PML-N capable to protect country: Maryam

PHOOLNAGAR (INP):

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Senior Vice President and Chief Organiser Maryam Nawaz said on Wednesday that "the PML-N is the only political party of the country which has the capacity and capability to protect the interests of the country and the federating units".

Addressing the workers' organizational convention here, she said that the PML-N always gave respect to the nation, made economic progress and provided facilities to people.

She said that Nawaz Sharif was the leader who had always protected his party workers and the people of Pakistan at large, while PTI Chairman Imran Khan was using women

and children as a shield for his protection. "The PML-N leader said that Nawaz Sharif, along with his daughter (Maryam), returned from London and courted arrest, which was an act of bravery," she said that Imran Khan was afraid of appearing in the courts of law, and he was not ready to leave his Zaman Park residence.

She said the PML-N youth were torch-bearers of the prestige of Pakistan. "I feel pride to see the spirit of youth and women who are looking determined for progress of the country," she added.

Maryam said that people wanted to play role as a team for development of Pakistan under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif and

Shehbaz Sharif. She said that her party would contest elections and win with a thumping majority. "We never accepted any selection in the past, nor we will let it happen in future," she thundered. The struggle for balanced scales was under way to give honour to vote. Only giving respect to vote could help provide justice to people," she added.

Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah, Federal Minister Rana Tanvir Hussain, MNA Malik Rashid Ahmed Khan, members of provincial assembly Malik Muhammad Ahmed Khan, Malik Ahmed Saeed Khan, PML-N Divisional President Wasim Akhtar Sheikh and other leaders and workers were also present.

Flash floods kill at least 14 in Turkish quake zone

ISTANBUL (Agencies):

Flash floods killed at least 14 people living in tents and container housing across Turkey's quake-hit region on Wednesday, piling more pressure on President Recep Tayyip Erdogan ahead of crunch elections.

Several more people were swept away by the rushing water, which turned streets into muddy rivers in areas hit by last month's 7.8-magnitude quake, officials said. More than 48,000 people died in Turkey and nearly 6,000 in Syria in the February 6 disaster, the region's deadliest in modern times. Hundreds of thousands of Turkish quake survivors have been moved into tents and container homes across the disaster region, which covers 11 provinces across Turkey's southeast.

Torrential rains hit the area on Tuesday and the weather service expects them to last until late Wednesday.

Turkish officials said the floods killed 12 people in Sanliurfa, about 50 kilome-

tres north of the Syrian border. Two people, including a one-year-old, also died in nearby Adiyaman, where five remain unaccounted for. Images showed the waters sweeping away cars and flooding temporary housing set up for earthquake victims.

In one viral video, a man dressed in a beige suit and tie reaches out for help while floating down a surging stream alongside a piece of furniture. His fate remains unknown. Other images showed people pulling victims out of the water with branches and rope. The Sanliurfa governor's office said the flooding also reached the ground floor of one of the region's main hospitals.

Facing a difficult reelection on May 14, Erdogan is confronting a furious public backlash over his government's stuttering response to the biggest natural disaster of his two-decade rule.

Erdogan has issued several public apologies while also stressing that no nation

could have dealt quickly with a disaster of such scale. Erdogan has spent the past few weeks touring the region, meeting survivors and promising to rebuild the entire area within a year.

"By the end of next year, we will build 319,000 houses," Erdogan told his ruling party members on Wednesday in a parliamentary address. "Beyond the search and rescue, emergency aid and temporary shelter we have provided so far, we have a promise to our nation to restore the cities destroyed in the earthquake within a year," he said.

Erdogan dispatched his interior minister to the flooded region to oversee the government's response. "Currently, we have 10 teams composed of 163 people doing search and rescue work across a 25km stretch," Interior Minister Suleyman Soyulu told reporters. "We also have divers. But the weather conditions are not allowing us to do much," he said.

Female education imperative for prosperity: Samina Alvi

F.P. Report

institutions.

She said solid efforts were being made to enroll all such children in public sector schools and take full advantage of their potential besides making them useful citizens of society. Bringing out-of-school children under the education net would not only bring significant improvement in their own lives but also help their families on social and economic fronts besides significantly contributing to the country's development process.

The First Lay said countries achieve heights of economic and financial prosperity with educational empowerment of all citizens including male and female through dedicated professional teachers rather than the construction of buildings. She urged teachers to also focus on character building and career

counselling of students, saying respect for teachers was also equally important for a learned and knowledgeable society.

The first lady said lack of education creates socioeconomic imbalances including poverty and illiteracy and that a lot of effort was required to improve the literacy ratio in the country. Samina Arif Alvi said she was pleased to see a large number of girls getting quality education here and praised their families for their continued support and assistance to them.

Besides education, she said economic and financial empowerment of women and imparting vocational skills was a must for achieving the desired economic goals. She praised RMWO for providing quality education and healthcare services to the people of far-flung areas of KP.

‘Alone we go faster, together we go far’: Marri

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister Poverty Alleviation Shazia Marri said "Its about women recognition since more than 50% of population of this country consists of women yet they need to show cards and slogans and come to streets for Aurat March to speak for our rights". She further added that in my own constituency I am the first person who managed to succeed against other parties so I can say women have more potential than men and thats why this forum is really important for women as it provides a platform to them.

The Federal Minister emphasized upon a recent study jointly conducted by IMF and ILO which showed that if gender gap can be reduced in Pakistan, it will result in huge positive impact on GDP of Pakistan. Since Pakistan is going through economic problems at the moment, she said that its time about changing the perspective and focusing on empowering women.

The Federal Minister mentioned that our religion has enjoined many rights for women which can help us in clarifying many myths regarding different social issues. Its the duty of educated men to stand up for women and talk about issues faced by them. This attitude should prevail so that any discrimination which exist against women would be reduced. Further, she said that these women entrepreneurs will open new pathways for other women in the workforce and she ended her speech by using the proverb "alone we go faster, together we go far".

Russia races to salvage US drone wreckage in Black Sea

MOSCOW (Agencies): Moscow said on Wednesday it would try to retrieve the wreckage of a US military drone that crashed over the Black Sea in a confrontation that Washington blamed on two Russian fighter jets.

Russia also warned against "hostile" US flights as tensions simmered and Russia denied its Su-27 military aircraft had clipped the propeller of the unmanned Reaper drone. Kyiv, meanwhile, countered that the incident over international waters was evidence the Kremlin wants to draw the United States into the conflict in Ukraine.

"I don't know whether we'll be able to retrieve it or not but it has to be done. And we will certainly work on it," Russian Security Council secretary Nikolai Patrushev said in televised remarks. The crash on Tuesday, which Washington said was the fault of reckless and unprofessional Russian conduct, further ratcheted up tensions between Moscow and Western allies, already soaring over the Ukraine conflict.

Patrushev said the incident was further proof that the United States is a direct party to fighting between Moscow and Kyiv and said Russia had a responsibility to "defend our independence and our sovereignty". Russia's defence ministry said it had scrambled jets after detecting a US drone over the Black Sea and denied causing the crash. The Pentagon said the drone was on a routine mission when it was intercepted "in a reckless, environmentally unsound and unprofessional manner".

Russia said the aircraft had lost control but White House national security spokesman John Kirby said the US "obviously" refuted the denial. He added the United States was trying to prevent the fallen drone from getting into the wrong hands.

"We've taken steps to protect our equities with respect to that particular drone — that particular aircraft," Kirby told CNN. Russian intercepts over the Black Sea are common, Kirby said, but this one was particularly "unsafe and unprofessional" and "reckless".

Ukraine said the incident was "provoked by Russia" and cautioned that it signalled President Vladimir Putin's aim to "expand the conflict". "The purpose of this all-in tactic is to always be raising the stakes," Ukrainian National

Security and Defence Council secretary Oleksiy Danilov said on social media.

Nato diplomats in Brussels confirmed the incident, but said they did not expect it to immediately escalate into a further confrontation. A Western military source, speaking to AFP on condition of anonymity, said diplomatic channels between Russia and the United States could help limit any fallout.

"To my mind, diplomatic channels will mitigate this," the source said. Russia's campaign in Ukraine has led to heightened fears of a direct confrontation between Moscow and the Nato alliance, which has been arming Kyiv to help it defend itself. Reports of a missile strike in eastern Poland in November briefly caused alarm before Western military sources concluded it was a Ukrainian air defence missile, not a Russian one.

The United States uses MQ-9 Reapers for both surveillance and strikes and has long operated over the Black Sea keeping an eye on Russian naval forces. "Our MQ-9 aircraft was conducting routine operations in international airspace when it was intercepted and hit by a Russian aircraft, resulting in a crash and complete loss of the MQ-9," said US Air Force General James Hecker, commander of US Air Forces Europe and Air Forces Africa. "In fact, this unsafe and unprofessional act by the Russians nearly caused both aircraft to crash."

"US and allied aircraft will continue to operate in international airspace and we call on the Russians to conduct themselves professionally and safely," he added. Pentagon spokesman Brigadier General Pat Ryder said the drone was "unflyable and uncontrollable so we brought it down", adding that the collision also likely damaged the Russian aircraft, which he said was able to land following the incident.

Several US Reapers have been lost in recent years, including to hostile fire. One was shot down in 2019 over Yemen with a surface-to-air missile fired by Houthi rebels, the US Central Command said at the time. Reapers can be armed with Hellfire missiles as well as laser-guided bombs and can fly for more than 1,100 miles (1,770 kilometres) at altitudes of up to 15,000 metres (50,000 feet), according to the US Air Force.